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1

The Duty Of Students

The influence of Western education has resulted in the dwindling of interest in the study of the Sanskrit language. It has caused the disappearance of domestic felicity and the erosion of the principles of arya dharma. People are enamoured of external appearances and behaviour, and consider speaking in their mother tongues a fault. They hesitate to honour the norms of social etiquette and regard it a burden to respect teachers and elders. Timidity is prevalent everywhere and has become a contagion.

If women flock to offices and take up jobs, who will be there to look after home and perform the domestic duties? If both husband and wife take up vocations, who shall perform the household chores? If mothers go to school to teach the children of others, who is there to teach their own children? If women take up books and go about like men, who will look after the kitchen? By a woman taking up employment there would be fewer financial problems for the family, but several other difficulties would arise denying happiness to her.

Embodiments of Love—students, teachers, and patrons of education!

Bharath, the acknowledged birthplace of spirituality, has been witness to a decline in righteousness and has gradually become a veritable abode for demoniac tendencies that nourish injustice, disorder, and unethical conduct. It is the duty of students in such a malaise-ridden society in this terrible age of Kali, with all its rampant vices, to see that righteousness and love are resuscitated and peace and security assured.

Just as mothers feel sorry for their children who are backward in education or in other aspects of life, mother India too laments over the spiritual and moral degradation of her children. To remove this agony of mother India, the students should fulfil their duties. In doing so, they would do well to remember that the citizens, the elders, the men wielding authority and the

great leaders were all, at one time, students themselves and that they, too, in time and in their turn, will be the leaders and citizens of tomorrow.

The Government does not have the power to guide the people along the path of morality and spirituality. The citizens, on their part, do not have the authority to correct the Government when necessary. Viewed from the spiritual angle, both the Government and the people appear to be losing their right to mend the ways of each other. The reason for this situation is that the men who are now at the helm of affairs had failed to shape their lives along spiritual lines during their childhood.

The greatness of an individual depends on the cultural perfection he has attained. "Culture" does not connote mere diligence. It means the removal of evil thoughts and propensities and the promotion of good thoughts and qualities. The lives of the citizens of tomorrow depend upon and take shape according to the type of life they lead as students today. The life a person lives as a student is the foundation for the life he will lead later as a citizen. It is only when a student lives a life characterised by peace and self-control that he will have a peaceful and contented life later as a citizen.

It is against this background that the students of today must act. They must realise that the moral strength in them is being sapped by Western culture and education. Western culture is the culture of the

metropolises where the multiplication of individual desires has led man to misery and unhappiness. Indian culture, however, is the culture that prevails in the rural milieu where desires are few and contentment rides high. In the present context, therefore, we should seek that education which confers the joys of a contented life. To live such a sacred and exemplary life is the duty of students today.

In the field of education, as in every other sphere of human endeavour, we are faced with baffling problems. The present educational system does little for the purification, the enrichment, and the spiritual unfoldment of man. It has merely brought society to the brink of disaster. In addition, we have the constant babble and meaningless prattle the intellectuals and *pundits* trying to thrust upon the administration in the country, thereby reducing the nation to a "kingdom of rabbits." The spread of modern education has brought in its train, spiritual retrogression and a surfeit of selfishness. We, therefore, require today patriotic students with broad minds, men of action capable of selfless service and sacrifice. "Simple living and high thinking"—that should be the ideal for us; not "high living and low thinking" which seems to be the maxim of modern education.

It is to impart to you such wholesome ideas and to enrich your value systems that the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust has been conducting these summer courses

every year. These courses afford you an opportunity to gainfully spend a month imbibing the high ideals of life that provide you with spiritual nourishment.

Human life is comparable to a tree and the kinsmen of the individual to its branches. On these branches the flowers of his thoughts and feelings blossom. These flowers gradually develop into fruits of good qualities and virtues. The nectarine juice present in these fruits is character. Without roots and fruits, a tree is mere firewood. Self-confidence is the root of the tree of life and character, its fruit.

With the hope that you will all become exemplary students, reap the full benefits of this course, purify your hearts and reform society, I bless you all.

2

Nishkama Karma

Can one who longs for a position of authority be of pure heart?
It is only when the servant of the nation becomes its leader that he can render selfless service.

Embodiments of the Divine Atma!

Bharath is the country which has rightly understood the secret of *karma* and has thereby come to be called *Karmakshetra*, the land of action. Work done in cognition of the *Atma* gives protection to life. Such *karma* broadens the heart and illumines the individual. It annihilates the ego and confers the bliss of the Self on man. To recognise this sanctity of *karma*, we should purify our hearts. *Karma* flows incessantly like a river. All creation, sentient, and insentient, is immersed in it.

The word *karma* may appear to be small, but its meaning is profound. It is not possible to define *karma*. It has neither beginning nor end. Just as life is beginningless, *karma* too is without beginning. Thus, the nature of *karma* is shrouded in mystery and in trying to comprehend its significance, one must be earnest and steadfast. In common parlance, it is natural to regard the performance of an action as *karma*. But, this is not correct. For example, to the question as to what someone is doing, we get the answer that he is writing. Here writing is considered *karma*. Similarly, when the same question is asked about someone else, we get the reply that he is not doing anything and is merely watching. Watching is as much an action as writing is. So, too, sleeping and contemplation involve *karma*. As long as there is life-breath in man, he cannot desist from *karma*. In fact, the very process of inhalation and exhalation is *karma*. There is no need to put in any special effort for work such as this. Likewise, there is little of true effort required in several other activities in our daily routine from morning to night.

Nevertheless, all these activities form an integral part of human life and cannot be described as spiritual endeavour. Instead, we should undertake today what is known as *nishkama karma*, or action performed without any desire for the fruit thereof. Service of the downtrodden, the disabled and the diseased also constitutes an obligation in one's daily life and cannot

be described as being *nishkama karma* or motiveless work. This is because man's love for the universe is not without selfishness. If man loves any object, he does so for his own sake and pleasure. Similarly, if a man conceals an object in a secure place, it is not on account of his love for the object but because of his love for himself. Thus, in the world, all kinds of love are born of love for oneself and not out of love for others. It is the primary duty of the members of the *Seva Dal* to give up the thought of the utility of an act of service to one's own self and consider service for the benefit of others alone as being truly selfless in character.

Man can be described as a conglomeration of thoughts and ideas. Every little thought becomes an integral part of his life. The quality of feelings one has, determines his future. Therefore, he must install sacred ideas in his heart. The fostering of pure thoughts will promote the spirit of selfless service in our hearts. *Nishkama karma* uproots the bestiality in man and confers divinity on him. Selfless service is a more exalted means of spiritual progress than such other ways as meditation, *bhajan* and *yoga*. This is so because when we undertake meditation, *japa,* or *yoga*, we do so for our own benefit and not for the good of others. These are aimed at subjugating one's individual desires and securing happiness for oneself. What we should aspire for is the attainment of the good of others without any desire for personal gain.

Nishkama karma, or selfless service, is the fragrant flower of altruistic love. It is not to be performed for the satisfaction of the person rendering the service or the person at whose bidding it is done. Man should regard *nishkama karma* as the purpose for which he is given life. This feeling should flow through his very nerves and bloodstream and permeate every cell of his body. Whatever be the work we do, we should do it as an offering to God and for His pleasure. Members and office-bearers of the Sathya Sai *Seva Dal* should not feel obliged to do service on the ground that the rules and regulations require them to do so. They should not look upon the regulations as compelling them to do service. Without being regimented by rules and regulations, we should take up service activities for the purification of our own hearts.

On the emblem of the *Seva Dal* is inscribed "Duty is God." Man is using the expression "duty" so often and in so many different contexts without realising its inner significance. The word "duty" would have no meaning at all if there were only one individual. It assumes significance only if there is a society or a community, or at least two persons. Here we should understand two aspects closely related to "duty." These may be termed "individual freedom" and "fundamental right." "Individual freedom" refers to the freedom an individual has, whereas "fundamental right" brings into

focus his relation to society. Man must endeavour to ensure that there is proper balance between the two.

All your life is spent in the company of others in the society. You are not independent by yourself. Without any kind of relationship to a community, to relatives and to other individuals, it is not possible for you to live in seclusion, all by yourself. Since it is not possible to live in absolute isolation, our lives are inevitably full of connection with others around us. It is in this context that the *Seva Dal* volunteers, realising their duty to society to which they owe their existence, must remember that life is bestowed on man not for personal profits but for communal good.

There is yet another dimension attached to the meaning of this word "duty." We should seek only that kind of liberty which does not obstruct the freedom of others. Should you hamper the independence of another individual in the course of an egotistic display of your individual freedom, you are sure to be condemned by society. The man next to you enjoys the same amount of licence that your own individual freedom affords you. There is a small example to illustrate this: trying to make the most of your own individual freedom, you may gaily stroll down the road, wielding a large stick in your hand. Yet, a man coming from the opposite direction has just as much freedom to dodge the stick as you have to wield it. If you behave in a manner which impairs the freedom of another, you stand to receive societal

disapproval or governmental censure. Thus, what we understand by the word "duty" is that the privileges and the rights enjoyed by us on account of our individual freedom, are also claimed by others who are around us. The right to walk freely does not allow you to roam about recklessly in a village as you might in a forest. A hundred percent freedom cannot be the prerogative of any individual bound to society, whether it is the Prime Minister or the President.

Even the monarch of a large kingdom cannot fulfil all his individual wishes. He cannot, merely by virtue of his being the King, behave in any manner that he fancies. The kings have some codes of conduct and discipline, which they must adhere to. Just as the ruler of a petty earthly domain has certain norms to go by in carrying out his duty, the Supreme Ruler of the world, the Almighty, too, does have such regulations in the matter of the governance of the universe.

It is puerile to say that God would do everything by Himself simply because He is omnipotent. Here is an illustration. There are two individuals who are devotees of the Lord. One of them prays to God for rain to prevent his crops from getting dried up. The other, however, prays to Him for the absence of rainfall for a few days in view of a grand marriage ceremony he had intended to perform in his house shortly. Thus, they put the Lord in a dilemma. Which devotee's prayer should God answer? Here, we should ask ourselves the question

as to whether God has received these prayers Himself directly or not. Even as there is a delegation of authority in the administration of a terrestrial kingdom by a ruler, by which various governmental functions are performed by several ministers who are assigned the charge of certain departments and portfolios, in running the affairs of the Cosmos, the Almighty God, too, assigns certain functions to certain gods like Indra, Varuna, and Rudra. Just as all earthly matters are not taken directly to a king, but are presented to the concerned ministers for action, all prayers of man do not reach God Himself—they are attended to by His "ministers", Indra, Varuna and others. Only those prayers which have their origins in the spirit of *nishkama karma*, infinite and pure love and an unsullied heart, reach the Lord directly. It is not possible for prayers of any other kind to reach Him directly. Therefore, it is only through these three media, that is, *nishkama karma*, boundless love, and an unsullied heart, that we can hope to secure direct contact with the Lord and obtain His Divine sanction to our request.

Even among these three, *nishkama karma* is very important and therefore the members of the *Seva Dal* should participate in service activities without indulging in selfish pursuits. To call ourselves Sathya Sai *Seva Dal* Volunteers and have selfish interests as an end would amount to an attempt to deceive God. Your actions should be in consonance with the name associated with the institution.

A few minutes earlier you had heard Gokak say something about *manishi*. This word, when slightly mispronounced, would be heard as *mahishi* or something arising out of *maheswara*. By its association in terms of the sounds of these words, the word *maharishi* also presents itself to us as a *manishi* (ordinary man) and gets transformed into a *maharishi* (sage) by engaging in *nishkama karma*. Truly speaking, the merit that could be obtained from service cannot be acquired even from the practice of rigorous austerities. Service brings human beings closer to each other and promotes affection and friendship. Without this friendship and feeling of love for one's fellowmen, one cannot hope to attain intimacy with the Lord (*sneham*) which among the nine forms of devotion to God is next only to *Atmanivedanam* (complete surrender).

You may be thinking in this context that you are living as brothers in keeping with the laudable ideal of "Brotherhood of man and Fatherhood of God." There is, however, a higher ideal that is to be sought after, for it is not uncommon to observe brothers quarrelling with one another and totally severing their connections. "*Ekam sat viprah bahudha vadanthi*"—the one truth is spoken of in different ways by the wise. "*Ekoham bahusyam*," I am One; let Me be many. "*Ekam eva advitiyam Brahma*," *Brahman* is only One, without a second. "*Easwara sarva bhootanam*"—God is in all beings. "*Isavasyam idam sarvam*"—The entire world

is enveloped by the Lord. This is the inner meaning of these *Upanishadic* declarations—behind the apparent physical differences, the one basic Truth, the Atma, resides in all beings. We should, therefore, live our lives with a constant awareness of this profound verity. Do not feel elated by injuring and hurting others, for that harm is not being caused to another but to your own self. In the same way, whatever be the benefit which arises out of the good deeds you may perform, it accrues to you and not to others.

Here is an illustration to explain that the good deeds do bring back good to oneself. Three cups of coffee were prepared in a home. The husband drank one cup and the wife, another. While they were debating as to whether they should share the third cup or let one of them have it, a friend called at the house and was cordially offered the coffee. The husband felt pleased that he had not only averted a quarrel with his wife but also performed the service of offering coffee to his friend. Three months later, the husband visited his friend's house. The friend extended due hospitality and offered him a cup of coffee, reciprocating the favour he had received earlier. Had he not been given the cup of coffee three months earlier, he would not have returned the hospitality. So, we see that the householder got back his cup of coffee after three months. In the same manner, we are repaid for our deeds in some way or the other, whether we know it or not, and in the same coin.

The *Bhagavad Gita* has proclaimed the path of *nishkama karma* as the royal road to perfection. It exhorts man not to crave for the fruits of action and merely perform one's duties in a detached manner, leaving the results thereof to the Lord. God does not enjoin man to do any work in particular. He is only the dispenser of the results of the deeds done by humans. He gives the fruits of actions according to the kind of work performed by man. If, without performing good deeds, you pray for personal gain, God merely listens to your entreaties, but does not favour you with His benediction. A story from the *Mahabharatha* portrays this succinctly. On an occasion, during the celebrations associated with the Sankranthi festival, Krishna was partaking of the freshly harvested sugarcane offered to Him by the *gopis* in accordance with the custom. As there were no machines those days, to squeeze the juice out of the sugarcane, Krishna had to cut it. While doing so, He inadvertently cut his little finger. Seeing blood on His finger, Sathyabhama, in her characteristic ego, ordered the gopis to go inside the house and fetch some cloth to bandage the finger. Draupadi who was also there, however, out of her love and concern for Krishna, immediately tore off a piece of cloth from the end of her *sari* and bandaged the Lord's finger.

Years later, when Dussasana brought Droupadi to the court of the Kauravas with the intention of humiliating her in public, she appealed to Krishna for

His Divine intervention to save her honour. Krishna pondered over it for a few moments to see whether she deserved to be rescued from her present predicament by virtue of any related good deed done by her in the past, which could be recompensed. Only help offered earlier entitles one to assistance from God. However, it is not as if any good deed done in the past would bring Divine aid in a particular situation. There must be a cognate association of the deed performed by man with the aid sought from the Divine. An ointment for the eye cannot cure the headache. After a little deliberation, Krishna remembered that the tying of a bandage, improvised by her, at one time in the past, entitled her to receive a similar gift. Therefore, He sent her an endless *sari* with the same little finger that had needed a bandage then. *Karmanyeva adhikaraste*—we must concern ourselves only with the action to be performed by us; the Lord will bestow on us the fruits thereof when the need arises.

Gokak has said earlier that Swami is the greatest volunteer and the greatest *Seva Dal* leader. You should follow Swami, the leader. This is because from morning to night, Swami performs even the smallest task Himself; and all His work is for the good of the world. It is in this context that I often say, "My Life is My Message." God and the voice of God are one and the same. Thus, doing what Swami does, as well as what Swami ordains, forms work which pleases Him. Work

done without the thought of self and eschewing the craving for name or power pleases Him most.

(Discourse delivered on the occasion of the inauguration of the All India Sri Sathya Sai Seva Dal District Convenors' Central Training Camp, to its delegates and to the participants in the Sri Sathya Sai Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality.)

3

The Messenger Of God

Gita is the Messenger of God.
Gita is the Universal Mother.
Gita is the means for man to cross the ocean of life.
Gita is the support for all spiritual seekers.

Embodiments of Love!

Bhagavad Gita deals with the basic facts of the gross material world and the subtle spiritual world; human society and the human mind. *Gita* is a mirror of the mind of the total, integral and universal man. It elevates man from the intellectual to the spiritual love and illumines his pathway to the *Paramatma*. It elucidates the secret of total self-surrender. It is an aid to the integral and total transformation of man. It is an epitome of the spiritual verities revealed by Krishna.

To appreciate the significance of sculpture, one must possess aesthetic sense. He must also possess some basic knowledge of its technique. You may provide yourself with a stone, a chisel and a hammer; but, you cannot carve an idol without acquiring an artistic temperament and the requisite technical skill. Similarly, a total and comprehensive cosmic awareness is the foundation for perceiving the Universal Reality.

The *Bhagavad Gita* expounds the secret of creation and the essence of Divinity. It explains the theory and practice of all spiritual knowledge based on individual experience. We must try and understand its true significance and practical relevance to human destiny. The sun is the source of light on the earth. Without the sun the entire world will be plunged in darkness. Similarly, Lord Krishna is the source of intellectual illumination and spiritual enlightenment.

It is obvious that we cannot experience the pure effulgence of *Sath-chith-ananda* or Truth-consciousness-bliss without Divine Grace. Human effort alone is not enough to attain spiritual beatitude. The divine annunciations of the *Gita* enable man to transcend the barriers of the world and acquire divine power and spiritual energy. All creatures are equally exposed to the celestial radiance of *Sath-chith-ananda*. But in apprehending this Truth-consciousness-bliss, men follow different paths. *Sath-chith-ananda* is not found in the external world. However, man is so preoccupied

with the external world of sensations that he has become oblivious of his own divinity and his natural identity with Godhead.

Men are immersed in the sea of cosmic Truth-consciousness-bliss, but they have not realised it. *Sath-chith-ananda* is everywhere, both within and without us, but it continually eludes and tantalises us. We are like men wading through a river but incapable of quenching our thirst. We need not search for Divinity in the external world. We have to realise it within our own selves. The divine effulgence of *Sath-chith-ananda* is concealed by the perverted nature of the human mind.

The sun is really impartial. The entire world is bathed in sunlight. The sun sheds its light equally on all objects, men and animals, beasts and birds, and forests. But the image of the sun is not reflected in mountains and valleys. A clear mirror reflects the rays of the sun. We can see the sun's image reflected by the calm surface of clear water. Likewise, the sacred vision of *Paramatma* is revealed to an unperturbed and tranquil mind in which all thought waves have been calmed. A pure and holy heart will mirror the divine glory of *Paramatma*.

A man with a wavering mind can never experience the Divinity of nature. All creatures in the world are manifestations of the Divine. Krishna has vividly demonstrated the Divinity of creation in the *vibhuthi yoga.*

"Among the Pandavas, I am Dhananjaya. Among the mountains, I am the Himalayas. Among the rivers, I am the Ganges. I am the lion among all beasts, the cow *Kama Dhenu* among the herbivorous animals and the cobra among the snakes." In the hierarchy of creation, *Paramatma* is the essence and the source of all attributes and excellences. Nevertheless, *Paramatma* is both transcendental and immanent. God manifests Himself wherever purity of thought and unwavering devotion coexist in a human being.

There were many noble souls at that time. There was Dharmaraja, the personification of all *dharma* and virtues. There was Bhishma, a tenacious warrior and a venerable, all-knowing scholar. There was Bhima, the powerhouse of physical strength, wielding his mighty club. Does it mean that Bhishma, Dharmaraja and Bheema were not worthy of being the direct disciples of Krishna? What is that special merit which Arjuna possessed and the others did not? Young men of modern times should ponder over this somewhat invidious distinction made by Krishna. They must recognise the subtlety and sanctity of the Divine Force that sways the universe. Did not Dharmaraja, who had never deviated from the path of *dharma* even under the most painful circumstances, deserve the Lord's Special Grace? Arjuna knew that he was morally inferior to his brother Dharmaraja and wished to know in what way he was more deserving. He questioned Krishna, his guide, *guru*, and friend.

Krishna gave an appropriate answer, "Bhishma knows that justice is on the side of the Pandavas and has even made a public proclamation of this. But, he is leading the Kaurava army. This means that his deeds do not correspond to his thoughts and words. Harmony among thought, word and deed is the greatest virtue, and its absence is hypocrisy and wickedness.

"Dharmaraja is subject to the common human failing of repentance rather than prior consideration. Though a noble soul, he lacks foresight and is guilty of remorse for his past mistakes. On the other hand, Bhima, who has tremendous physical prowess and is dextrous with his mighty club, unfortunately has a deficiency in intellectual strength, the greatest strength of all. A man without the power of discrimination cannot absorb this subtle teaching."

Here, we must distinguish *purvatapa* from *paschattapa. Paschattapa* is futile regret for the past. *Purvatapa* is wise concern for the future. *Purvatapa* is an indispensable aid to the spiritual aspirant while *paschattapa* is absolutely useless. The power of discrimination is definitely more valuable than bookish knowledge, wealth and physical strength.

The harmony between thoughts, words and deeds is the first step in spiritual growth. Lack of correlation between ideas, utterances and actions leads to self-deception, hypocrisy, and spiritual bankruptcy. The proper

study of mankind is man. The generation, expression and efflorescence of humanitarianism depends on the proper integration of thought, speech and action. In other words, the rapport between mental and physical activities is an essential ingredient of spiritual training. Arjuna exemplifies the harmonious blending of thoughts, words and deeds—a quality absent in Bhishma.

In the midst of the din and roar of the battlefield, the clash of arms and the clamour of falling warriors, Arjuna maintains his physical composure and mental equanimity. He does not, for a single moment, lose his one-pointed alertness and mental agility.

Krishna exhorts Arjuna to maintain his one-pointed poise, with implicit faith and self-confidence. Arjuna listens to the divine declaration of the Great Integral Incarnation. He surrenders himself absolutely to the Lord. Arjuna becomes a *saranagata* (absolute self-surrender) and prostrates himself at the Feet of Krishna.

Arjuna is superior to Dharmaraja, whose mind is always agitated by regrets for the past. Unlike his brother Dharmaraja, Arjuna is concerned with the future. In comparison to the mighty Bhima, Arjuna possesses a sharp intellect capable of grasping spiritual profundities. This is the justification for Arjuna being the chosen recipient of the *Bhagavad Gita.*

Arjuna's name has great spiritual significance.

Arjuna is one who has a pure heart. Krishna used to address him as Partha also. Partha means "the son of *Prithvi*." There is no use of merely memorising the seven hundred *slokas* (verses) of the *Bhagavad Gita.* We must try and become Arjunas and Parthas.

Krishna is *Purushothama*, the greatest being. We can offer our faults and foibles, and sins and sorrows at Krishna's Feet and enjoy the highest treasure of pure, unalloyed bliss. We must enshrine the teachings of Krishna in our hearts and practise these precepts in our daily lives. The *slokas* of the *Bhagavad Gita* will banish the *soka* (sorrow) in our hearts and give us abiding peace and joy.

4

Dharmakshetre Kurukshetre

Men who do not have purity of mind cannot
acquire knowledge of their real self.
Only those with pure hearts can realise the
true nature of the Self.
I am declaring the truth as it exists.

In Kurukshetra which is a *Dharmakshetra,* or sacred region, a place which has been the seat of holy sacrifices, the two armies were arrayed for battle. Forgetting the supremacy of the Divine principle and giving full play to his ego, Duryodhana unfurled the banner of war. In order to please Duryodhana, Bhishma blew his conch. Taking it as the signal for war, the armies sounded their war drums.

Krishna and Arjuna also blew their conches on the other side. The great roar of battle, proceeding from the soldiers on the side of the Pandavas, rent the skies.

Responding to Arjuna's request, Krishna stationed his chariot in the middle of the two armies. The chariot appeared so terrifying to the Kaurava soldiers, that they felt as if the war-horses galloped on their hearts. Beholding his grandfather Bhishma, his *guru* Dronacharya and his friends and relations and thinking of the bonds of affection between him and the people on the other side of the battlefield, Arjuna felt despondent. His head reeled, his limbs trembled and the *Gandiva* slipped from his hand. "Oh, Krishna!" he cried, "I am forced to wage this terrible battle against those friends and relations with whom I should have been living in happiness and harmony. My mind rebels against this prospect. The cause for this is neither the fear of death nor the need to kill my kinsmen. The *Sruthis* have declared that the destruction wrought by war may lead women away from the path of virtue and bring about social disorder. It would be far better to beg and live on alms than to fight for a kingdom and be responsible for this great sin and repent later."

Thus the great hero Arjuna entered into a state of despair. His dejection proceeded from his concern for the preservation of *dharma* and his anxiety to strictly obey God's command. *Dharma,* which is concerned with the welfare of all, should override the dictates of *mamakara* (attachment), which confines itself to the interests of one's kith and kin. The *dharma* that relates to societal well-being should be held higher than man's duty to a few and, therefore, should not be sacrificed

for the latter. The attachment one has for one's relations may be compared to the clouds that suddenly gather in the sky and disappear in no time. *Dharma*, however, is that which sustains this earth. Thus, Arjuna felt dejected out of his anxiety to protect *dharma* and adhere to God's injunction as indicated in the *Sruthis*. Had Arjuna merely felt sorry for his kinsmen, it might have been only *Vishada* or dejection; but since he felt agonised for the sake of the protection of *dharma* and obeying the word of God, his mental state is described as *vishada yoga* or "the *yoga* of righteous despair."

Generally, the ego develops in men as a result of attachment and desire. *Moha* (delusion) is the result of *abhimana* (egoistic feeling), *mamakara*, and *ahamkara (conceit)*. The worldly relationships proceed from these evil tendencies. Krishna advised Arjuna not to pay attention to mundane bonds and added that those who kill and those who are killed are only His instruments. Arjuna was a medium used by Him to teach a lesson to all mankind.

"I have chosen you as My instrument," Krishna said. "You are a representative of mankind. Divine dispensation is the root cause of all; acts of God are for the promotion and preservation of *dharma*. Arjuna, you have not been able to understand My nature. For the protection of *dharma* in the *Thretha Yuga*, I killed Vali and gave his kingdom to his brother Sugriva; I destroyed Ravana and gave Lanka to Vibhishana without laying

any claims to it. So also, though I had sovereign power and could have ruled over Ayodhya, I went to the forest in obedience to my father's wish to fulfil the pledge I gave to my father and to prove that the rulers of the lkshvaku clan never deviate from their word of honour.

"Whatever I undertake is designed to promote the welfare of the world. If I do not undertake action, the Universe would come to a standstill. Having killed Kamsa who was unfair, unjust and proud, I gave the kingdom to his father Ugrasena. Similarly, I destroyed wicked rulers like Jarasandha and Dantavaktra and gave away their kingdoms to the nearest of their kin. I did not retain anything for Myself. All this was done only for the protection of *dharma*. From age to age, I have been working without respite even for a minute for the preservation of *dharma*. I remain just a spectator without any personal motive. In every age, whenever righteousness declines and unrighteousness raised its hood, I incarnated Myself. For the protection of the virtuous and for the destruction of evil and for the restoration of *Dharma*, I manifest Myself from age to age."

Hearing these words of Krishna, Arjuna said in all humility, "I shall do as you ordain." Then Krishna said soothingly and lovingly, "Follow me with folded hands and proceed to obtain the permission of Bhishma, your grandfather." The Pandavas were given to following Krishna's words without questioning. Leaving his footwear and crown, Arjuna walked behind

Krishna with folded hands. Dharmaja, Bhima, Nakula and Sahadeva watched this sight and realising that Arjuna was walking behind Krishna to some purpose, they too set their crowns down, removed their shoes, folded their hands and walked behind Krishna. The Kauravas looked at this scene and shouted for joy, thinking that the five brothers were frightened by the mighty commanders on the Kaurava side and had come to surrender.

God's inexplicable ways are known only to Him. Whatever God says, does or thinks, appears to be strange. But God's actions are never contrary to the canons of *dharma*. There will be great felicity if one adopts the attitude of unquestioning obedience. That day, the Pandavas enjoyed the fruits of such obedience. The Pandavas, preceded by Krishna, approached Bhishma who was standing in front of them and prayed thus, "Grandfather! We lost our father in our childhood and you have nourished us since then with tender care. Though you are our grandfather, we may say that you are more than a father to us. By a terrible turn of events we are unfortunately constrained to fight against you, whom we regard as our father. Without your sanction, we have no right to commence the battle. So please grant us your permission."

Bhishma shed tears of profound joy when he looked at the Pandavas, who had chosen to observe the rules of *dharma* even in a moment of dreadful crisis.

Stroking their heads tenderly, the grandsire said, "May victory be yours!"

The brothers then proceeded to their *guru*, Dronacharya and sought his blessings. Appreciating their righteous conduct, Dronacharya also blessed them with victory. Thus, we see that Krishna had pointed out the ideal path, bringing to the Pandavas victory even before the war had begun.

In fact, Sanjaya who was conveying to Dhritharashtra all the details relating to the war said as much to the blind king. *San* means good, *jaya* means to gain victory. So the name of Sanjaya denotes that he has gained a good and righteous victory. Of pure heart and pious disposition, Sanjaya had contributed to the well-being of the world through holy and disinterested actions. When the blind king Dhritharashtra asked, "O Sanjaya! Can you tell me how my sons are doing on the battlefield and in what state they will return home?", the wise Sanjaya unhesitatingly replied, "Where Krishna the *Yogeswara* works in conjunction with Partha wielding the *Gandiva*, there will lie victory, prosperity, glory and felicity."

Yogeswara is one whose deeds are unselfish, who works for the welfare of the world and who embodies the spirit of sacrifice. The attributes of purity, permanence and bliss are applicable to Divinity. So, God has been described as having eight qualities. He is absolute, immaculate, ancient, eternal, spotless, wise,

unfettered and untainted. The devotee who takes shelter at the feet of such Divinity shall be ever victorious.

The parents are the source of persons born in the world. In the *Bhagavad Gita,* Kurukshetra, and Dharmakshetra are described as the parents. It is called Kurukshetra because it belongs to the offspring of Kuru. It is called Dharmakshetra because it belongs to those who follow the path of *Dharma*. This is found in some books written upon the *Gita* and it is also described by people who teach the *Gita*. Kurukshetra and Dharmakshetra are like husband and wife who bestowed upon the world the highest good.

There is also another interpretation. This body is the *kshetra* or field and childhood, during which man is pure and selfless, is Dharmakshetra. As man grows in years, desires, evil qualities and evil thoughts enter the body and the body becomes Kurukshetra. The inner significance lies in the fact that Dharmakshetra and Kurukshetra both exist in our *hridayakshetra* (heart). By cultivating good conduct and good thoughts, we can live in "childhood" throughout our lives and thereby live in Dharmakshetra.

Kshetra means a field; *dharmakshetra* denotes the "field" of righteousness. *Kuru* means to do, and *kurukshetra* denotes the field of activities. What should we do? We should do good deeds, live righteous lives and follow the path of *dharma*. We should make *dharma*

the basis of our lives. We should try to develop *hridaya dharma* which relates to the welfare of all beings. The ignorant Dhritharashtra asked what battle raged between his sons and the Pandavas on the arena of Dharmakshetra or Kurukshetra. *Mamakah* means "my own," that is, attachment arising from *Rajasic* qualities which Dhritharashtra had. "Dhritharashtra" is one who claims as his own that which does not belong to him. Dhritharashtra claims as his own the body which really does not belong to him. The body, the mind and the intellect are different from our real self. We are all Dhritharashtras when we regard this body as the reality. We all say, "this is my body", "my mind", "my senses", and so on, but "who am I?" is a pertinent question. If we enquire, we get the answer that we are not the body or the mind or the senses or the inward tendencies or the ego.

We are Parthas, the sons of *Prithvi*, when we have untainted minds, when we show boundless love and when we fully surrender to the Lord. We should cultivate *abhimana* (attachment) towards the *Atma* and not our bodies. Partha is one who has *abhimana* toward his Atma; Dhritharashtra is one who has *abhimana* toward his body. The manifestation of the *Vishwavirata Swarupa* does not show that God dwells in every object, but rather demonstrates that all things exist in Him. Therefore, we should direct our vision inwards and see the spark of the Divine that we are and not be engrossed in external pursuits.

In the *Vedas*, Divinity is compared to a flash of lightning amidst the blue clouds. Divinity exists like a flash of lightning in our own spinal column between the ninth and the twelfth vertebrae. It is present as a "line" in the *sushumna nadi*. *Gita* is the form of God and is comparable to the flash of lightning. (In Telugu, *Gita* also means a line). It is of no use if we simply read the 700 verses without comprehending the inner significance. Only when we contemplate, comprehend and meditate upon the splendour of Divinity, can we understand the real meaning of the *Gita*.

On the eve of the battle, Krishna taught Arjuna several lessons which were framed in words. Vyasa elaborated the words of God, expanding them into 700 verses. From tomorrow, we shall consider and try to understand the actual words spoken to Arjuna by Krishna in order to transform him. Those words which flowed from the lips of Krishna are of paramount importance for us. The scholars who write commentaries have tried to bring down the Divine to their own level. It is not proper to bring down God to our level. Instead, we should try and elevate ourselves to the level of God. Rather than saying that God is this table, stick, stone or dust, it is ennobling to regard the table, the stone and the dust as God Himself. You may worship a picture as God, but not God as a picture. I hope that during the course of this month, the students will listen to the very words spoken by Lord Krishna and strive to rise to a higher level by understanding His inspiring words.

5

Spirituality And Society

The respect commanded by a community depends on its moral values. Moral bankruptcy leads to social degeneration. A community inspired by ethical mores survives forever. I exhort the brave sons of Bharath to remember the strength and value of morality.

Embodiments of Prema!

There is a widespread misconception that spiritual values have no place in modern society. It is erroneously supposed that spirituality is incompatible with secular society. Krishna removes this misconception in *sankhya yoga*. Many fallaciously imagine that spirituality is only concerned with salvation. Spirituality is, in fact, the backbone of society and is indispensable for social progress and solidarity.

Its importance for and relevance to society, cannot be exaggerated.

Easwara manifests Himself among individuals who aggregate together to constitute a community. Every individual is an aspect of *Easwara*. Likewise, society too has emerged from *Easwara*. An individual has form, but society has no such definable form. In the same manner, the world is visible, but *Easwara* is invisible. Though He is invisible, His existence becomes indisputable because there cannot be creation without a creator. Just as a fabric cannot come into existence without thread and a pot without mud, so also the universe cannot come into existence without the primordial substance of *Brahman*.

Brahman is the basis, the substance, the prime mover and also the "enjoyer" of the universe. Krishna exhorted Arjuna to comprehend the omnipresent and immanent essence of *Brahman*, the Godhead.

It is emphasized that we should not reject *swadharma* or our own *dharma*. But what is this *swadharma*? The *Bhagavad Gita* contains an elaborated and lucid exposition of the concept of *swadharma*. Krishna enlightens Arjuna on the meaning and significance of *swadharma*. *Swadharma* is mainly concerned with individual attributes. *Vishwa dharma* is higher than *swadharma*. *Vishwa dharma* is universally applicable *dharma*. *Vishwa dharma* is the cosmic *dharma* of *Brahman*. *Easwara dharma* emerges from *vishwa*

dharma. *Samajika dharma* or the *dharma* of society emerges from *Easwara dharma*, the *dharma* of God. *Vyakti dharma* or individual *dharma* emerges from *samajika dharma,* and this *vyakti dharma* is synonymous with *swadharma*.

It is said "*samathvam yogamuchyate*". The sentence is vibrant with thought and meaning. The word *samathva* may be roughly interpreted as equanimity. The popular meaning of *swadharma* is the code of conduct or scale of values adopted by any particular caste, community, creed or religion. But this is not the correct interpretation and it is not acceptable to all groups of people. There are no universal and absolute norms of morality. Ethical relativity is an inescapable social phenomenon. Morality depends on the time, the place and the spirit of the age.

Differences are obvious in our mundane world. There are all sorts of people in the world. There are men, women and children of different age groups. There are infants, adolescents, young men and women and old men and women. The *dharma* of women cannot be the same as the *dharma* of men. There is, in nature, an inherent inequality. Thus, it becomes ridiculous to adopt a single ethical code for the entire mankind. Each individual has his own *dharma*, but it need not militate against the *dharma* of others.

In the *Bhagavad Gita,* Arjuna finds himself on the horns of a spiritual dilemma. He is worried about

his *swadharma*. He finds himself in an unenviable predicament. He hesitates to kill his own relatives and be guilty of fratricide. So, he begins to detest the homicidal glory of a battlefield. Then, Krishna teaches the importance of *swadharma*. *Swadharma* is individual *dharma* or a code of conduct in conformity with an individual's status in society. It is also determined by a person's natural instincts. *Easwara dharma* is God's universal *dharma* based on love and compassion. It is catholic and eclectic in its essence and is equally applicable to all castes, cults, creeds and communities.

Swadharma or individual *dharma* is transcended by a person who recognises and realises the immanence of *Easwara*. "*Easwara sarva bhutanam*". The moment you comprehend the truth of this cardinal aphorism, you realise *Easwara dharma*, the theocentric order in nature. Thus, *swadharma* is lower than *Easwara dharma* and *vishwa dharma*. When you recognise the divinity of every human being, you realise *Easwara dharma*. You will be subject to the dualities of pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, good and evil as long as you identify yourself with the perishable and mutable physical body.

Arjuna was afflicted with weakness of mind and heart. Krishna chastised Arjuna for his moral and spiritual cowardice. As long as you are weak and timid, you cannot achieve anything in life. Sentimentality and body consciousness should be avoided. As long as you think from the point of view of the perishable body,

you cannot overcome your spiritual pusillanimity. When you think from the point of view of the immortal Atma, you will have no feelings of weakness and timidity. By these exhortations, Krishna galvanised Arjuna into activity on the battlefield.

The world is a stage. We are all actors in the world drama. But all our actions are motivated by the Will of God, who controls our immortal souls and perishable bodies. And we must play the game without displaying any sort of weakness or timidity.

The duties, dichotomies, and relativities of the world do not affect the immortal Atma. The coexistence and juxtaposition of good and evil should be acknowledged. From the point of view of the *Atma*, good and evil are only phenomenal and not absolute.

Deha (the physical body) is composed of the five primordial elements of earth, air, water, fire and ether. Sooner or later, the *deha* will perish. But the *dehi* or the inner *Atma* has neither birth nor death. It is indestructible, imperishable and immortal. And this *dehi* is one with *Brahman*. *Atma* and *Brahman* are essentially identical. The identification of the *Atma* with *Brahman* is the *summum-bonum* of spirituality. Spirituality and equanimity go together. Social justice and spirituality are closely related. Spirituality is conducive to social justice and egalitarianism.

The realisation of the *Atma* is impeded by envy, malice, and jealousy which are caused by attachment to

the perishable physical body. All people do not derive the same benefit from the *Gita*. It all depends on the deservedness and purity of the individual. Ultimately, the individual is responsible for everything that he does. Human beings may not be able to even imagine the sublime bliss of spirituality as long as they prefer to wallow in the mire of slothfulness.

The *Bhagavad Gita* that we read today has been embellished and beautified by Vyasa's poetic genius. One need not memorise all its *slokas* to achieve the inner tranquillity of spirituality. A single *sloka* from the *Gita* is enough to transform our lives. Steadfastness (*sraddha*) is necessary for acquiring the knowledge of spirituality. The *Bhagavad Gita* exhorts us to become fitting instruments of God. It should be repeatedly read for intellectual illumination and spiritual enlightenment.

Liberation is the goal of all theists. The *Atma* manifests itself in a body. It must realise its divinity through devotion and finally merge with the ultimate source from which it has evolved. But very often man forgets his divine nature by yielding to the temptations of power and pelf.

An individual's response to good and evil in the world depends on his *karma*, which is a correct measure of his *gunas* (qualities). *Karma* is the key to liberation. But man forgets his real destiny by his attachment to his corporeal body. Once, Indra was born as a pig on account of a curse. He forgot his past glory, married a sow, and raised a family of little pigs. He felt supremely happy

and forgot his divinity. Narada took pity on him and made him realise his real destiny. Human beings also forget their divinity and attach themselves to sensual pleasures.

Krishna's exposition of the *Gita* benefited Arjuna, Sanjaya, Vyasa, and Hanuman. The same *Gita* fell on the deaf ears of Dhritharashtra. His attachment to his cruel sons blinded him to the justice due to the Pandavas.

Every *sloka* in the *Gita* is important. There are seven hundred *slokas* in all. A matchbox may contain as many as fifty sticks. But, a single match is enough to light a lamp, for dispelling the darkness in a place. Similarly, a single *sloka* from the *Gita* is enough to bring the light of wisdom and dispel the darkness of ignorance. But, without *sraddha* or perseverance, the *Bhagavad Gita* will remain a sealed book. There is no liberation and spiritual enlightenment for the slothful.

God is not confined to any single place. He is not only transcendental, but also immanent and omnipresent. Krishna told Arjuna, "You are not the killer in the real sense. You think that you are going to kill your enemies. Killing is only phenomenal. You are instrumental in this process of destruction, purification and the resurrection of *dharma*. You would not be unnecessarily perturbed if you were to remember that the corporeal body is transient and the incorporeal *Atma* is immortal." Real *Yoga* is the attainment of equanimity and control over the sensory organs which screen the ultimate reality. Weakness is death and strength is immortality.

Krishna's exposition of the *Bhagavad Gita* was necessarily brief. But, Vyasa elaborated the Song Celestial by his own illuminating comments for the benefit of posterity.

For instance, the words, "*Samatvam yogam uchyate*" or 'equal-mindedness is called *yoga*', were expanded into twelve verses by Vyasa; the phrase "*Kshudram hridaya-daurbalyam*" or 'detestable is weakness of the heart' was elaborated into twenty-two verses; the verse "*anityam asukham lokam imam praapya bhajasva maam*" which means 'having got this transitory, miserable world, worship Me' was made into seven verses; and the aphorism, "*nayamatma balahinena labhyah*" or 'this *Atma* cannot be attained by the weak' was explained in nine different verses.

Hanuman, who was on the flag of Arjuna's chariot, overheard the *Gita* and expounded it in twenty-one verses in the Paisachi language.

The truth is one but its manifestations are many. The most essential prerequisite for a *sadhaka* (spiritual seeker) is infinite patience and perseverance. The *Bhagavad Gita* contains the quintessence of all scriptures. It should be studied assiduously by every spiritual aspirant. It should also be regarded as a book of great practical value in our daily lives. It has given solace to many and it will help your spiritual progress.

6

Qualities Of A Sthithaprajna

Whether it is a scholar well versed in all the Sastras, the Puranas and the Vedanta, or a king living in splendid mansions, or a world-renowned hero who vanquishes his foes on the battlefield, or for that matter, a person who has received plenty from the Goddess of Poverty and thereby languishes in penury, he will be of no use at all if he is not endowed with devotion. A servant having devotion to God is more worthy of salutation than a ruler of the world who is devoid of love for God. O good and gentle people in the assembly, what else can I tell you than the truth stated above?

The *Upanishads* are the essence of the *Vedas* which are ahuman (*Apaurusheya*), imperishable and infinite. The *Upanishads* offer eternal

truths which ennoble and elevate the mind. The *Mahabharatha* illustrates the spirit of the *Upanishads* in the form of a narrative. The *Bhagavad Gita* offers the quintessence of the *Mahabharatha*. The *Upanishads* taught the people of the world in several ways to speak the truth and follow the path of righteousness. Those who regard the *Gita* as the basis and the goal of life, attain the sacredness of the Divinity. The *Gita* declares that the spirit of Krishna envelopes and resides in all that we see in this world. This is the significance of the *Viswavirata Swarupa* of the Lord. To behold this universal manifestation, men with divine vision have made a conscious endeavour prompted by faith through the four paths of devotion, action, wisdom and *yoga*.

The word "devotion" is synonymous with "spirituality". Spiritual life should not be regarded as living in isolation. Spiritual life enjoins one that he be free from attachment and hatred and look upon all mankind with an integrated vision. Action or work relates to the world. The world, in turn, is related to God. So, Krishna propounded that all actions must be performed with the intention of pleasing God. This type of action is a characteristic feature of a *sthithaprajna,* or a person who has mental equipoise. A *sthithaprajna* performs his actions, firmly established in the *Atma*.

Krishna explained to Arjuna that a *sthithaprajna* has an even mind which is neither elated by joy nor dejected by sorrow. The *sthithaprajna* dwells always in

the Spirit without giving way to grief, lust, fear and delusion. His vision beholds the Spirit everywhere. Krishna pointed out that Arjuna would be able to realise his true nature only when he became a *sthithaprajna*.

The primary quality of a *sthithaprajna* is the control of the senses. It is not easy to repress the senses or assume mastery over them. So, Arjuna said, "Oh, Krishna! It is almost impossible to keep the senses under control. The mind, too, which is fickle, dangerous, and vile cannot be easily controlled." To this, Krishna replied, "There is nothing easier than the control of the senses. To those who do not know the subtle process, it appears very difficult to control the mind. Those who become enslaved by worldly desires since childhood and those who cultivate external vision will not be able to control their senses and mind. The world created by the senses goes on changing its external aspect. The greatest weakness of man proceeds from his dependence on this ephemeral and evanescent world which goes on changing like passing clouds. Though aware of its transitory character, man believes in the world. If you once look at the changing world and realise its transience, it will be easy to gain control over your senses. Though the permanent and real *Atmic* Principle is very close to him, man is unable to recognise it. Truth is unpalatable and falsehood, delightful to the people. People are attracted to the tavern, though it may be situated far away, to enjoy intoxicants which are injurious to the body and the mind. They do not accept

milk, curds and cream which are very delicious and nourishing, even if they are supplied at the doorstep. From his childhood, man develops attachments and desires, thereby exposing himself to many unnecessary troubles and suffering.

There is a little story. Once, Dakshinamurthi set out on a journey around the world. One day, standing on a beach, he was listening in rapt attention to the *Pranava*-like roaring of the waves of the sea. Then, swept by the breeze, two pieces of straw fell into the sea. Wave after wave rose up and pushed the straw ashore. In the meantime, some withered leaves also fell into the sea. At once, they, too, were pushed to the shore by the rising waves. Dakshinamurthi's vision was not merely external. He could grasp the inner significance of events. Seeing the waves push away everything, he said to himself, "Oh! the waves have taught me a good lesson today", and he regarded the sea as one among his twenty-four preceptors.

What is the significant lesson taught by the sea? The sea does not permit even one piece of straw to get into its water, because such pieces may ultimately contaminate its form if they are permitted to accumulate. Though the ocean is vast and mighty, it did not permit even a speck of impurity to contaminate its nature. Although man is frail and small, he allows impurities to contaminate the lake of his heart. The lake of the mind must be the happy resort of the swans of *Soham*

Thathwa playing happily. Man becomes a victim of ignorance, darkness and lust if he gives unrestricted freedom to his senses. So, Krishna made it clear from the beginning that controlling the senses is essential for a *sthithaprajna*.

Prahlada harped upon the same truth in his arguments with his father. Prahlada addressed his father and said, "Oh, father! You were able to gain victory over all the worlds in a moment; but, you are not able to conquer the world of your senses and your mind. Although you are valiant and mighty, you are not able to conquer forces which stifle your humanness, increase your bestiality and make you drift away from divinity. It will be of no use if you conquer earthly empires without vanquishing the enemies lurking within. Evil qualities which conceal your true nature and destroy your purity are abounding within you. Keeping them like that, it is of no use to offer prayers and acquire powers."

It is the royal road of the *sthithaprajna* to trample the senses and recognise the real nature of the Atma. Some of the commentators of the *Gita* today misinterpret the qualities of the *sthithaprajna* and mislead the layman. Some of them, lacking in real experience, interpret the attributes of a *sthithaprajna* in a ludicrous manner. The *sthithaprajna* keeps awake when all the others are asleep; that is, the *sthithaprajna* is wide awake in the spiritual sphere while the men of the world are in a state of

slumber, oblivious of the matters of the spirit. While the ordinary people keep themselves awake in worldly transactions, the *sthithaprajna* does not take part in these activities and is, therefore, like one who is asleep as regards such matters.

Control of the senses is absolutely essential for every individual. Look at this paper. It is now in its normal form. If it is rolled up and kept for sometime in that state, it cannot regain its original form. When we want to bring it to its original and natural state, we must roll it in the reverse direction. So from our boyhood, knowingly or unknowingly, we roll our mind with the pull of sensory and worldly desires. If we roll it up in the reverse direction, in the direction of the Atma, it will regain its original form. So, we shall be able to gain control over the senses when we turn the vision inward since it had been all along focused on external phenomena. Letting bygones be bygones, we should put in the necessary effort to restore the sacred nature of our mind by cultivating the inward vision. Whatever work we undertake, whatever thoughts we entertain, whatever scenes we may visualise, we must make an endeavour from today to turn them Godward.

Of the eighteen chapters of the *Gita*, *Sankhya Yoga* is very important. Mahatma Gandhi used to read *Sankhya Yoga* twice or thrice whenever his mind was restless and perturbed. It restored the peace of his mind. *Sankhya Yoga* is the life of the *Gita*. The name is derived

from the enquiry of *Sankhya* in the chapter. *Sankhya* Y*oga* revealed the features of a *sthithaprajna* to Arjuna and chased away his delusions.

Arjuna had a very sensitive mind. If he listened to any sentence, he at once translated it into action. He was a person who was an adept at the practice of the spiritual precepts. Because He could secure such a holy disciple in him, Lord Krishna, as the *guru*, conveyed to the world the sacred essence of the *Gita*. Our lives shall become blessed when we develop faith in God, reverence for His words and the resolution to implement in our daily lives His sacred teachings. It is necessary for the students to shed the ideas and ideologies which they have harboured so far in their minds. It is necessary in this sacred place to abandon and abjure all those accumulated ideas.

If the brain is empty, it is possible to fill it with something. If the brain is already stuffed with several things, where is the scope for such filling? Unless the brain is kept clean, it is not possible to fill it with sacred things. “Oh mind, the rogue! Having indulged in evil thoughts, having played several games, having put on deceptive disguises in this momentary existence, what have you achieved in this transitory life?” students should ask themselves.

We declare that the world is full of injustice, disorder, unrighteousness, falsehood and evil practices; but what have we done to set it right? Men weep at the

time of birth. They weep at the time of death. During the interregnum, they weep over this and that. Do they weep when they see the decline of righteousness? Have they cried to revive it and resuscitate it? For what have they cried? Has it been for the sake of mere crying? When we take the pledge to revive the declining *Dharma*, when we strictly adhere to the commands of God, when we strive to implement the ideal of universal love, then only may we feel that this human birth is justified and fulfilled. It is essential that students must realise this and mould their lives accordingly.

Sacred and pure-minded students!

You are really fortunate to have secured this coveted opportunity. It is My hope that you comprehend the significance of this message, this path and this divinity, and thereby make your lives blessed and set a shining example to the world.

7

"I Am Thine"

Giving up of one's evil thoughts constitutes sacrifice and Yoga—leaving one's wife, giving up one's material possessions and retiring to the forest will be of no avail. I speak to you the truth that exists.

Embodiments of Love!

Thyaga (sacrifice) is the touchstone of righteousness, charity, *yagna* (sacrifice) and *yaga*. *Lobha* (greed) is the root cause of sinful actions resulting in injustice, unfairness, falsehood, misconduct and weakness. Man should first realise his responsibility, discriminate between good and evil, sin and virtue, and then begin to act in the right manner. It is a mistake to think that control of senses is necessary only for *yogis* and *sanyasins*. Sense control is essential for all human beings. When all humans are able to control the senses, it will lead

to the well-being of the world. Devotion without humanity and patriotism without morality will be of no use and will bring harm to the community. However, actions undertaken to please God assume the nature of sacrificial offerings and are conducive to the well-being of all.

The six evils of lust, anger, pride, greed, desire, and jealousy spring from man's identification with his body. Compassion, love, and the spirit of sacrifice arise, on the contrary, from the *Atma*. Every individual must develop and follow the virtues proceeding from the *Atma*. We have forsaken the noble human virtues and are pursuing instead the temporary pleasures that gratify the senses. Krishna said, "The Lord is the father of the entire creation comprising the sentient and insentient objects, Arjuna! There is only one Lord who holds sway over the entire universe. He is the Lord of the universe, the *Jagan Natha*, the *Vishwa Natha* and also the Master of all life or the *Prana Natha*. The governance of this world is in the hands of the Lord of the universe. He gets work done through all human beings. Without the Lord's prompting, human endeavour cannot progress. This Divinity is manifested and demonstrated in all creatures in the form of Truth—Consciousness—Bliss.

"Arjuna! Undertake work in order to please God and not to gratify the senses. Your actions are responsible for elevation to the highest state or degradation to the lowest planes. Your joys and sorrows proceed from your own actions. Your actions are

responsible for your sins and virtues. Fix your mind on the *Atma* and do your work for the pleasure of God; your actions will then be disinterested. Disinterested action destroys the demoniac qualities of man and promotes the divine tendencies. It strengthens pure and *sathwic* qualities in man. Thus it is said that man has only the authority to act and that it is God who dispenses the fruits of man's actions. You should not undertake any work in the hope of receiving its fruit. You will become an exemplar for the world when you achieve control of the senses and undertake disinterested actions. As the representative of mankind, O Arjuna, you should take a pledge to perform sacred actions."

The human aspect (*jivatva*) and the Divine aspect (*Daivatva*) have a close connection. You should recognise the significance of the cycle of creation. The cycle starts with *akshara* (indestructible); from *akshara* comes *Brahma*; *yajna* comes from Brahma; from *yajna* comes *karma*; from *karma* comes *parjanya,* and from *parjanya*, our food; and from food comes life. This is the cycle of creation. When we consider their sequence—*Akshara* (The Word), Brahma (the Cosmic Reality), *yajna* (sacrifice), *karma* (action), *parjanya* (clouds), *anna* (food), and *prana* (life)—we notice that *Akshara* comes first and *prana* stands last. All living creatures are born from food, live by food, and are nourished by food. It is declared that "Food is God" (Brahma). When we examine the cycle of creation commencing with *Akshara* and concluding with *prana*,

we must recognise what entity lies closest to *Akshara*. The first is *Akshara*, then comes Brahma, then comes *yajna*, then we have *karma*, *parjanya, anna*, and *prana*. In this cycle, *prana*, life, comes closest to *Akshara*, the permanent reality. It goes to prove that life in its essential quality stands closest to *Akshara*. *Karma Thathwa* (action) achieves coordination between these other entities. On one side, we have *Akshara,* Brahma, and *yajna*. On the other side, we have *parjanya, anna*, and *prana*. *Karma* stands in the centre with these entities on either side. *Karma* offers a synthesis of the three aspects, *Akshara,* Brahma, and *yajna* on one side, and *parjanya, anna*, and *prana* on the other side.

Life is not permanent. It is encased in the body that is ever-changing and is made up of the five senses, five sheaths and five elements and is related to the *ksharapurusha,* whichis subject to destruction and decay. But, life endowed with Divinity is related to *Akshara* which cannot be destroyed. These two aspects, the destructible (*kshara*) and the indestructible (*Akshara*) are also characterised as *ahara* (unstable) and *Sthira* (stable) respectively.

Sthira is also *Akshara* because it is beyond change and above the mutations of place and time. *Chara* is that which is connected with the five senses, compounded of the five elements and goes on changing. Our life is subjected to many troubles between these two aspects of *Sthira* and *Chara*. A small illustration.

In the villages, people use the grind stone. It consists of two round stones; the one at the bottom is stationary while the one at the top rotates. If we place some grains between the stones, they get crushed to powder. The grains keep getting scattered and crushed between the stones. But the few grains that remain at the centre of the stones remain safe and do not get crushed. That safe place may be compared to the sphere of God. Living beings that exist close to God will be free from all danger. Therefore, in all our actions we should manifest the Divine aspect and thereby proclaim through our deeds the joy of Divinity concealed in humanity.

We should try to live without being affected by joy and sorrow caused by birth and death of the body. No one weeps when he finds ice to be cold or when he is told that fire is hot. It is natural that ice is cold and fire is hot. In the same manner, death is natural for the body that is born. Why should one weep over that? We are becoming victims of sorrow by regarding a natural phenomenon as unnatural. The cause for this is attachment. Infatuation stems from the instinct to possess. By developing fondness for the phenomenal world, we are becoming unmindful of our Divinity.

Krishna advised Dhananjaya, “Arjuna! You are becoming a victim of *abhimana* and *mamakara* and falling into a mood of dejection. You should not allow your human nature to be affected by feebleness. One who wants to live in this world must be manly. When

you undertake action in a spirit of dedication to the Lord, when you work with your body without any consideration of the fruits of your action, then you tread the royal path."

That is why it is said that King Janaka could attain the highest state by doing his daily work always in a spirit of dedication. We should cultivate the spirit of surrender, saying, "I am Thine." There is an apt illustration. In the *Bhagavatha*, the *gopikas* from the beginning used to tell Krishna, "We belong to You." This is the characteristic feature of true devotion and surrender. Therefore, Krishna protected them at all times wherever they were. On the other hand, the people of Dwaraka regarded Krishna as their possession. "Krishna is our brother, our aunt's son, our uncle's son, our cousin, our nephew," they thought. Such relationships clouded their attitude towards Krishna. This feeling that Krishna belonged to them made them feel that the Pandavas triumphed because of Krishna, who belonged to the Yadava clan, and that, therefore, the credit should go to the Yadavas. Thus, they developed *ahamkara* also; and this marked the beginning of their destruction taking the shape of a catastrophe (*pralaya*) and wiping out the entire race itself. On the other hand, the *gopikas* were always safe and happy because they were devoid of ego, possessiveness and pride.

In Arjuna's case, however, the Lord Himself claimed him as His own. How fortunate Arjuna was! Krishna

and Arjuna were described as *nara* (man) and Narayana. Krishna showed Arjuna as the ideal man and the model representative and through Arjuna as His medium, He communicated to mankind the sacred message.

Though we are enveloped by Divinity, we become victims of sorrow by cultivating attachment to worldly phenomena. The ash conceals the fire from which it arises. The moss covers the water from which it is born. The cataract that is formed in the eye blinds the vision. The dirt that gathers on the mirror makes the mirror give a blurred image. In the same manner, ignorance which had its origin in Divinity ultimately shrouds our sacred knowledge. The evil tendencies in us are responsible for this. When we banish these evil tendencies and thoughts, it will be possible for us to behold Krishna, the Lord.

It is only when we remove the evil propensities in our mind and visualise Divinity that we can live according to *Easwara dharma*. A person desiring to live according to *Easwara dharma* should purify his mind. When the head is stuffed with evil tendencies, when the ears listen to evil words, when the eyes peep at evil scenes on the sly, when the mind is wavering and deceptive, *dharma* cannot come anywhere near you.

Students and Teachers!

It is proper that you should feel that you belong to Swami, instead of feeling that Swami is yours. If you

undertake the journey of life in this spirit of surrender, you will be greatly blessed. You shall enhance the sacred nature of our country by such an attitude. You can propagate the spirit and the message of the *Gita* if you preserve in your heads this one line, "He is the Father and the Lord of the Universe." You should strengthen your faith in the Lord who rules over the universe and prompts all your actions. This faith left a strong impact on Arjuna's heart and he acted according to the Divine ordination.

Arjuna said, "I will act according to Your Command. Pardon me for having posed so many questions knowingly or unknowingly. I have misused precious time, feeling proud of my intelligence, ego and physical prowess." Strength of body, strength of mind, and strength of learning are of no avail without the strength derived from God. Without divine strength, all these are feeble.

Do not feel proud of your youthful vigour and beauty. All your freshness and lustre shall fade away like the beauty of a flower which blossoms at dawn and fades by dusk. The stories of your petty achievements flash like lightning and then vanish, leaving behind utter darkness. We should not forget our divine destiny and be enticed by evanescent pleasures. Every student must make sincere attempts to understand and implement the spirit of the *Gita*. They should preserve in their hearts the sacred and blissful Atma *Thathwa*, which is glorified by the *Bhagavad Gita.*

8

The Word Of God

Blind are they who lack faith in God, for, man sees the Divine with the eyes of faith. God may not exist for the faithless one, but for us HE IS.

Embodiments of the Divine Atma!

God and His Word are inextricably interrelated. The devotion of an individual is open to suspicion if he has love for God but does not pay heed to His Word. Desire for God but neglect of His Iinjunctions cannot be the true characteristic of devotion. It would be impossible, indeed, to achieve anything in this world without faith in the Almighty. The benefit we derive from our faith is proportionate to its intensity.

God is the aggregate of all individual *jivas*; *Virata Swarupa* (Cosmic Form), that of all individual bodies;

and *Hiranyagarbha* (Cosmic Mind), that of all individual minds. Thus, God and man are essentially identical. Individuals who have recognised such great truths and divinity of man find statements that God does not exist, ridiculous. Only foolish people who do not recognise the significance of these profound verities disbelieve in God.

Today, people are trying to forget the Effulgent Form of Pure Divine Consciousness which permeates the entire creation and forms its basis. In trying to deny God, who is the basis for the universe, man is denying his own existence. When we closely inquire into the nature of atheism and the meaning of the word *naastika*, we see that the word *naasti* is comprised of the parts, namely, "*na*" and "*asti*". "*Na*" is denial and "*asti*" means existence. In the word *naasti,* the part *asti* affirms the existence of God, whereas "*na*" denies it. Thus, the word *naasti* only denies something that already exists. Similarly, atheists say "God is nowhere." On close scrutiny, we find that first there is an affirmation in the "nowhere." Thus, untruth follows only as feeble refutation of truth that exists.

The intimate relationship that exists between God and the *jiva* is indescribable. However, falling a victim to his own ego, man arrogates unto himself the authority for his actions. But, in reality, it is only God who decides what action is to be performed by whom, at what time, at what place, under what circumstances, and with what degree of success.

Unaware of God's Omniscience, man does not hesitate even to commit sin. Nevertheless, since he is part of God, there is nothing that he can do—whatever be the time and the place of the deed—that escapes the notice of God. Just as a human being knows immediately the movement of a small ant crawling on his toes, God whose body is this universe, is instantly aware of even the smallest of deeds performed by man.

In every human being, there is an inner divine force that goads him into right action. There is also present in him the opposing force that lures him into evil deeds. Resolutions to refrain from committing sin are often short-lived. More often than not, the man who vows to speak the truth always is forced by circumstances to utter lies. Similarly, however much a man may determine not to hurt others, he might without conscious deliberation, at some time or the other, inflict injury upon another. This is a universal phenomenon. While several kinds of righteous strength are present in man, there is also present in him a mightier, malevolent force that compels him to do wrong actions. A typical example is that of a man deciding to fast on a Saturday as part of his worship of Lord Venkateswara but succumbing to the temptation of a cup of coffee and a few iddlis before noon that very day.

Krishna taught Arjuna, "Desire and anger, born of *rajas* are the greatest enemies of man. They stifle his innate goodness. Out of the three basic traits in man,

the *rajasic* and the *thamasic* traits oppose his interests. *Kama* or desire, derived from *Rajas*, knows no satiation, even as a raging fire does not. It shakes man's inner poise and leads him astray. It creates a breach in man's heart and enters therein. After its entry, anger and the attendant vices join the invasion and steal the *jnanarathna* (jewel of wisdom) kept therein."

"Desire makes man forget his real nature and reduces him to the status of a beast. It robs him of all his virtues and jeopardises his honour and reputation."

"Arjuna! This battle is not an accidental happening. You have yourself been making preparations for it for several months. Even during the year of your incognito existence, you were aware that a satisfactory agreement with the Kauravas was impossible; and seeing no way to peace, you had corresponded with friends and relations seeking help and assistance in the war. You had even tried to prevent Me from going to Dhritharashtra to negotiate for peace and had maintained that war was inevitable".

"Your sudden decision not to fight, clearly indicates that some powerful force is shaking your confidence and making you alter your prior decision. This force obviously is desire. Turn this desire Godward and perform actions as offerings to God. It is futile to waste time by pondering over the matter any further. Realise the immanence of God and perform your duty."

Control of the senses is very essential for man. Giving free play to them, just because they belong to you, is foolishness. Although it be your own horse, if you do not hold the reins tight while riding, you will meet with disaster. Similarly, you may say, "I have given money and purchased this car, it is registered in my name and it is my car", but if you do not apply the brakes when necessary, even though it is your own car, it will lead you to danger. Sense control is thus imperative for all human beings and not just for *yogis* and *sanyasins*. By letting himself to be enslaved by his senses, man is degrading himself. The royal road to perfection consists of controlling one's senses, praying to the Almighty and finally merging in Him.

Krishna told Arjuna, "Although I have no desire and am not bound by *karma*, I undertake work. I have entered this battle and become your charioteer not because I do not have horses of my own to look after, but because I have vowed to restore *dharma*. Arise, Arjuna! For the peace and prosperity of the world, the clash of arms and the shower of arrows are inevitable."

Many people today insinuatingly aver that the Mahabharatha war in which Krishna Himself took part, had wrought destruction and killed forty lakhs of people. However, they forget that Krishna's motive behind having the wicked Kauravas annihilated is like the doctor's motive in performing surgery to remove a malignant tumour from a patient's limbs. Lord Krishna

played the role of the Supreme Doctor with His dear devotee Arjuna as the compounder, and performed the surgery of the Mahabharatha War to remove the Kaurava cancer for the well-being of the world at large.

It is inevitable in creation that a few be hurt in the process of conferring benefit on the many. In undertaking selfless activity for the welfare of all, no sin can accrue. It is necessary for us to understand the inner meaning of God's actions if we are to appreciate their true significance and relevance. For this understanding, inner vision is essential. Just as for a tree its roots, which are not visible outside, form the basis, so too the inner vision forms the basis (*adhara*) for the external vision which it supports (*adheya*).

The ways of God are inscrutable as well as inexplicable. Only one who has ascended to His level can comprehend the Lord's Designs. God's nature is Infinite and beyond the limitations of a particular individual, society or nation. To understand God's nature, man has to develop universality of outlook and cultivate the all-embracing concept of expansive love. He has to perform all actions as offerings to God and for His pleasure. It is my hope that you will all follow the Words of God and live ideal lives.

9

The Inner Dialogue

What we aver as existent, does not exist; what we proclaim as non-existent, does exist. There is only one Divinity that exists for all. This world does not exist. All of you should realise this truth.

Embodiments of Love!

We should not regard the *Bhagavad Gita* as merely a dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna. It is an endless dialogue between the human and the Divine in the hearts of all human beings. Just as Arjuna listened to Krishna's Voice with an unwavering mind, every human being must listen to the words and declarations springing from the depths of his heart in a spirit of sincerity. If this spirit of attention is improved, it is possible for man to reach Godhead. A *danava* (demon) can undoubtedly become a *manava* or man

and man can become God, through such discipline. This is the unexcelled glory of the *Gita*. The influence and the sanctity of the *Gita* can be understood not by the ordinary human consciousness but by the Divine levels of man's being.

Gita is a *kalpatharu* or wish-fulfilling tree, which was planted by Krishna and nourished by Vyasa. The *Upanishads* are the seeds of the tree. Knowledge of *Brahman* is the sprout. The *Sastras* are the branches and Love of *Easwara* and surrender are the fragrant flowers. The Bliss of the *Atma* is its fruit. Every human being must take shelter under this tree and seek to attain fulfilment of the purpose of life—Infinite Beatitude.

The advent of an *Avatar* and His actions provide inspiring ideals for the emergence of divine human beings. We should endeavour to bring about *Avatharana* or "descent" of the Divine principle in our hearts. This is the most sacred *yoga*, described as *jnana yoga*. *Jnana yoga* serves as the royal road leading man to his sublime goal.

"As you are my devotee and friend," Krishna addressed Arjuna, "you deserve to receive the gift of this wisdom, which I am imparting to you out of affection." In this context, we must pay attention to the two epithets, "devotee" and "friend". There is no higher state than that of a devotee; why then did Krishna use the epithet "friend"? If we consider the status of a friend as the highest, why should Krishna have employed the epithet "devotee"?

Humility and obedience are the qualities of a devotee. Excessive humility that often goes with devotion might act as a barrier in forging the spirit of intimacy with God which is so vital for attaining *Atma Jnana* or Supreme Wisdom. On the other hand, close friendship and excessive familiarity alone might make a person take undue liberties. For these reasons, Krishna referred to Arjuna as both "devotee" and "friend" or one in whom friendship is enriched by humility and devotion is tempered by intimacy. As Arjuna was both a devotee as well as a friend of the Lord, he was the most deserving recipient of the *Bhagavad Gita.*

"You deserve to be initiated into this *yoga*, O Arjuna," said Krishna. "At first, I taught it to the Sun who taught it to Manu, who in turn enlightened Ikshvaku. In this manner, through the experiences of the sages, all kings came to know about it, Arjuna! This wisdom is eclipsed today and therefore, through you, I desire to communicate this *yoga* to the world again."

These words of Krishna's bewildered Arjuna. He asked, "Krishna, you are my contemporary; how and where could you get the opportunity to teach this *yoga* to the Sun who taught it to Manu of yore? I am unable to believe this. Please clarify my doubts."

At the time of the war, Arjuna was eighty-four years old and Krishna was eighty-six, the difference in their ages being only two years. Then how was it possible during those two years for Krishna to have

taught the *Gita* to the Sun, Arjuna queried. Krishna smiled and replied, "Arjuna, I am unborn; I am infinite; I am omniscient and omnipresent. I have neither beginning nor end. You, too, are above birth and death, and have taken several bodies. There may be birth and death for the body, but you are above them. Because of your external vision, you are ignoring this aspect. If you turn your attention to the *Atmic* Reality, you will be able to recognise your immortal nature."

Whenever injustice and unrighteousness raise their hoods in the world, the Lord comes down as an *Avatar*. The word *Avatar* means descent. It is not coming down from the peak of a mountain or the top storey of a building. It is a descent from the state of the Atma to the state of the body. A little illustration clarifies this point. An ICS officer may be well-versed in many branches of learning. But when he teaches his little son, he begins to write upon the slate the letters A, B, C, D and the boy learns them. Why should such a highly educated ICS officer come down to the level of teaching the alphabet? It is for the sake of teaching his ignorant son that the officer is forced to descend to the boy's level. It does not mean that the officer knows only the letters of the alphabet.

Similarly, when a child cries, its mother bends low and picks it up. The child crying on the floor cannot reach up to the arms of the mother. If the mother thinks it an act of condescension to bend, then she will not

undertake to pick up the child. By bending out of love for the child, the mother does not lower her own status.

In the same manner, out of His love and affection for mankind, the Lord descends to the human level in order to elevate men to Godhood. Such a descent does not in any way diminish Divinity.

Because the Lord takes a human form, we find that He exhibits human consciousness along with Divine consciousness. Ordinary people cannot grasp the Divine aspects of an *Avatar*. God appears to be an ordinary human being to the limited intelligence of lay people because of the coexistence of the divine and human aspects of consciousness exhibited by Him. Man's perception is limited to the level of human consciousness. Therefore, human comprehension is restricted by the limits of human consciousness. But the sages who were Divine human beings were able to comprehend Divinity and recognise that all objects manifest Divinity. They recognised the Formless God in the visible form, because they had imbued themselves with divine consciousness. Thus, according to their levels, different people regard an *Avatar* as a mere human being or the Cosmic Reality.

"O Arjuna! Promoted by your human consciousness, you may erroneously consider Me an ordinary man. I am teaching you this wisdom in order to remove this illusion created by your human consciousness and to strengthen your Divine consciousness."

For one who desires to attain the divine heights of the Supreme Being, *karma* and wisdom are like the two wings of a bird. Many *jnanis* put a stop to their actions thinking that they have reached the highest state. In the state of *nirvikalpa samadhi*, it is not possible to do anything. This may be described as the natural state of *vairagya* (detachment). But some people feel proud of their wisdom and discard all activity. This kind of *vairagya* proceeds from sloth, *thamas*, and is the result of vanity. This pseudo-detachment, born out of indolence, can never be traced to wisdom.

"In fact, the wise never desist from action, in order to be a model for others. If the wise do not act, there will be none to guide the ignorant", Krishna observed.

It is not desirable to give undue prominence to work, too. Wisdom is the final reward for the blossoming of our mind through action. If we go on harping on duality, when can we achieve peace? From duality, we must progress to qualified non-duality and finally to complete non-duality. Wisdom cannot be derived by mere acquaintance with many books. It cannot be acquired by learning the *Sastras* and philosophy. Real wisdom lies in the vision of non-duality. (*Adwaitha darsanam jnanam*). The elders say that real wisdom lies in the recognition of Divinity everywhere.

Stuffing the brain with bookish knowledge does not lead to the purification of the mind. Wisdom does not mean mere prattle. It must be put into practice and

authenticated by our actions. Real wisdom should be reflected in the joy with which we work. Can all the green birds speak like parrots? Can all the worms crawling on flowers hum like bees? Can the ass wearing tiger's skin ever become a tiger? Can a swine, grown to elephantine proportions, ever become an elephant? Though the he-buffalo has two horns, can they ever have the value of the tusks of an elephant? In the same manner, those who memorise the *Sastras*, the *Upanishads*, the *Vedas*, the *Ithihasas*, and the *Puranas*, those propagating them without practice, can never be regarded as wise persons.

Krishna told Arjuna, "I am present behind all phenomena. I am the spirit present in you as well as in all the soldiers who have gathered here for battle. When you regard yourself as distinct and different from Me, you can not properly understand the aspect of unity."

In this context, the common statement, "I and you are one" is incorrect. I am I and You are You—always. In fact, I and You become "We". "We and we are one" is a more correct statement, because you and I are present in we. Wisdom resides in every heart like an effulgent beam of light. In the modern age, it is described as super consciousness. Our consciousness is the wakeful state. The dream state is called subconsiousness and the state of deep sleep is unconsciousness. Beyond these, there is the *Turiya* or the fourth state, that of super consciousness. If we follow the super consciousness in

us, we shall be obeying the teachings of Krishna to Arjuna. A little example illustrates the existence of the super consciousness in man.

A thief entered a house at night and stole many objects. The next morning he was arrested by the police. In the wakeful state, during the day, the thief denied his offence in order to defend himself and escape punishment. Though it was a lie told in self-defence during the wakeful state, the super consciousness within him continued to tell him that on the previous night he had entered a certain house, stole several objects and kept them at a certain place. This truth continued to haunt him.

In the same manner, though every human being may be guilty of concealing falsehood and sin, though many lies may be told for the sake of escaping worldly censure, deep down within him he is aware of the sins he has committed, the lies he has told and the harm he has caused to others. The area from which such inner promptings of truth generate is the abode of Krishna. So, in the heart of every man, there is a continuing dialogue, a perennial argument between the human and the divine.

I often say that you should not remain forever in the stage of idol worship. You may worship a picture as God, but not God as a picture. Carrying on your enquiry, you should strive to manifest the divinity latent in you and realise that the super consciousness in you is your

real Master. You must follow that Master, face the Devil of the evil tendencies in you, fight them to the end and finish the game of life with success.

The education that students secure today is not true education; it is only a bread-winning formula. As Krishna said, spiritual education is the highest education. Just as all rivers flow into the ocean, their destination, all branches of learning—scientific, medical, cultural, religious—also coalesce into spiritual education, which is their goal. In this context, Thyagaraja said, "O, mind! Why are you worried to find so many different rivers in the ocean at Dhanushkoti? If we bathe in the ocean, we earn the merit of bathing in all the rivers."

I hope that you will pursue the path of spiritual education and with pure hearts and selfless actions, work for the welfare of the world.

10

Re-ligion: The Spiritual Reunion

Selfless love is the source of happiness, truth, peace, sacrifice, endurance and all other higher values of life. There is no security and safety without prema, the absolute, unalloyed form of love. O brave sons of Bharath, remember that love is more fundamental than all other moral values!

The different kinds of lives and living organisms are infinite in number. Nevertheless, reality has three main aspects, namely, the empirical reality, the illusory reality and the absolute reality. These three categories of human existence correspond to three levels of consciousness viz., *jagrata* or the consciousness of wakefulness, *swapna* or the subconsiousness of dreams, and *sushupti* or the unconsciousness of deep slumber. Waves of water are

more real than the surf on the seashore. Similarly, the basic substance of water is more real than waves. Likewise, spiritual life is more real than mundane life; mundane life is more fundamental and more real than the dreams of the subconscious mind. Transparency, sweetness and liquidity are the natural properties of water. The same qualities are, to some extent, imparted to the waves of water and the surf on the shore.

Sath-chith-ananda is *kutastha*. *Sath-chith-ananda* represents the integrated reality of truth, consciousness and bliss. *Kutastha* is the immutable and immortal reality. *Sath-chith-ananda* is the omnipresent reality reflected in the subconsciousness of dreams, conscious activities of the mundane world and super conscious experiences of spirituality. Surf comes from waves and waves come from water. Likewise, consciousness follows subconsciousness and subconsciousness follows super consciousness. *Kutastha,* in this context, refers to the unchanging, immutable and eternal principle of spirituality. Who is this unchanging, immutable and immobile being? This is the quintessential principle of *Easwara*, a personified and concretised abstraction, the knowledge of which can be acquired only by apprehending the reality of the Atma. "*Nahi jnanena sadrusam pavitramiha vidyate*," said Krishna. Nothing as sacred as *jnana* is known.

Jnana or spiritual wisdom, enables the *jivatma,* or the individual soul, to merge with the *Paramatma* or

the cosmic soul. Every individual must try and recognise the oneness of the *Atma* and the *Paramatma*. This is the full essence of the spirituality expounded by Krishna. You may master any number of skills and talents. But if you cannot comprehend the unity of the *Atma* and the *Paramatma,* you will end up as a hopeless nihilist.

What is the good of acquiring all sorts of knowledge?

Who can alter the line of destiny on man's brow?

"If you fill your head with all sorts of evil ideas, you will be robbed of your discrimination and intelligence." The Telugu poet Vemana has thus composed a number of couplets and quatrains which succinctly summarise a whole system of philosophy and a complete code of morality.

"Why do you load your stupid pate with all kinds of learned lumber? Why do you kill yourself with too much learning? Try and understand that eternal truth which will make you immortal."

"You may learn all arts and sciences. You may call yourself a versatile genius and an all-knowing polymath. But still you will only be a learned fool if you do not know your Self."

"A mean-minded man without moral scruples may read but he can never give up his meanness."

"You may read all the books in the world. You can only become a hair-splitting and pettifogging *pundit*. With the aid of books you can never acquire spiritual wisdom and integrated knowledge. Such bookish learning may enable you to eke out your livelihood. But books can never reveal to you a vision of your own divine Atma."

Stricken by poverty, once Narada had to face a number of difficulties. He became a victim of acute mental depression. He had mastered all the sixty-four arts of antiquity. But he had no peace of mind. At last, he went to Sanatkumara, who diagnosed Narada's ailment and prescribed for him the path to self-realisation. In the *Bhagavad Gita,* Krishna reveals to Arjuna the esoteric but simple path to self-realisation for the attainment of abiding peace and everlasting bliss.

Sanatkumara initiated Narada into the spiritual experience of identifying the individual *Atma* with the universal *Paramatma*. This is the most sublime *mantra* for spiritual liberation. The immediate, intimate and intuitive apprehension of the immanent effulgence of divinity pervading the microcosm and the macrocosm is the highest liberating experience.

"The microcosm and the macrocosm are suffused with the same creative energy of *Paramatma*. This mystical energy is known to the wise. Shut the doors of outward perception and look inwards. Transcend the barriers of thought. Travel along the mountain path of

life and reach the peak and listen to the primordial sound of the *Pranava*. Come out of the dark night of the soul and divine grace will descend on you."

The star-studded firmament is boundless. Even with the naked eye we can see innumerable stars. There is every reason to believe that the uncharted and unseen universe consists of millions of invisible galaxies. Even with the aid of the most powerful instruments, modern man has not been able to explore the universe in its entirety. The limited human mind can never become omniscient. *Easwara* is the only omniscient Being. Even if you know everything in the world, you will be ignorant if you have not tried to apprehend the essence of *Easwara*.

What you know is very little. What you do not know is enormous. It is impossible to know everything. Instead of trying to know everything, it is better to know that, by knowing which, everything else will be known. Krishna is the divine exponent of this perennial philosophy of life and the science of the self incorporated in the *Bhagavad Gita. Yoga* or the science of the self is the foundation of Indian culture. The dissolution of the dichotomy between *jivatma* and *Paramatma,* generated by *karmic* causes, is the essence of Indian culture. Indian culture and Indian philosophy are essentially religious.

The word "religion" contains the prefix "re." "Re" means doing something again. The other part of the word

connotes "unifying". Religion may be thus interpreted as reunion, the renunciation of two entities separated by time or the restoration of their original organic unity. *jivatma* and *Paramatma* have lost their fundamental oneness. *Karmic* factors have created a duality between the *Atma* and *Brahman*. The restoration of the primal unity of *Atma* and *Paramatma* through self-realisation is the primary function of religion.

This process of reunification of *Atma* with *Paramatma* is an arduous *sadhana* (Spiritual practice). An analogy might be useful here. The water in the sea evaporates on account of the sun's heat, forming clouds. These clouds float in the sky until they are again condensed into water drops by cool winds. The vast ocean consists of an infinite quantity of water. A small volume of water becomes a cloud and comes down as rain. This rain water becomes a stream. A number of streams mingle together to become a large river which flows down mountains and through valleys. Finally, the river reunites with the ocean. Similarly, we are alienated from *Easwara*, the repository of illimitable grace. We have gone through many incarnations and the recurring cycles of births and deaths. The journey of the embodied soul follows a similar pattern until it merges with the universal soul.

We are proud of our knowledge, our heritage and our culture. Nevertheless, we behave in an unbecoming manner. Even animals have a sense of decency and

decorum. There are different *varnas* (social groups) in the world. These *varnas* are based on individual and social attributes. We cannot transcend our attributes. It is only *Easwara* who transcends all human attributes.

All *varnas* are based on differences in attributes. Each group has its specific attributes which are collectively designated as *swadharma*. *Swadharma* is not free from desires. It has its own specific aims and objectives. They include peace and prosperity in this world and the delights of heaven. Thus, all rituals prescribed by the various *varnas* are performed for the fulfilment of earthly ambitions and heavenly hopes. *Dharma* based on *varnas* involves an element of selfishness. It is not *Easwara sharma*, which is absolute freedom from selfish desires. You can realise the *Atma* only when you give up all selfish *dharma*s and follow *Easwara dharma*. Selfishness is a beastly quality. Even humanitarianism should be made divine. Love tainted with selfishness is death. The essence of *Easwara dharma* is selfless love. Cultivate the quality of unbounded, selfless love. It is only then that real spiritual wisdom will dawn on you. The cultivation of selfless love is not an easy thing. Indeed, selfishness also is essential in the beginning. Selfishness is perhaps a degenerated and depraved form of self-love. Without *swartha* or self-centred love, you cannot have *parartha* or expansive love. Selfless love is an extended form of selfishness. But you cannot grow spiritually if you are limited to your self. Humanitarianism is an extended

and sublimated form of self-love. You may be born in selfishness, but you should not die in selfishness.

When you are born, you are not born with garlands and necklaces. You have no pearls or diamonds. You have no golden ornaments. But around your neck hangs the garland of your past *karma* and acquired *samskaras* (inborn impulses). And when you die, you do not take anything with you except the consequences of your good and evil actions. You are always decked with the invisible garland of your inexorable *karma*, which pursues and burdens you. This burden of *karma* can be lightened by God's grace and your own realisation of the oneness of your soul with the universal soul. And *karma* can be destroyed by *karma* alone.

The *Bhagavad Gita* is a treasure chest of sublime teachings of perennial spiritual value. Young students must ruminate and contemplate upon them and practise them. We must bring about a spiritual renaissance in Bharath. Lack of integrity and morality is the bane of the modern world. Man does not live by bread alone. We must always remember that money comes and goes, but morality comes and grows. I hope you will follow at least a few of the noble teachings of the *Gita* and follow the path of morality and integrity. I conclude My discourse with blessings to all of you.

11

Jnana Yajna

Love is the Form of Brahman; Brahman is
Love Divine.
The merger of human love with Divine
Love brings about Cosmic Order.
One who is full of love attains Adwaitha.

Embodiments of Love!

An individual seeking to realise Divinity must possess the primary prerequisite of *chittasuddhi* or purity of heart. Even as poisonous creatures like snakes and scorpions do not enter a clean and well-lit room, desire, anger, envy and hatred do not enter a mind which possesses purity and wisdom.

The removal of ignorance is not an impossible task as would be the case in an attempt to wash a piece of charcoal pure white with milk. One who seeks to

dispel the darkness of ignorance must necessarily acquire *jnana* (spiritual wisdom). Just as a lamp is needed to drive away darkness, *jnana* or wisdom is the only antidote for ignorance. Nascence is like the encrustation on a copper vessel which can be washed off; it is like the husk covering the grain of rice that can be removed by the process of threshing.

Arjuna, who was ridden by doubt and hesitation, was unable to recognise his own real nature. Neither was he, stricken by despondency, able to act in accordance with the commands of Krishna. Krishna, therefore, infusing courage and confidence in him, instructed him on the sacred *yoga* of spiritual wisdom—*jnana yoga*. Krishna said, "Arjuna, all actions must ultimately find their fulfilment in *jnana* and must, therefore, be performed with meticulous care." Many perform *yajnas* and *yagas* for the acquisition of *jnana*; and some of these like the *ashwamedha yaga* and the *rajasuya yaga* are too expensive and elaborate for the common man. People also perform *yagas* for securing temporal results. These proceed from *guna dharma* and not from *samajika dharma* or *Easwara dharma*.

Jnana can be considered in many ways. It is considered as a *yajna* and even *thapas,* or austerity, through which people endeavour to attain the Divine. *Jnana yajna* can be performed by all irrespective of caste, creed, religion or sect. Whosoever performs actions as offerings to God, for His pleasure and without

any desire whatsoever for the fruits thereof, performs *jnana yajna*. Krishna says, "Those who cognise Brahma in all actions, verily perform *jnana yajna*."

Krishna kindled in Arjuna the flame of *jnana*. To light a lamp, a container, oil, wick and fire are necessary. But, most essentially, there should be someone to light it. Similarly, for lighting the fire of *jnana* in an individual, he should possess in him the container of *vairagya* (detachment), the oil of *bhakthi* (devotion), the wick of *indriya nigraha* (sense control) and the fire of *Atma vichara* (self-enquiry). "In you are present these essential qualities and so I shall kindle the flame of *jnana* in you," said Krishna to Arjuna.

Explaining the reason why caste distinctions have been made, Krishna said, "I have created the four *varnas* to promote *swadharma*, *samajika dharma*, *vishwa dharma*, and *Easwara dharma* and to establish them permanently in this world so that, in turn, the flame of *jnana* will burn bright forever." The four *varnas* are the *brahmins*, the *kshatriyas*, the *vaisyas*, and the *sudras*. Passages in the *Purusha Sukta* describe the different *varnas* as parts of the Lord's body. The *brahmins*, who regard the *Vedas* and *Sastras* as perennial and abiding truths and as the pathways along which humanity must progress, are described as the face of Brahma. The *kshatriyas*, kings, who sacrifice their bodies for the sake of the country and utilise their physical prowess for the defence of the country's cultural and territorial integrity,

are described as the shoulders. The wealthy *vaisyas*, who engage themselves in charity, distributing their wealth to all and sundry, have been described as the thighs. The feet are the *sudras*, who engage themselves in cultivation and maintaining the regular supply of grain for food.

Each organ of the body works in unison with the rest of the body while discharging faithfully its own assigned function. Should something happen to any limb, the danger is shared by the other organs who come forward to mitigate the pain of the affected part. A small example illustrates this. While a person is walking along a path, a thorn is noticed by the eyes. On account of the internal communication system between the eye, which is on the face, and the foot, which is at the bottom, the thorn is avoided by the foot. If the thorn pricks the sole of the foot, the eye shares the pain and sheds tears sympathetically.

In the same manner, the different castes should work in co-ordination with each other and share the joys and sorrows of each other. This spirit of mutual love and unity is essential for the promotion and protection of *dharma* in society. In a body, the same heart animates the head, the shoulders, the thighs and the feet and the same blood flows through all of them. Thus, there is no room for distinctions and differences among the four. Likewise the *brahmins*, the *kshatriyas*, the *vaisyas*, and the *sudras* must remember that they

are all motivated by the same Divine life-force and must not allow caste difference and discrimination to arise. However, through the centuries, the inner significance has been forgotten and the caste system has been made a basis for sectarian distinctions and communal disharmony.

Wisdom has been likened to a boat which can take man across the turbulent waters of *samsara* or worldly existence. It has also been described as the fire which burns all illusions, impurities and idiosyncrasies of human nature. In this connection, let us examine the connection between the fire and our food. The smoke depends on the fire, the cloud depends on the smoke, the rain depends on the cloud, the crop depends on the rain, and the food depends on the crop we harvest. Further, the attitude and qualities of our mind are conditioned by the food we consume.

Let us consider wisdom as a sword, too. Desire, anger, passion, greed, pride, and envy take roots and grow like mighty trees in our hearts, destroying our innate humanity. Wisdom is the sword with which we must cut off these trees and live a quiet and happy life.

Thus, in the fourth chapter of the *Gita*, Krishna explained the genesis of the four *varnas* and described *jnana yoga*. He emphasised that no other *yajna* need be performed if *jnana yajna* is undertaken. He exhorted Arjuna to dedicate his actions to the Lord and realise through them, the unity of mankind. *Yajna* is the

dedication of all the powers man is endowed with, to the supreme Lord. It can be performed by all—men, women, children, aged people, the rich and the poor. Whoever performs actions in a spirit of dedication to the Lord, performs *jnana yajna*. To perform this, money and materials are not necessary. Virtue is the prime requisite, the heart is the altar, thoughts are the offerings, and delight is the ultimate fruit. One must undertake actions in this spirit for the attainment of Supreme Delight, the delight of Life, the delight of the Spirit and the delight that is Divine. *Jnana yajna* is the performance of action, discarding the spirit of attachment and ego. Trying to live with self-realisation is the essence of *jnana yajna*.

"Who are you? Whence have you come? Whither do you go?" We are in a pitiable plight, harping on "mine" and "thine" and not knowing the answers to these questions. Where were you before your birth? Where would you be after death? Who are your children? Who are your friends? Man has none to call his own. All these relationships arise from selfish attachments and do not indicate any permanent bond. "Recognise this truth", Krishna told Arjuna. "Do not entertain the attitude of weakness and illusion, proceeding from ignorance. Do not become feeble-hearted by calling these people your uncles, *gurus*, friends and sires." Emphasising further, Krishna said, "O Arjuna! You are not the killer and they are not killed. These bodies resemble mere vestments. None feels sorry

to throw away old and soiled garments. All these bodies are like worn-out dispensable garments."

Arjuna had a doubt. "It may be proper to compare the bodies of people who are eighty, ninety or a hundred years old to disposable garments; how is it proper to compare the bodies of those who are five or ten years old to clothes which have served their purpose? Krishna answered Arjuna, "You do not have the authority to decide which is old and which is new. Such discrimination has not yet developed in you." I am giving one small illustration. Ten years ago you purchased a piece of cloth, kept it somewhere and forgot about it. When you happen to open the *almirah* now, that cloth attracts your attention. At once you take it to a tailor and have a coat made out of it. When you put on this new coat, you feel happy that you are donning it. But when you bend forward the coat gets torn. You feel sorry that your new coat is torn. Though the coat is new, the cloth is of old stock. Likewise, the bodies of a young person may appear as new and fresh, but may be of old stock belonging to some previous births. Just as the garment is the cloak for the body, the body is the vesture of the spirit. Krishna thus compared the body to a garment which gets soiled and worn-out, drops off and is reduced to ashes. "Death is the dress of life." At the time of death, we cast off one dress and don another. No one laments when he is told that fire is hot or ice is cold. It is quite a natural phenomenon. Similarly, it is natural for the body that is born, to die. To lament over

it, is sheer ignorance. The knowledge of the Self is essential to exterminate this ignorance. It is the duty of every individual to acquire this self-knowledge, to recognise the true destination of life and to strive to merge in the sacredness of Divinity. Thus, Krishna preached to Arjuna the sublime wisdom and the sanctity of *jnana yajna.* Thereby, Krishna exhorted Arjuna to proceed and fight on the battlefield.

"O, Arjuna! Do not feel that you are fighting your relations and friends. Consider that you are fighting your own vile tendencies. These enter your nature like friends and then torment you like foes. Therefore, with the support of good qualities, you should fight against your evil qualities. Continuing to think of Me always, carry on the fight," Krishna advised.

12

"Sraddhavan Labhate Jnanam"

You might have read many books. You might have studied all the Sastras in their entirety. You might have mastered the most difficult subjects. You will naturally feel proud of your profound knowledge of all the branches of learning. Bu, all your immense erudition will be useless if you do not bring your palms together to worship Paramatma. Your learning will be of no use if you have no devotion. O man! Your worldly education is an exercise in total futility.

Embodiments of Love!

Adhyatmika dharma, or the *dharma* of spirituality, has become static and stagnant. It should be revived, galvanised, and given a new

dynamism. Our young students should play a pivotal role in the renaissance of the perennial philosophy of spirituality.

From the point of view of Indian spirituality, we do not go from falsehood to truth or from unreality to reality. Truth cannot be derived or deduced from falsehood. Spirituality is the hierarchy of reality. We have to ascend from a lower level of reality to a higher level of reality. Absolute truth is the highest level of spiritual reality.

Indians have inherited the *dharma* of spirituality from times immemorial. But it is not confined to our country only. It is universal, eclectic, and catholic. All human beings have the right to imbibe from this fountain of spirituality. It is our misfortune that we have not recognised our own spiritual heritage. Spirituality is not the monopoly of any particular country. It is like the wind which cannot be confined to a particular place. Let the winds of spirituality blow all over the world.

The common man is enslaved by his *gunas* or attributes. He should transcend the *gunas* and transform himself into a divine being. He should undergo a spiritual metamorphosis, as it were. The spiritualisation or divinisation of man is the ultimate goal of the *Gita*. We can revive and revitalise the eternal verities and values of our ancient culture by establishing a completely sanctified society. Human society has always been a conglomeration of various classes. The word

"society" has become a misnomer. A true society is a community of selfless individuals. An ideal society must have a scale of values and a code of morality which should be applicable to all individuals. There is no scope for the efflorescence of *dharma* in a society dominated by absolute selfishness and predatory competition. A society contaminated by *adharma* or immorality will corrupt the entire country.

Man is not an island unto himself. A gregarious creature, he lives as an integral part of society. He cannot also exist without *Easwara*. A spiritualised world and a divinised society should be established for the transformation of man into a divine being.

Krishna exhorted Arjuna to strive for the establishment of a theocentric world. "People have different aims and aspirations. They follow different paths for winning My Grace. I guide them along their chosen paths and fulfil their wishes and lead them to their different goals in life", said Krishna revealing His Divinity to Arjuna.

There are three words which connote obeisance in varying degrees, namely, *paata*, *nipaata*, and *pranipaata. Paata* means falling down. *Nipaata* means a slight fall. *Pranipaata* means a total fall. In other words, *paata* signifies the paying of obeisance by bowing down, *nipaata* indicates the touching of the Lotus Feet of the Lord with one's head, and *pranipaata* connotes complete prostration at the Lord's Feet—

Sashtanga namaskaram. This is symbolic ritual exemplifying *saranagati thathwa*, the essence of total self-surrender. This indicates the annihilation of the ego. Obliteration of all traces of egoism is the aim of *pranipaata*.

The vision of the inner *Atma* will not be revealed to the spiritual aspirant as long as his ego continues to exist. It is only when egoism is given up that the inner significance of *dharma* will be comprehended in its totality.

Sraddha is earnestness, perseverance, determination, and steadfastness. *Sraddha* alone is not enough. *Sraddha* should be strengthened by *nissamsaya* or absence of doubt or scepticism. *Sraddha* and *nissamsaya* are the two banks of the stream of life. In other words, spiritual advancement cannot be achieved without persistence and faith.

Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswathi are the three sacred rivers of our country. They have their source in the Himalayas and flow down to join the vast ocean. They are swift-flowing rivers with strong embankments. If they have no embankments, they will devastate the entire country. A river must have banks to restrict its flowing water. A man's life is like a stream, whose two banks are *Sraddha* and *Nissamsaya*. Flowing between these two banks of *sraddha* and *nissamsaya*, a man's life stream mingles with the vast ocean of *anugraha* or Divine Grace. Perseverance and faith constitute the life-breath of man. Humanity cannot exist even for a moment

without perseverance and faith. They are the two wheels of the chariot of a man's life which should proceed towards the unfathomable ocean of God's Boundless Grace.

God is worshipped by four kinds of devotees; *aartha, arthaarthi, jijnasu*, and *jnani.* God loves all of them. He grants them boons appropriate to their thoughts and attributes.

An *aartha* prays to God in times of distress. He prays for relief from the difficulties, troubles, trials and tribulations of the world. God gives him mundane happiness by removing his sorrow and sickness. With the cessation of his sadness, the relation between the *aartha* and God also comes to an end.

An *arthaarthi* is a devotee who prays to God for power, pelf, and prosperity. He becomes an egoist as soon as his wishes are fulfilled. If his ambitions are not fulfilled, he blames God for His indifference to the welfare of mankind. When an arthaarthi's prayers are not answered, he becomes an angry agnostic.

A *jijnasu* wants to understand the enigma of God and to solve the riddle of the universe. He is an enquirer, an explorer and an investigator. His aim is to unravel the mystery of existence with the aid of his limited intellect. This is a painful intellectual endeavour foredoomed to failure. When all his efforts fail he also becomes a disinterested man filled with indifference and

apathy. But if a *jijnasu* remains undaunted by failures and persists in his enquiries with a single-track mind, he will also win God's Boundless Grace.

A *jnani* is the only individual who has reached the summit of spirituality. He has attained the acme of wisdom. He alone can reach and know God. It does not, however, mean that the others cannot know God. They, too, can realise God if they dedicate all their actions to God in a spirit of self-abnegation. Killing of the lower self is more important than memorising all the scriptures.

This is the easiest path to God-realisation. Every act should be treated as a sacrament. Meditation, yoga, and rites and rituals are no longer essential to the *jnani*. His life and his actions are dedicated to God in complete self-surrender. He remains unattached to the fruits of his actions.

A *guru* is a spiritual preceptor. He transmits wisdom to his disciple. His duty ends here. It is the disciple's duty to receive and respond to his master's spiritual wisdom. He must put into practice what he has learnt. A *guru* is like a guidepost on the highway. He shows the path to the disciple. A signpost indicates the road to be followed but does not indicate anything about the ups and downs and the pitfalls on the road. It is the traveller's duty to beware of all pitfalls and obstacles on the road. Similarly, a *guru* is only a guide. The disciple has to find for himself all the obstacles on the

mountain path of spirituality. He must personally experience all the vicissitudes of the spiritual life.

Failure to experience the inner self is the main reason for not understanding the true significance of the *Gita* and its relevance to everyday life. There are very few people who have had a really authentic experience. The *pancha bhuthas*, or the five elements, the *pancha kosas*, or the five sheaths, and the *pancha pranas*, or the five life-breaths should be regarded as sacred manifestations of God.

"*Nimitta maatram bhava savyasachi*. Arjuna, you are only instrumental in the propagation of My Message. You are just an instrument in My Hands," proclaimed Krishna to Arjuna.

Even *swadharma* is tainted with the *gunas*. Man's life is motivated by the instinct of self-satisfaction. But self-satisfaction is a concomitant of spiritual dissatisfaction. Man always thinks of his selfish interests in whatever he does. This self-satisfaction involves the embodied soul or the ego. That is why it is necessary to transcend or kill the lower self.

The four *varnas* or castes are based on the *gunas* or the primordial attributes of *prakruthi* or nature. In the human body, the head, the shoulders, the thighs and the feet depend on one another. The head stands for the *brahmin*, the shoulders for the *kshatriya*, the thighs for the *vaisya*, and the feet for the *sudra*.

A *Vedic* pundit has three sons. The first son is a farmer, the second son a soldier, and third son a merchant. Thus, in the same family, the vocations of the father and his three sons are determined by their attributes and actions. All of them belong to the *Vedic* scholar's family. They live together and depend on one another. In the same manner, people of all castes must live together harmoniously discharging their respective duties. They must all work together for the welfare and prosperity of the country. The essence of the message of the *Gita* is the coexistence of all castes in a spirit of harmony and mutual welfare.

Why do you touch the feet of elders? You do not do *namaskar* to their face or shoulders. It is obvious that the feet are very sacred. By touching the feet of holy men, you can attain *Paramatma*. It is a mistake to extol the head and denigrate the feet.

The human mind is activated into a dynamic equilibrium by the three *gunas* of *sathwa*, *rajas*, and *thamas* (equanimity, energy, and inertia). These *gunas* are the motivating forces whose source is *Easwara* who is not only transcendental but also immanent and ubiquitous.

13

Karma Yoga

Man has but the right to perform action; to ask for the fruits thereof he has none. God alone can dispense the fruits of man's actions.

Embodiments of the Divine Atma!

Everyday from morning till night you spend your life in merely earning the means of your livelihood. What great happiness have you attained by employing your skill and education in only filling your stomach, forgetting the Lotus-eyed Lord? O, man! Ponder over this with deep regard.

Embodiments of Love!

From times immemorial, Bharath, by its spiritual power, has been conferring permanent peace and happiness on all mankind. *Lokah samastha sukhino*

bhavantu or "may the whole world be happy" has been the goal of the sacred *dharma* of Bharath. In order to protect and preserve this ideal, the kings, the sages, the saints and scholars as also the various women of yore sacrificed their all and led lives worthy of emulation.

Sacrifice (*tyaga*) is the essence of spiritual life. All men must necessarily have *tyaga*. Although one may not be willing to make sacrifices, nature shall force him to do so. It behoves man, therefore, to undertake sacrifice even before he is so compelled.

Lord Krishna stresses in the *Bhagavad Gita* that absolute purity of the heart is an essential requisite for treading the path of sacrifice. What is sacrifice? What is it that one must give up? Is it the transient wealth one has? Does sacrifice mean the giving up of one's wife and children? Nay, these are but matters that relate to the environment conditioning man's external life.

Sacrifice means giving up one's desires (*kama*), anger (*krodha*) and greed or extreme miserliness (*lobha*). Man generally identifies himself with the *anatma* (non-*Atma*) without realising his true nature. The reflection of the sky in a pot of water disappears the moment you pour out the water. Likewise, when you recognise the temporal nature of all that is non-*Atma* and attribute their ephemeral existence to worldly desires (water) and give them up, you get closer to the *Atma*. Unless you sacrifice desire, anger and greed or miserliness, you cannot attain Divinity.

Desire impels you to go against the established code of social behaviour even at the cost of losing your honour and reputation. It makes you get immersed in selfishness and disregard your duty to society and God. It raises its ugly hood in every aspect of your life and turns you into a demon.

Anger destroys your intelligence and warps your judgement. The angry man forfeits success in all his endeavours and invites societal censure. He brings dishonour to himself, to his friends and relations desert him. He is led to sin and thereby ruins his life.

Lobha or extreme *miserliness* does not let anyone be happy. A miser neither enjoys himself nor allows others to utilise his wealth. For everything he takes a retrogressive step, fearing loss of his property or diminution in his wealth. There is a small story to illustrate this. There were two brothers by names Miser and Greater Miser. True to their names, they were so niggardly that they did not even feed themselves properly. On occasions, when they prayed to God to further their worldly interests, they would not even proffer *naivedya*, (sacred offering to God). They would merely let Him have a cursory glance at it and eat it up themselves within moments. The reason for this great hurry, in not allowing the offering to remain at the altar for more than a few seconds was the fear that if the sugar candy offered as *naivedya* was kept any longer, some ants might partake of it in small quantities and

thereby deprive them of valuable granules of precious sugar!

One day, news came that one of their near relations had died. The elder brother, Greater Miser, decided to offer condolences to the bereaved family in person, and therefore set out early next morning by foot. He did not start immediately on the same day by bus or train, as travel by these means of transport would entail an insufferable burden by way of travel fares!

After his elder brother had gone, Miser put out the lamp and placed it on a windowsill, only to be stung by a vicious scorpion. While the younger brother was suffering thus, Greater Miser had put some two miles behind him. Suddenly, he became thoughtful and hastened back to the house. On being asked by Miser the reason for his unscheduled return, Greater Miser replied, “O, brother! I was worried that you may not have put out the lamp after I left. I have, therefore, come back to remind you.” To this, Miser in spite of his excruciating pain, said ruefully “Alas! brother, your desire to avoid wastage of oil is indeed appreciable, but what a pity, how much your sandals would have worn out by this unnecessary return of yours!” Greater Miser then replied, “My dear Miser, do not worry. I walked barefoot with my sandals in my hands.” Such is the bane wrought by *lobha*.

Thus, by desire, anger and greed, man’s devotion and wisdom diminish and his actions get tainted.

Therefore, Krishna enjoined Arjuna to be free from these vices, overcome illusion, develop inner vision and spiritual wisdom, and follow the path of *karma sanyasa yoga* (the renunciation of the fruits of one's actions).

In *karma sanyasa yoga*, we have three words, *karma*, *sanyasa*, and *yoga*. *Karma* means action; *sanyasa* means renunciation of worldly taints (*vasanas*) and desires, and rising above attachment and hatred; and *yoga* means union with the Divine.

"O, Arjuna," Krishna said, "this aspect of *sanyasa* is lacking in you. You are still swayed by attachment and ego." None can desist from action. Man is continually engaged in action. Therefore, renunciation of action (*karma sanyasa*) is neither realistic nor practical.

"Instead, while performing action, transform it into worship. Dedicate all your actions to God and perform them for His pleasure. Such actions will place you on the path of *bhakthi* (devotion)."

Thus, Krishna initiated Arjuna into the secret of *karma yoga*. *Karma yoga* should become natural to man. Whatever be the act performed, it should elevate and ennoble the doer. It is not enough if one merely listens to something noble; one must take it to his heart and ruminate over it.

Once, a sage brought three dolls to the court of a king and asked for the best doll to be identified. A clever

minister passed a thin wire through one ear of each of the dolls. The wire came out of the other ear in the case of the first doll and through the mouth in the case of the second. In the case of the third doll, however, the wire went deep inside.

Explaining the significance, the minister held that the third doll was the best. It represented the man who understood and retained the true meaning of whatever he heard and put it into practice. The second doll stood for the mere prattler who did not put anything he heard into actual practice, while the first signified the worst among men—he who simply let what he heard through one ear out from the other.

Students should listen to the sacred message of the *Gita* and imbibe it in their hearts. Recognising the truth that motiveless action performed for the pleasure of God (*karma yoga*) is higher than giving up of all activity, they should serve society in a selfless manner without an eye for reward. Develop love for all so that greed does not seize you into a state of godlessness. Also desire and anger should be controlled to the maximum possible extent.

14

Buddhi Yoga

The tree of prakruthi (nature) falls and the branches of desires wither away only when the mind, the root, is destroyed.

Embodiments of the Divine Atma!

Man may be compared to a machine with the intellect, the mind, the senses and the body as its different components. Just as the various parts of the body work in perfect co-ordination with one another to keep the physical mechanism of the body in order, the various faculties in man should work in harmony with one another to ensure that the *Atmic* Radiance is reflected in their functioning and that man's life is full of Divine Light and Joy.

In big factories, the workers in all cadres discharge their duties properly by obeying the instructions of their immediate superior officers. Such

a process is conducive to the efficient running of the organisation. Elaborating on this theme while dealing with *karma yoga* and *karma sanyasa yoga*, the *Gitacharya* addressed Arjuna and said, "The senses control the body and the mind controls the senses. The mind, in turn, is controlled by the intellect. Being closest to the *Atma*, *buddhi* (intellect) best reflects the attributes of the *Atma*. The influence of the *Atma* directly falls upon the *buddhi* and therefore, the *buddhi* functions as the presiding faculty in man."

The mind generates *sankalpa* (thought), which is checked and allowed to remain by the intelligence in every human being, the intelligence alone has the power to make decisions and to discriminate between good and bad. Individuals, often, get upset and troubled by the desires that arise in their minds. However, if they follow the dictates of their intelligence, their minds get lulled into submission and their actions result in happiness. Here is a small illustration.

In this gathering, there may be a person who thinks, "Swami's discourse may go on for another half an hour. If I catch a bus after the discourse is over, I might miss the second show of a movie. So it may be better to get up now and go." This is the prompting of the mind. But then, the intellect comes on the scene and counsels. "No, no. Don't leave. An opportunity to listen to Swami's discourse dealing with profound truths relating to the *Atma* and the spiritual life will not come

to you again—it is a rare blessing and should not be squandered away. Stay on and listen to Swami." The mind, then, follows the decision of the intellect. It must be so if life's purpose is to be fulfilled.

Buddhi is directly influenced by the *Atma*. Therefore, if the mind follows the *buddhi*, it will be able to lead the senses along the right path. So, Krishna advised Arjuna not to follow the mind, which, left to itself, is prone to succumbing to the pulls of sensory pleasures, but instead, to subjugate it to the intellect.

For going about in a chariot, it is the charioteer who has the most important role to play. Neither the horses that draw the chariot nor even the owner who is seated therein is competent to ensure a safe journey. It is the charioteer alone who can do it. If he is not accomplished, the horses will run berserk and drag the chariot hither and thither. Therefore, the charioteer must be competent enough and experienced to do his job properly. Krishna said, "Arjuna! Your body is a chariot and your senses are the horses; your mind acts as the reins and your intellect is the driver. If you let your intellect guide your life's journey, you will reach your ultimate destination safely."

Arjuna emerged victorious in the battle because his charioteer was Krishna, the source of all intellect. To install Krishna as our charioteer is the most sacred and felicitous means by which we can attain the goal of life. If, however, we have an inept person as the

charioteer (as Karna's charioteer Salya was), we will get discouraged every minute of our lives and eventually lose the battle we wage against our inner foes.

It is only when the mind follows the *buddhi* that inner vision is developed. Inner vision leads to the experience of the Bliss of the *Atma*. External vision, however, subjects man to untold suffering.

Krishna told Arjuna that in this world of objects which we see with our external vision, we perceive two qualities, namely "*kshayasila*" (destructibility) and "*dukhamisrama*" (presence of sorrow). This can be explained by an example. We see a child growing into a man and are happy that he is developing physically, failing to note, however, that the life-span of the child is simultaneously getting reduced. This gradual ebbing out of the life within man as he keeps growing is attributable to "*kshayasila*". Similarly, we see a bud blossoming into a flower and enjoy its fragrance without recognising the fact that in a few hours the flower will fade away. So also, the food that we cook today may be delicious and wholesome if eaten today, but if it is kept for the morrow, it would decompose or go stale. The fruit we eat today may be fresh, sweet, and delightful to the palate, but the very next day, it will become waste matter and will be looked upon with disgust.

Thus, destructibility or impermanence is an inherent characteristic of the material world. So also, worldly objects and relations bring about sorrow along

with joy. The same object may be the source of joy as well as the cause of sorrow. The shadow of sorrow haunts the experience of joy. One may feel happy when he receives the news of the birth of a son but feels miserable when he receives the news of the death of the same son.

Krishna said to Arjuna, "The joy which you seek and the self-realisation which you aim at, are both within you. They cannot be found in the external world. You are as foolish as a person who begs for food on the street even though there are sweets and other delicate dishes in his own home. You think that this world and its objects confer happiness on you. This is an illusion created by your mind. It is only when you follow the intelligence that you will be able to enjoy *Atmananda*".

Real happiness lies within you. A small illustration. Putting its thumb in the mouth and sucking it, the baby imagines that something sweet is flowing from the thumb, although, in reality, the sweetness comes from the saliva in its mouth. Let us take another case. A street-dog snatches an old, dry bone but finds it very hard to break. Out of its anxiety and hunger, the dog goes on biting the bone with all its strength. Suddenly, the bone breaks and a piece of it pierces the dog's gum. As a result, blood begins to flow in the dog's mouth. The foolish dog keeps biting the bone and thinks that it is enjoying the blood flowing from the bone, while actually it is getting the blood from its own gum and not from the bone.

We eat different sweets made of different kinds of flour. Sweetness, however, comes from the sugar and not from the flour. Yet, we say that the laddu or the Mysore pak is sweet. In the same manner, although the sweet beatitude of the Atma is within us, we erroneously attribute the sweetness to the fleeting objects found in the world. *Nara* (man) must pursue the path that takes him to *Narayana* (God). We must aim at becoming *Pashupati* (Lord Siva) but should not revert to the life of an animal (*pashu*). One who follows his intelligence can become *Pashupati*, while one who follows his mind becomes a *pashu*. It is natural for the mind to prompt and provoke, but we must not translate them into action hastily. We should discriminate with our intellect and implement its dictates.

The intellect is described as the embodiment of God. Krishna says in the *Vibhuthi Yoga* that He is the intellect inherent in all men. In daily life, when someone commits a mistake, we scold him as one devoid of intellect. When we come across a good man, we remark, "He is one having intellect." *Buddhi* (intellect) develops the divine Nature, which is within us. Therefore, it is necessary for man to follow the intellect which offers permanent, supreme delight and which continues from birth to birth, displaying divine attributes. The mind is destructible, but the intellect cannot be destroyed. The intellect guides and leads man to the *Atma*. We should follow the intellect which seeks the eternal delight of the *Atma*, and not the

mind which hankers after the pleasures of the senses.

In general, people of this age follow the mind and only a very rare person follows the intellect. Therefore, Krishna, foreseeing the trends of the *Kali Yuga*, desired to teach *buddhi yoga* to all mankind through Arjuna. I hope that everyone will follow the sacred and inspiring words of Krishna to Arjuna.

15

Dhyana Yoga

How can he, who surrenders to the internal enemies ever vanquish the external foes?
Man becomes blessed when he cognises the Truth.

The mind derives its Sanskrit name *manas* because it is continually engaged in the process of *manana* or thinking. Impulses are generated in the mind. Very often, however, the mind is led astray by conflicting impulses that are generated in it. The fickle nature of the mind acts as an impediment to man's spiritual progress; therefore, it is imperative that every spiritual aspirant gains control over his mind if he is to drench himself in the delight of his soul.

The mind travels faster than even the wind. Just as we apply brakes to halt a fast-moving vehicle, we have to curb the flow of our thoughts.

Arjuna prayed to Krishna to teach him the art of mind control, in answer to which Krishna elaborated on the subject. The mind is strong and mighty. It carries with it the accumulated tendencies of innumerable births and therefore, tries to gain dominance over the soul. But with such a mind, running amuck with desires, it is impossible for man to attain Divinity.

The mind is like a bee. Though small in size, a bee can bore its way through thick wood or even through a human body as it did in the case of Karna. However, such a bee, when it sits on the lotus to suck the sweet honey contained therein, gets caught within the delicate petals of the flower as they close around it and finds it impossible to escape. Similarly, our attempt to conquer the mind is bound to prove futile unless it is led to the Lotus-like-form of the Lord, wherein it gets eternally trapped.

The sixth chapter of the *Gita* is entitled *Atmasamyama Yoga* or the *yoga* of controlling the *Atma*. This is a misnomer in as much as it is neither necessary nor possible to control the immaculate, eternal embodiment of the Truth—the *Atma*. The word *Atma* in this chapter of the *Gita* has been used to denote the mind. In the *Atmasamyama Yoga*, the art of mind control is dealt with in elaborate detail. *Dhyana* is mentioned here as the principal means to achieve control over the mind.

In the *Atmasamyama Yoga*, Krishna emphasises the need for maintaining absolute cleanliness at the place

where meditation is practised. It is not your house or the forest that is to be kept clean, but the immediate surroundings of the place where you perform meditation that should be kept clean. The *jiva* dwells in the body whilst the Lord resides in the heart. Therefore, as meditation is not so much performed in external environs as it is within the heart—it being an internal process—it is more vital to rid the heart of all impurities and render it a fit abode for God. In our daily lives, when we have to sit somewhere, we choose a clean place and cover the ground with a handkerchief or a newspaper. Such being the care we take in cleaning a place to sit in for ourselves, the need for keeping the heart clean to seat the Lord therein and to achieve the purpose of meditation, is all the more important. The necessity for man to cleanse his heart arises because of the taints of *thamas* and *rajas* that have been associated with him over several births.

There are three states relating to the mind: *soonyathwa* (emptiness), *anekagrata* (simultaneous pulls of multiple thoughts), and *ekagrata* (one-pointedness). These three states are referable to and arise from the three gunas in man. While *thamo guna* (indolence) brings about a blankness in the mind, *rajo guna* (the quality inducing animated action) provokes the mind into wandering hither and thither. *Sathwa guna* (the quality that promotes the sacred aspects of human life) stills the mind into one-pointed contemplation. Thus, it is only those who cultivate *sathwa guna* that can undertake meditation with ease.

When we think of meditation, three things are involved, First, there is the person who meditates, the *dhyata*; secondly, there is the object of meditation *dhyeya*; and thirdly, there is the process of meditation itself, *dhyana*. In true meditation, all these three should merge. The person who is meditating should identify himself totally with the object of meditation and should be unaware of even the fact that he is meditating. When he is meditating, his attention should be so rivetted to the *dhyeya* that he loses his own identity and forgets his involvement in the action (*dhyana),* too.

Meditation is often misunderstood to be the same as concentration. Concentration is essential for ordinary sensory perceptions and it is something that we have and utilise while performing the most ordinary and routine acts. For example, we concentrate when we read a book, write a letter, drive a car or eat our food. Concentration comes naturally to us in the process of perceiving through the five senses and no particular exertion or special practice is required for it. It is incorrect, therefore, to equate concentration with meditation at which only the spiritual adepts excel.

Meditation is a process which obtains at a much higher plane than human sensory perception. Being a mental process that involves seeing through the senses, concentration may be regarded as being below or within the realms of the senses, while meditation is beyond or above the world of the senses. If meditation were as

easy as concentration, the great rishis of the past would not have practised various austerities and subjected themselves to innumerable difficulties in the deep forests.

Unfortunately today, however, by the influence of *Kali*, meditation which is the sacred means of attaining union with God, is being considered an alternative for aspirin to cure a headache! What a slight it is for Indian culture!

For one who desires to practise *dhyana* or meditation, it is advisable that *jyothi* (light) is taken as the *dhyeya* or object of meditation and not a form of Divinity such as that of Rama, Krishna, or Easwara; for these forms, too, are subject to change and ultimately perish. *Jyothi* or light does not perish or change. Moreover, a flame can kindle a million others without getting extinguished and is therefore inexhaustible.

In this process of meditation on light, the progression must be from restlessness to tranquillity and from tranquillity to divine Effulgence. One should sit cross-legged and erect to ensure an easy flow of the divine force from the *mooladhara chakra* to the *sahasrara chakra* through the *sushumna nadi*. The aspirant should fix his gaze on the gentle flame and gradually close his eyes, mentally transferring or absorbing the flame into his heart, as it were.

The lotus of the spiritual heart should then be imagined as blossoming in effulgent beauty dispelling

with its radiance the dark forces of life. One should then imagine that out of the heart so illumined, rays of light proceed gradually to all parts of the body, suffusing everything with light and imbuing it with sacredness and purity all over. As the light has reached the hands, the individual ought not to do any wrongful acts; since the flame shines in his eyes, he cannot look at undesirable sights. So, also, since the *jyothi* has permeated his ears, he should not listen to evil talk. His feet, too, since they have been filled with light, should not tread upon unholy paths. Thus, this type of meditation ennobles man and helps him scale great spiritual heights very steadily.

If we keep the mind busy in this manner with the task of carrying light to all parts of the body, it will not wander and will remain steady. The whole process takes about twenty to thirty minutes to complete. This kind of meditation should not be regarded as an exercise in fantasy. No doubt, in the beginning, imagination will be involved; but, by constant practice, it will be transformed into a powerful thought wave, creating an indelible impression on the heart leading to union with God.

The meditation should not end with the individual visualising the light in himself. He should see it in his friends and relatives and even in his enemies. He should see the whole of creation bathed in the resplendent light of Divinity. This would make him live a life full of love and happiness.

If you so desire, you may in the initial stages, picture the form of God which is dear to you, within the flame on which you meditate; you must, however, realise that the form has got to dissolve in the light, sooner or later. You must not try to confine Divinity to any one particular form; you must see God in His all-pervasive form, as the One who resides in the hearts of all Divine beings.

Some believe that only Rama, Krishna, and Sai Baba are God. This can only be attributed to sheer ignorance. You are also God. In order to make you realise that all beings are Divine, that all are embodiments of the Supreme Being, God comes as an *Avatar*. I have assumed this Form to make you all realise your innate Divinity. Recognising this purpose, to fulfil which *Avatars* come, you should take to the spiritual life with ardour and zest.

There are people who feign themselves divinely inebriated and give the impression that they are on the verge of the transcendental state of *samadhi*. But the moment an ant or a mosquito settles on their bodies, they are led into an instinctive act of killing the poor insect! There are others who sit peacefully in meditation for a minute and then immediately shout at their servants for the smallest of lapses! This should not be the attitude of one who desires to meditate sincerely. Ramana Maharshi was once questioned as to how long a person should perform *dhyana* every day. He smiled and replied

that one should perform meditation till he forgets that he is doing so.

We should perform *dhyana* in an unostentatious manner unobserved by others. Fish are sold in heaps at the fish market, but diamonds are carefully preserved at the jeweller's shop and displayed only to worthy customers. Likewise, if we sit for meditation at all places indiscriminately, inviting public attention, we would be reducing *dhyana* to cheap exhibitionism.

Krishna told Arjuna that one should be alone while meditating. The body should not touch the earth or another body. This is because contact with the earth makes the individual lose the divine current generated in him during meditation.

Meditation will be more meaningful if desires are curtailed. Less luggage, more comfort make travel a pleasure; fewer desires make the journey of life easier and happier.

16

"Anoraneeyan Mahato Maheeyan"

Smaller than the smallest and bigger than the biggest, the All-pervasive Brahman remains the Eternal Witness of all. Brahman is Atma. Atma is Brahman.

Embodiments of Love!

The universe is without beginning and in it dwell an infinitude of *jivas* (living beings). Among these *jivas*, man is the most exalted being. From times immemorial, men have been striving to know God. Some have maintained that God exists, while others have denied His existence. But neither the theists nor the atheists have been able to adduce proof for their rival contentions.

Several Indians say that God is Siva—the One astride Nandi (Bull) or that He is Vishnu—the One with Garuda (Eagle) as His *vahana* or vehicle. Others declare

that these are false statements, and swearing by the Bible, proclaim that God is light and that He resides in Heaven.

Depending on the place, the time and the experience of the individual concerned, there have developed various conceptions of the Godhead. Out of concern for and seeing this predicament of man, Krishna has given in the *Bhagavad Gita* a very apt description of God: "*Anoraneeyan Mahato Maheeyan*," that is to say, God exists everywhere and manifests Himself as both the infinitesimal and the Infinite.

Would it be possible for man to see God, who is smaller than even the smallest particle of an atom, or perceive the Transcendental Divinity that envelopes the entire cosmos and extends even beyond? The answer cannot but be in the negative, for when man is unable to see even the air that surrounds him, he has no means to perceive Divinity that is even more subtle. Neither can man gauge the infinitude of the all-pervasive *Brahman* that transcends the vast cosmic expanse with its myriad stars, each bigger than the sun and at great distances from the others.

To teach man the truths relating to these two aspects of Divinity—"*Anoraneeyan Mahato Maheeyan*"—which lie beyond the ken of his normal intellect, God appears on earth as an *Avatar*. In the Krishna *Avatar*, keeping Arjuna as the representative of all mankind, Krishna taught these eternal truths through the *Bhagavad Gita.* "Beyond the Universe,"

Krishna said, "lies total darkness and beyond this darkness exists Truth." This darkness consists of the *rajasic* and the *thamasic* realms. Beyond the darkness lies the domain of *sathwa guna*—the domain of Truth and Light.

"Truth is God" it is said; but to realise this truth we must transcend the *rajasic* and the *thamasic* realms. Meditation is the means for attaining such transcendence.

For meditation, Krishna lays down two important injunctions; a moderate diet and a regulated conduct of life. "*Yuktahara viharasya*", said Krishna. Here, *yuktahara* does not denote complete abstinence from food, as this would lead to physical emaciation and mental fatigue. The Buddha's experience illustrates this very well. While doing penance, the Buddha had, in the beginning, given up food for several days. This resulted in a dissipation of his physical and mental energies. Realising that a healthy body and a sound mind are necessary prerequisites for effective penance, he went to a nearby village and partook of curds and appeased his hunger. From that day, he continued taking food in small quantities every day. He was thereby able to meditate with great ease and realise the Truth.

Thus, food in the right quantities and of the proper type is necessary if an individual is to meditate effectively. Excessive eating thatleads to drowsiness, should, however, be avoided. The correct thing would

be to divide the stomach into four equal parts and fill two parts with solid food and one part with liquid food leaving the fourth part empty. Filling the stomach with solid food completely promotes *thamo guna*, which is positively an impediment to meditation.

Sleeplessness is also detrimental to meditation. Lack of sleep promotes *rajo guna* and fills one with unhealthy thoughts and emotions.

The food man partakes of these days is essentially *rajasic* and *thamasic*. This is the reason why there is cruelty and unrest in the minds of men. Their physical health, too, is poor. Today, a boy of sixteen would have passed through all the physical experiences that a man of sixty would have gone through. Such is the deplorable condition of our youth. How then can they experience the bliss of *dhyana* (meditation)?

It is imperative, therefore, for everyone to introspect and find out how much of his time is being spent in the mad race for fleeting material pleasures and how much is devoted to the thought of God. The hedonistic man of the present day can spare no time for the contemplation of Divinity. The gates of Heaven shall be open for him only if he can think of God now and then. However, everyone seems to be totally preoccupied with the thoughts of one's children, friends, relations, money and material possessions. Man is thus denying himself the bliss of spiritual experience, engaged as he is in the pursuit of the transient pleasures

of the world. Man must, therefore, divert his vision from the world of temporal joys to the Bliss of the *Atma* within.

In the eight fold path of *yoga* suggested by Patanjali in his *Yoga Sutras*, the last three stages are *dharana*, *dhyana*, and *samadhi*. *Dharana* thus precedes *dhyana*. It denotes the fixation of the mind on the goal of *dhyana* and involves the preliminary preparations necessary for *dhyana*.

One should adopt a comfortable posture for *dhyana*. The common practice is to sit, with the hands in *chinmudra* and with the legs crossed, on a wooden plank covered with a soft skin or cloth. These are all, however, part of *dharana*. *Dhyana* begins with the process of gradual identification with the Lord and leads to *Samadhi*.

Samadhi is the state in which *dhyana* attains fulfilment. In this state, the individual rises beyond the objective world of relative reality, the subjective identity of himself and even the very activity that he is engaged in (*dhyana*). *Samadhi* is not a state of unconsciousness; neither does it mean frisking about in emotional excitement. The word *samadhi* itself is indicative of its significance. *Sama* is equipoise; *dhi* is intelligence. *Samadhi* is that state of intellectual equipoise where the individual transcends the world of duality and experiences the bliss of divine communion.

The Lord incarnates as man to help man

comprehend that which apparently cannot be understood and to enable him to attain that which is seemingly unattainable. By this, however, the Lord who is Infinite, Immutable and Immanent, does not suffer any diminution. Neither is He, though embodied in a human frame, influenced by the taints and blemishes that normally affect a human being.

The sea is vast and unfathomable. However, to know the taste of sea water, one need not drink the entire ocean. It is enough if he has a few drops. Similarly, the one who understands, assimilates and experiences the Lord in Human Form has understood, assimilated and experienced the Immutable, the Imperishable and the Formless *Brahman* as well.

To grasp the significance of the Divine Incarnation, it is imperative that we rise above the *rajasic* and *thamasic gunas*. *Sathwa guna* alone can lead us through the path of true devotion to the Lotus Feet of the Divine. To remove *rajas* and *thamas* and to promote *sathwic* nature, a favourable environment and *sathsanga* or the company of good men are essential.

The mental makeup of a person can be judged from the way in which he maintains his immediate surroundings. For example, a person whose room is full of pictures of his relations, friends and political leaders can at once be understood to be one dominated by *rajo guna*. He is one who attaches undue importance to human relationships and adores worldly power and pelf,

ignoring God. Similarly, if the room is full of ugly and obscene pictures, the individual is essentially *thamasic* in nature. Both these categories of men are unfit to follow the sacred path of meditation. A third category of men who have pictures of God and holy men adorning the walls of their rooms converting their rooms into shrines, as it were, are the *sathwic* people, the people who are rightfully qualified to undertake meditation.

Pictures and people do leave indelible impressions and exercise considerable influence on the minds of men. Once Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi went along with his mother to witness a play on the life of Harischandra. The portrayal of Harischandra as the peerless practitioner of truth so influenced the young Mohandas Karamchand that even as he was returning home, he had resolved to stand by truth all his life. This ideal stood as the beacon for him throughout the rest of his life and by his steadfast adherence to truth, he came to be acknowledged as a *mahatma*.

Ramana Maharshi also conditioned his mind by objective experience. Every night he used to look at a particular star with one-pointed attention for several long hours. This strengthened his *dharana* and equipped him to undertake *dhyana*.

Just as mental purity is a necessary precondition for meditation, mental tranquillity is also equally essential. A restless mind impedes the processes of both *dharana* and *dhyana*. The mind needs to be given rest

through sleep. Sankaracharya compared sleep to *samadhi*, though *samadhi* confers much greater joy and inner harmony. Sufficient sleep is needed by an individual to keep his mind alert and poised for meditation.

There are three direct roads to Godhead. The first consists in the performance of all actions in a spirit of dedication to God for His pleasure. The second, in the renunciation of the desire for the fruits of action. The third, in the identification of oneself with God through the process of *dhyana*. Dedication of all actions to God confers wisdom on the doer. Renunciation of the desire for the fruits of action bestows mental tranquillity. *dhyana* too ensures inner peace.

Dhyana can be practised by all—the old, the young, the ignorant, the wise, the healthy and the weak. For those who do not possess the necessary physical and mental abilities to do *dhyana*, the cultivation of universal love would be as efficacious as *dhyana*. All these three paths, however, lead to the same goal.

17

Sathwic Food

The lambent light of the Atma shines with eternal effulgence. It has neither birth nor death, nor beginning nor end. Nor can it be destroyed. It is the immortal witness, the beholder of all space and time.

Embodiments of Love!

"*Na sreyo niyamam vina*", said Krishna to Arjuna. An unregulated, unsystematic, undisciplined and disorderly life cannot experience joy, goodness or well-being. One who controls and regulates the actions of others is called *Yama*. One who controls himself and regulates his own actions possesses the quality of *samyama*. *Yama* has no control over a person endowed with *samyama*. There should be discipline and regulation in life in accordance with self-imposed constraints. These self-imposed constraints constitute

the *thapas* of an individual. An unrestrained life is an immoral life. The wind and the sea and also the other phenomena obey the universal laws of nature. The earth rotates round its own axis and revolves around the sun periodically. These uniformities in the universe are the laws ordained by God. They are obeyed by the macrocosm as well as the microcosm. The laws of nature ordained by God are necessary for creating and sustaining the universe and for maintaining its dynamic equilibrium.

Such self-imposed discipline is conducive to real *santhi*—peace of mind, poise, equanimity, and stable equilibrium of the mind. Peace of mind is the most desirable thing in this world. It gives us physical and psychical euphoria. In order to achieve this *santhi*, an aspirant must develop a thirst for *jnana* or spiritual wisdom. He must also acquire the qualities of love, sympathy and compassion, and do selfless service to others. *Santhi* should not be regarded as a part-time virtue to be cultivated only during *dhyana* or meditation. It is a constant state of inner tranquillity. It should become habitual and instinctive. *Dhyana* is also universal and eclectic. It is not restricted by the barriers of space-time. It is not governed by the dogmas of any particular creed. *Dhyana* is a way of life for the total divinisation of man. *Dhyana* and *santhi* are inseparable. *Dhyana* promotes *santhi* and *santhi* intensifies *dhyana*. The quality of Divinity is not limited to the icon that we worship. Some people experience the most profound

peace of mind as long as they are in meditation. But, the moment they come out of the meditative state of mind, they exhibit their demoniac nature. It should not be so. The divine attributes acquired during meditation should be cultivated and nurtured in everyday life.

Mere medication will not cure a sick man. He must also control his diet for quick recovery from illness. There is no single panacea for the great world of sorrow. Each individual has his own specific type of suffering. Nevertheless, meditation on God is an unfailing remedy for human suffering if it is supplemented with the practice of *dharma* and the strict observance of moral restraints. We are all interdependent. We must learn to share the joys and sorrows of other people. A practitioner of meditation must pray for the welfare of others as sincerely as he prays for his own welfare.

A spiritual aspirant need not live in monastic isolation. He should practise universal compassion, which is nothing but an intense desire for the welfare of the entire humanity. Food plays an important part in the cultivation of universal compassion. Yesterday, I talked to you about the right type of food for spiritual aspirants. Today, I will deal with *sathwic* food, or the type of food necessary for spiritual progress. *Sathwic* food enables the *sadhaka* to apprehend the omnipresent reality of Divinity. He progresses through the four stages of the life divine. These four phases of spiritual

advancement are *salokya*, *samipya*, *sarupya* and *sayujya*. *Salokya* is entrance to the field of theocentric reality. *Samipya* is proximity to the fundamental spiritual substance of the universe. *Sarupya* is the assimilation of the form of the deity. *Sayujya* is liberation and ultimate union with the Godhead.

Sathwic food is conducive to the progressive attainment of these four states of spirituality viz., *salokya*, *samipya*, *sarupya*, and *sayujya*. Here, it is necessary to examine the implications of the concept of *Sathwic* food.

Some people are under the mistaken impression that *sathwic* food should consist of only milk, yoghurt, sweets and fruits. They believe that they will become *sathwic* by consuming large quantities of these delicacies. They are absolutely mistaken. Excessive and immoderate consumption of milk and its products awakens and aggravates the *rajasic* and *thamasic* qualities in man. A diet extra rich in milk, curds, and ghee cannot be called *sathwic*, because it leads to the development of the passionate nature of man.

In this context, I have to dilate on the nature of human knowledge and the five gateways of perception. Man is endowed with the five sensory organs connected with the five faculties of *sabda, sparsa, rupa, rasa*, and *gandha* (sound, touch, sight, taste, and smell). The preservation and the development of these sensory faculties depend on the *sathwic* food taken through the

mouth. The type of *sathwic* food that we take is determined by the fancies of individual taste. We feel satisfied when we take the right type of food through our mouths. But we forget that we absorb an incorporeal type of food through the other sensory organs also. The wholesome effect of *sathwic* food will be nullified if we listen to bad talk, indulge in bad talk, look at bad things, come into physical contact with bad things and smell bad things. Mind and body are tainted, contaminated and polluted by evil. Thus, *sathwic* food alone is not enough for the spiritual regeneration of man. We should not speak about evil. We must avoid condemning others and praising ourselves. Self-adulation and self-glorification retard spiritual development. We must feed our sensory organs with wholesome food, wholesome sounds and wholesome sights. The tongue is meant to sing the glory of God. The ears are meant for feasting on the glorious manifestations of the divine.

Each organ of perception must be provided with its proper spiritual sustenance. Thus, *sathwic* food does not mean the moderate consumption of milk, curds, ghee, and fruits alone but the enjoyment provided by noble thoughts, sacred sounds, holy sights and spiritual discussions as well. We must develop *sathwic* sight and spiritual vision. We must have *darshan* of the beauty of nature and the divinity of icons in temple. We should avoid all distracting sights and sounds. We should not look at anyone with an evil eye. Evil thoughts develop

an evil eye. The eyes are the windows of the heart. The heart should overflow with love and compassion. *sathwic* nature is developed by feeding the eyes with *sathwic* sights.

The sense of smell is also equally important. The olfactory sense should be satisfied with sweet smells. All obnoxious odours should be avoided. To create an atmosphere of holiness, sweet perfumes are used and fragrant incense sticks are burnt at the altars in temples. Foul smells destroy sanctity. The idea of holiness is always associated with sweet scents and perfumes.

The tactile sensation or the sense of touch should be satisfied by coming into physical contact with the feet of holy men. Contact with evil men must be avoided. Their contacts promote bad thoughts.

Sathsanga or the company of the virtuous is of supreme importance. *Sathsanga* leads to non-attachment. Non-attachment induces equanimity which, in turn, leads to liberation during life.

With the aid of *Sathsanga*, many things are achieved. We cultivate good habits and participate in pious activity. *Sathsanga* sanctifies the human body for becoming a temple of God.

Thus, a comprehensive and balanced *Sathwic* diet must provide *sathwic* satisfaction to all the sensory organs of the human body. The sensations of *sabda*, *sparsa*, *rupa*, *rasa*, and *gandha* must be provided with

sathwic satisfaction by means of *sathwic* discourse, *sathwic* company, *sathwic* sights, *sathwic* food, and *sathwic* perfumes. A comprehensive *sathwic* diet provides *sathwic* gratification to all the sensory organs. Today, the idea of *sathwic* food has been restricted to food consisting of fruits, milk and its products. We have already seen that the immoderate consumption of such food has a deleterious effect on the human body.

The spiritual technique of *dhyana* mentioned in the *Bhagavad Gita* cannot be beneficial in the absence of comprehensive *sathwic* food, which should feed the entire body with *sathwic* sights, sounds, smells and tactile sensations. Otherwise, it becomes a mere pose. Today, *dhyana* has degenerated into a fashionable pastime. The true meaning and significance of *dhyana* should be clearly grasped in order to avoid the pitfalls and dangers inherent in its faulty practice. Restraints are necessary for the welfare of human beings. Limited food and *sathwic* food are essential for spiritual progress. Such food should give satisfaction to all the sensory organs.

All rivers join the ocean. Likewise, the aim of all *sadhana* is the merging of the individual soul with the universal soul. God's grace is like the unlimited ocean. The water vapour symbolises the *sadhana* (propitiation); the cloud is *sathya* (truth), and the raindrops are *prema* (love). They collect together to form the stream of *Ananda* (Bliss), which joins the vast ocean of *Anugraha* (Divine Grace).

Knowledge obtained directly from *Sastras* and scriptures is like sea water. By exercising the faculty of discrimination and by entering the meditative state of mind, the pure water of wisdom can be distilled from the saline sea water of scriptural knowledge. This knowledge is humanised by experience and divinised by selfless love.

Bookish knowledge divorced from experience leads to fanaticism and intellectual arrogance. Knowledge by acquaintance is always superior to knowledge by description. Practice is better than precept. We must live the scriptural injunctions rather than merely talk about them. Self-imposed discipline is more effective than discipline enforced by some external authority.

The quality and quantity of food that we take determine our thoughts and feelings. There is indeed an intimate connection between "food, head, and God". *Sathwic* food is conducive to self-realisation, and liberation from the dualities and relativities of the world.

Rajasic food generates virulent thoughts. By consuming non-vegetarian food we develop brutal mentalities. Those who are practising meditation must abstain from meat. We should also remember constantly that *ahimsa* or non-violence is the supreme *dharma*. It is sin to kill innocent animals for the sake of filling our stomachs. We must remember that God dwells in all

creatures. "*Isa vasyam idam sarvam*" (All this is pervaded by God), says the *Isa Upanishad*. The truth of this aphorism can be experienced through meditation.

"*Udaranimittam bahukrita vesham*"—for the sake of the stomach, men don different guises. Like the chameleon, they change their colours according to the demands of the situation. They become opportunists and hypocrites. In the end, they try to justify their opportunism and rationalise their hypocrisy. They delude themselves by this policy of expediency and time-serving. Such people can never follow the path of meditation. It should not be supposed that the path of meditation is easy and artificial. If *dhyana* is easy, why should the great sages of our country have mortified themselves for the attainment of *moksha*? Some modern techniques of meditation claim to achieve *nirvikalpa samadhi* instantaneously. *Dhyana* is mistaken for temporary freedom from worries. If this sort of anaesthesia is needed, one can become tipsy by drinking liquor. *Dhyana* is not a state of inebriety or amnesia. *Dhyana* is a state of complete identification with one's *dheya* or object of meditation. It is a state of total spiritual empathy. Today, many artificial and distorted methods of meditation are being popularised. Students must beware of them because they are all unprofitable and potentially dangerous.

There are three *gunas*: *sathwa*, *rajas*, and *thamas*. There are three eyes: the two physical eyes and the

invisible spiritual eye. There are three times: the past, the present and the future. And there are the three worlds. The unity of these triads is vouchsafed to the spiritual aspirant during his transcendental state of meditation. Then sin and sorrow are annihilated. *Sath-Chith-Ananda* (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss) is experienced through meditation and complete self-surrender. This is the essence of *dhyana*. Today, a number of rites and rituals are being performed as a part of *sadhana*. These are only aids to concentration. They are not of much use for true *dhyana*. Correct posture, the right type of food and the right place are only aids to *dharana* or concentration. *Sathwic* food, *sathsanga*, etc., assist the *sadhaka* to some extent. They develop the habit of concentration. Our efforts should not end here. Concentration should be followed up by contemplation and meditation.

There should be an element of reciprocity in all human and personal relations. Love, sympathy, compassion and affection are always mutual. They cannot thrive in isolation. They atrophy and vanish wherever selfishness and jealousy manifest themselves. We must discharge our duties in a spirit of self-surrender without consideration for wealth or recognition.

Prema (love) is the greatest *sadhana* (spiritual activity). *Prema* is not mere reciprocal love. It is an extended and sublimated form of self-love. It is the extension of love to humanity and to the entire creation. The essence of *prema* as a *sadhana* lies in the cultivation

of humanitarianism, universal compassion and altruism.

Nobody can become a saint or a sage overnight. We must start early, drive slowly and reach the goal safely. Haste makes waste and waste creates worry. A true *sadhaka* must develop the qualities of patience and persistence in order to reach the ultimate goal of spiritual enlightenment.

18

The Four States Of Consciousness

Brahman is the One that defies positive identification and description; the One that can be indicated only by negations and denials; the One that is Eternal and Infinite: Being Awareness Bliss Absolute.

The one all-pervasive *Brahman* permeates the entire universe of animate and inanimate objects. This all-inclusive *Brahman* has assumed the audible form of the primordial word *AUM*. There are four inseparable elements in this Supreme *Parabrahman*. They are *Viswa*, *Taijasa, Prajna*, and *Turiya*.

Jagrathavastha, the wakeful state is the state of normal consciousness and is concerned with the gross world of matter. It brings empirical knowledge of the phenomenal world acquired through sensations and perceptions. It has several means of knowing. These

consist of the *karmendriyas* (the five organs of action), the *jnanendriyas* (the five organs of perception), the five *pranas* (vital energies), *manas* (mind), *buddhi* (intellect), *chitta* (consciousness), and *ahankara* (ego). In the *jagrathavastha* these nineteen aspects of sensational or empirical knowledge are integrated. It is essentially this knowledge which hankers after the pleasures of the material world.

Swapnavastha, the dream state of consciousness has the subconscious faculty of recognising and getting an inkling of the holy experience of divinity and sanctity. It is concerned with the subtler aspects of human knowledge and experience. It carries with it subtler impressions of the experiences of the *jagrathavastha*.

Prajna and *turiyavastha* assume different characteristics. *Prajnavastha* is a transcendental state of consciousness in which the dichotomy between grossness and subtlety disappears in superconsciousness. It is pure *prajna* or consciousness of Divinity. In *prajnavastha*, the differentiating and diversifying faculties of the mind become inoperative. That is why it is said that *prajnana* is *Brahman*. To help man reach this summit of Divinity, Krishna has expounded in the *Bhagavad Gita* the *sadhana* of *dhyana*, the path of meditation. In *prajnavastha*, all mundane desires and dream-wishes are sublimated into the bliss of spiritual experience. The lambent light of *prajnana* shines steadily in this state of higher consciousness.

The *turiyavastha* is the highest state of consciousness in which the essential nature of the *Atma* is experienced. *Santam* (tranquillity), *sivam* (goodness) and *sdwaitham* (nonduality) are experienced by the *sadhaka*. The *turiyavastha* is a pure, tranquil and steady state of superconsciousness in which all discriminating and differentiating *gunas* (attributes) are transcended and dissolved in the eternal and absolute reality of *Brahman*.

Omkar is the fusion of the three primal sounds, *A, U*, and *M*. These three letters represent respectively the *jagrata*, the *swapna*, and the *sushupti* states of consciousness. They also symbolise Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwara. This trinity represents the three personified realities corresponding to the aforementioned three states of consciousness. In a garland of beads, a string passes through them and holds them together. In a similar manner, *Brahman* passes through all *jivas* and makes them interdependent and interrelated.

Sakshatkara is the immediate, intimate, and unitive apprehension of the absolute, supreme, and integral reality of *Brahman*. It is a mystical experience beyond mind, space and time. *Dhyana* is an aid to *sakshatkara*. The eye cannot see itself. Similarly, the Atma also cannot see itself. If a doll made of salt is sunk into the sea for finding its depth, the doll gets dissolved in the water and becomes irrecoverable. In a similar manner, the *jivatma* in search of the *Paramatma*

loses its individuality and identity. *Brahman* is an unfathomable ocean. A *jiva* thatgoes in search of *Brahman* becomes one with *Brahman*. Atma and *Paramatma* are ontologically identical and non-dual. They are only aspects of the highest state of consciousness.

In *dhyana*, *manas* (mind), *buddhi* (intellect), and the various *indriyas* (senses) are transcended by means of self-control. All dualities, dichotomies, differences, and relativities disappear in the superconscious state of *dhyana*. *Dhyana* is synonymous with the unitive knowledge of the Godhead. It is a *divyadarshana*, a vision of and a path to the Divine. It leads to *Sath-chith-ananda* or the integral reality of Existence-consciousness-bliss. It grants *nityananda,* or everlasting bliss and confers *Atmananda* or the bliss of the *Atma*. It helps man attain *paramananda* or supreme bliss, and *adwaitananda,* or the bliss of non-duality.

Krishna said, "*Ahamatma Gudakesa*". Krishna who is Hrishikesa addressed Arjuna as *Gudakesa*. Hrishikesa is the Lord, the Master of all senses. Arjuna is *Gudakesa*, the one who has acquired sense-control. *Gudakesa* is the disciple of Hrishikesa. The Lord of the senses is the Supreme *Guru* and the one who has acquired control of the senses is His *sishya*. Krishna is the Supreme *Guru* and Arjuna is His sincere *sishya*. Arjuna is *Narottama*, the ideal human being; and Krishna

is *Purushottama,* the Supreme *Purusha* or God. Today, there may be good *guru*s, but there are no sincere *sishyas*. This is the influence of *Kali* on human beings. People remember and repeat the name of Krishna, but they do not put His teachings into practice.

Once upon a time there was a noble *guru*. He had a disciple. One afternoon, the *guru* who had gone somewhere, returned home in the hot sun. The disciple was then performing the *guru's* worship. The *guru* had arrived in the blazing heat of the sun. His bare feet were being scorched by the hot earth. He asked the disciple to open the door and let him in. The disciple, who was reciting the *ashtothara* of his *guru* said that he should not be disturbed during the *puja*. He did not open the door until he had finished the *puja*. The poor *guru* had to stand in the hot sun until the disciple had completed his worship. We find many such foolish disciples today. What is the use of worshipping the *guru* but causing him pain? There are many devotees who worship Krishna without caring for His teachings.

Every individual must recognise the truth that there is only one *Parameswara* for all. God may be conceived in many ways. *Brahman* may be either *saguna* or *nirguna. Saguna Brahman* is *Brahman* with attributes and *Nirguna Brahman* is *Brahman* without attributes. There is no essential difference between the two, just as there is no substantial difference between a piece of cloth and cotton. *Nirguna Brahman* is like the cotton,

the basic substance, while *Saguna Brahman* is like the fabric, the derivative. *Saguna Brahman* and *Nirguna Brahman* are only two levels of Reality.

A beam of light falling on a prism is refracted. As a result of refraction, we see the different colours of the spectrum. The colours of the spectrum are different, but the light is only one. Similarly there may be various names and forms of the ultimate Reality. *Brahman* is one and its manifestations are many.

A *sadhaka* will have several types of experiences during meditation. When he is absorbed in Divinity he listens to many kinds of sounds. He develops a sort of extrasensory perception. He listens to the sounds of musical instruments like the veena, mirdangam and flute. These sweet strains of music are symbolic of *Sakara Brahman.* They are the first results of *dhyana*. During the preliminary stages of *dhyana*, all sensory organs become hypersensitive. This acute sensitivity enables the *sadhaka* to respond to extraordinary sights and sounds. In course of time, this faculty of hypersensitivity or extrasensory perception develops into the highest faculty of listening to the Voice of Silence itself. There is *sabda* in *nissabda* (the Voice of Silence). It is the primordial sound of *Easwara's Pranava*. The *sadhaka* listens to the repetition and reiteration of the *Primal Voice* of *Aum*. He experiences the ineffable and inexplicable bliss of the *turiya* state of superconsciousness.

During profound meditation, some *sadhakas* feel

that their bodies have become very heavy and cannot move freely. Some others experience a feeling of extreme lightness and levitate upwards. Some *sadhakas* have a sensation of trembling and shivering. The tenacious and steady-minded *sadhaka* will not be unnerved by these supernormal experiences. He will continue his *sadhana* unhampered by his fantastic experiences.

Ramakrishna Paramahamsa went through all these stages of *dhyana*, from *sakara* to *nirakara* (from forms to formlessness). During his spiritual evolution, the Divine Mother revealed Herself to him as Kali. But the *Atma* is formless. That is why the *sadhaka* is advised to leave behind all forms and names and strive for the experience of the Formless *Brahman*. The absolute *Brahman* without form and attributes gives the highest spiritual ecstasy. The *sadhaka* is entranced and enraptured by the divine afflatus of *Nirguna Brahman*. He experiences perfect bliss. This superconscious state of meditation transcends all dualities. It is a state of unitive knowledge of the *Brahman*. It is everlasting and transcends all attributes and feelings.

A novice must start with meditation on *Saguna Brahman*. He must observe all restrictions. He should be regular and punctual in his *sadhana*. A young sapling must be protected from animals. A fence must be put around it until it grows into a big tree. The fence becomes unnecessary after it becomes a huge tree.

Similarly, rules and regulations are necessary for beginners in *sadhana*. An advanced *sadhaka* does not depend on external props. He can go into a trance whenever he likes. Meditation becomes spontaneous and habitual.

Dhyana should be distinguished from *dharana*. *Dharana* is mere concentration. The first stage of concentration should be followed up by contemplation and absorption. This absorption leads to meditation. *Dhyana* is not the monopoly of any particular religion. It is a universal and pragmatic programme for gaining the unitive knowledge of the Godhead.

19

Saranagati Thathwa

The quintessential teaching of all the Vedas and the scriptures is that man should feel his identity with the One Atma that is present in all beings.

"Arjuna! The one who sees Me in all and all in Me is dear to Me, whatever be his way of life", declared Krishna. "That person who worships Me through all creatures merges in Me!" The Gitacharya continued and said, "There is a limit for *dhyana*, but not for the benefits conferred by it, the *siddhi*. *Dhyana* endows man with jnana or supreme wisdom."

Jnana is not mere intellectual gymnastics. It is not a flight of imagination. Neither is it a mental concoction. It is a continual experience of the reality of the *Atma*. "Only one in a million makes an attempt to realise the *Atma*. Even among them only one in a

thousand understands the process of realising the Atma. Among the thousands of such people only one reaches Me. Those who have achieved self-realisation and merged in Me are very few indeed," said Krishna to Arjuna.

Success in *jnana yoga* depends upon an individual's deservedness. In a running race, only one runner comes first. Similarly, there may be thousands of flowers on the branches of a tree, but very few become fruits. People are of different sorts. There are the theists, the atheists, the agnostics, the slothful people, the *yogis*, the hedonists, the stoics, the cynics, the saints and the sinners. Each individual occupies a particular position in the world in accordance with his *samskaras* or the psychical and spiritual characteristics acquired during previous lives.

Prakruthi consists of earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intellect and ego. Beyond this *Prakruthi,* however, there is a higher realm known as *paraprakruthi*.

Every person must grasp the meanings of *Prakruthi* and *paraprakruthi*. It is through *paraprakruthi* that man becomes Divine. *Prakruthi* binds man to the world. *Paraprakruthi* divinizes him. *Prakruthi* is concrete, corporeal and tangible. *Paraprakruti* is abstract, incorporeal and intangible. The Immanent *Atma* also is incorporeal and intangible. It is subsistent beyond mind, space and time. But it can be intuitively and mystically experienced by following the path of *Yoga*.

A vessel contains milk. You cannot see the butter separately in the milk. Does it mean that the milk does not contain butter? Boil the milk and then curdle it. Churn the curds and the butter in it will come to the surface. Thus, milk contains butter though it cannot be obtained without subjecting the milk to the process of boiling, fermenting and churning. Similarly, sugarcane contains sugar. But it has to be pressed and twisted in order to squeeze the juice out of it. So also, there is water in the deeper layers of the earth and oil in the mustard seed. To get the water you have to dig a well and to get the oil you have to press and crush the mustard seed.

Prakruthi is a vessel; *sadhana* is the churning-rod and *jnana* is the rope wound round the churning-rod of *sadhana*. Pull the rope of *jnana* and churn *Prakruthi* with the churning rod of *sadhana* and the Divinity that is latent in *Prakruthi* will show forth. Some people are too slothful to make an effort and go on arguing that God is non-existent. Every human heart contains the wish-fulfilling tree (*kalpatharu*) of divinity. It has also the wish-fulfilling sacred cow (*kama dhenu*).

Our *karmas* are solely responsible for all the bad that accrues to us and the merit we acquire. Sinful *karma* can be destroyed by meritorious *karma*. Sins are negative while merits are positive. A negative integer like "-5" can be nullified only by adding "5" or a bigger positive number. The negative effect of sinful activities

can be neutralised only by the positive effect of meritorious actions.

There are two methods of spiritual progress, namely, the *vidhwamsaka marga* or the destructive path and the *vidhayaka marga* or the constructive path. If you want to cultivate a field, you have to first pull out all the weeds and level the land. Then follow irrigation, ploughing and fertilising. This sort of work is destructive. Sowing which is constructive and creative comes next. Similarly, the human heart can yield the crop of *Ananda* or divine Bliss only when all the evil thoughts in it are first weeded out and it is filled with pure love. Undesirable qualities such as hatred, negative criticism, the habit of blaming others and finding fault with them have to be given up. A cynic cannot appreciate goodness and nobility. It is his misfortune. It is only when the heart is purged of all vices that it can overflow with love. The plant of *prema* can be nurtured only in the field of the pure, immaculate heart. These processes of destruction are indispensable for spiritual advancement. The purified *sadhaka* whose heart is full of love and compassion, can traverse the path of meditation for gaining the unitive knowledge of the Godhead with ease and felicity.

Wisdom lies in the practical application of theoretical knowledge to life and its problems. You may memorise all the seven hundred verses of the *Bhagavad Gita,* recite the *Vedas* or read the *Puranas*, but all these

will be of no avail unless you put into practice the sacred teachings contained in them. The assiduous study of the scriptures will be a futile exercise if the truths propounded in them are not translated into action.

People make obeisance to the book of the *Bhagavad Gita*. They place it to their eyes in reverential homage and worship it, carry it on their heads and speak about it with evangelistic fervour! They adore the material book and its pages but not its content. The book is idolised, but the subject matter is neglected. So, also, theoretical study is emphasised, whereas its practical application is ignored. These are inexcusable vices.

Divinity is embodied in all creatures and this fundamental truth should be exemplified in practice by man. He must extend the field of his love until it encompasses the entire creation. It is only then that he will deserve to be a worthy recipient of God's love.

For eighty-four years Krishna and Arjuna had been playmates and friends. They had lived, played and sung together ever since their childhood, yet Krishna had never expounded the *Bhakthi Yoga*, the *Karma Yoga,* or the *Jnana Yoga* to Arjuna till the time of the battle of Kurukshetra. The essence of the *Bhagavad Gita* was expounded by Krishna to Arjuna on the battlefield in the midst of the clash of arms and din created by the warring soldiers. What is the inner significance of Krishna choosing the battlefield as the venue for making

the grand spiritual annunciation of the *Bhagavad Gita*? Till the *Kurukshetra* battle was fought, Arjuna had been completely engrossed in the pursuit of worldly pleasures and was preoccupied with mundane matters. He had spent all his life in search of power, pelf and prestige, but, on the eve of the battle, he swooned and found himself thrown into a mood of despondency. To him, the world appeared to be a great vanity fair. He lost interest in everything and experienced a profound feeling of emptiness, futility and despair. He felt that it was a sin to fight against his kinsmen, friends, elders and teachers. He felt like beating a retreat and going away from the battlefield. He was filled with agony and anguish and doubt and despair. Waging a war against his own cousins seemed to him the deadliest sin. He did not want the homicidal glory of this fratricidal war. "To fight or not to fight"—that was his problem. Finding himself on the horns of this great dilemma, he said to Krishna, "I have lost my power of discrimination. I cannot distinguish good from evil. I am robbed of my reason and do not know what to do. I am facing a grave moral and spiritual crisis. I surrender everything unto you. Save me from this predicament." Arjuna thus became a *saranagata* (one who has surrendered) and prostrated before Krishna. In this situation of complete self-surrender, Arjuna attained one-pointedness. He qualified himself to receive Krishna's gospel of life. Krishna apparently waited for this right moment to expound the great Song Celestial.

Three qualifications are essential for listening to this exposition of the *Bhagavad Gita:* surrender (*saranagati*), one-pointedness (*ekagrata*), and the sacrifice of worldly desires (*vairagya*). *Saranagati* is total self-surrender wherein the devotee lays down his body, mind, heart and soul at the lotus feet of the Divine Master. *Ekagrata* is one-pointedness of the mind when the devotee gives his undivided attention to the Lord's annunciation. To be initiated into the esoteric spirit of the *Bhagavad Gita,* the *saranagata* must also possess the qualities of selfless love and sacrifice.

The importance of *dhyana* should also be recognised. *Dhyana* is an infallible aid to spiritual progress. Freedom from the consequence of *karma* can be attained through *dhyana*. This freedom enables the *sadhaka* to acquire *santhi* or inner tranquillity. The sweetness of the experience of inner tranquillity is derived from the fruits of *dhyana*. The modern man seeks *santhi*, but he is treading the perilous path of violence and conceit. His mind is restless and his heart tumultuous. The reason for this can be traced to his *prarabdha karma* or the accumulated *karma* of his past lives. *Prarabdha karma* pursues man like the hound of hell. The accumulated dead-weight of *prarabdha karma* can be destroyed only by *satkarma* or good actions in the present life. To remove obnoxious odours, perfumes are used. However, the bad smell is not really removed. It is only mitigated by the fragrance of the perfume. In the same manner, the deleterious effects of past *karmas*

can be suppressed and neutralised by the wholesome effects of present *satkarmas*.

Karma can be wiped out by *karma* alone. It is only a diamond that can cut another diamond. A thorn can be pulled out only by using another thorn. The power of *dharana* (concentration and determination) enables the *sadhaka* to banish all evil from his heart and enthrone virtue in its place. *Dharana* leads to *dhyana*. In other words, concentration leads to contemplation and assimilation and these, in turn, lead to meditation.

20

The Practice Of Meditation

Man's life is like a bug-infested cot,
His body is a den of diseases.
How then can joy be his?

Embodiments of the Divine Atma!

In our daily lives, we see that the same object assumes different forms and names. The same seed develops into the trunk, the branches, the twigs, the leaves, the flowers and the fruits of a tree with distinct forms and names and displaying different qualities. Similarly, the same gold takes the form of various jewels and one flame brings into being an infinite number of flames of several hues. In the very same manner, the Primal Light of *Paramatma* is one, but it manifests itself as the *Atma* in all beings of the universe. It is essential that we discern this unity in diversity.

Clay is moulded into a pot and gold is shaped into a jewel. A lump of clay cannot become a pot without the help of a potter. Neither can a piece of gold be transformed into a jewel without a goldsmith. Similarly, to make a train run there should be a driver; and for the automatic traffic lights to operate, there has to be a controlling device. So also, for this vast, complex and intricate universe, there should be someone who has created it and has been controlling it.

Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intellect and ego are the primal substances out of which the universe is made. Mud or clay is the basic substance out of which the pot is made and is, therefore, the material cause for the pot. The potter without whose *sankalpa* (thought) and involvement the pot cannot arise, is its efficient cause. Similarly; *prakruthi* is the material cause for the universe and *Brahman* is its efficient cause. It is the Will of *Brahman* that has created the myriad facets of this dynamic universe with its multifarious forms and innumerable objects. Yet, we must remember that it is *Brahman* that has manifested itself in all this infinitude. Krishna exhorted Arjuna to ignore the diversity in unity and discern the unity in diversity. We have to comprehend the non-dual *Atmic* nature of this world of multiplicity.

Dhyana enables man to cognise this unity and discern both the Immanence and the Transcendence of *Brahman*. For meditation to be most effective, it should

be performed at a fixed time and at a fixed place every day, and according to a well-regulated procedure. Sometimes this routine may be upset, as, for example, when you have to go on a journey—it may not be possible to perform meditation at the usual place or according to the normal procedure. Nevertheless, one must ensure that at the usual appointed hour every day, the meditation is performed steadfastly. If the meditation is done at the correct time every day, the mind will take the subtle body to the usual environs and make the individual go through the prescribed regulations inwardly, thereby cutting away any possible feelings of alienation that could crop up at new places.

The ideal time for engaging oneself in meditation is *Brahma Muhurtham*, that is, the period commencing at 3 a.m. and ending with 6 a.m. early in the morning. *Brahma Muhurtham* literally means the time of *Brahman*. You must choose a fixed time for meditation during the *Brahma Muhurtham* and meditate regularly at the same time every day.

Adopting a comfortable posture, you have to sit straight so that the *kundalini* power is afforded unhampered movement. The *kundalini* power is present in man in the *mooladhara chakra* as a divinely radiant power. Its upward flow to the *sahasrara chakra* or the thousand-petalled lotus, through the intermediary centres called the *swadhishtana, manipura, anahata, visuddha*, and *ajna chakras* corresponding respectively

to the regions of the navel, stomach, heart, larynx, and the *bhrumadhya sthana* or the region between the eyebrows, takes man to various levels of consciousness and spiritual awakening.

During meditation, the *sadhaka* should neither shut his eyes completely nor open them wide. He should gaze at the tip of his nose with half-closed eyes and concentrate on the divine radiant power at the Ajna *chakra*. In this blissful mood, he has to keep his hands in the *chinmudra*, with the thumb and index finger joined at their ends and the other three fingers of both the hands kept apart. The thumb represents *Brahman*. The forefinger represents the *jiva*. *chinmudra* is symbolic of the proximity of *Brahman* and the *jiva*. The *jiva* in combination with its *gunas* is conditioned by time. God, however, is beyond time and, therefore, all *gunas* vanish when the *jiva* and God become one.

The purpose of *dhyana* is to unite the *jiva* with *Easwara*. The essence of *triputi* is the integral, unitive reality of *jiva* (man), *Easwara* (God) and *lrakruthi* (world). The divinity of the individual and the unity in diversity can be visualised by adopting the *chinmudra* during meditation.

This blissful experience can also be gained by renouncing the desire for the fruits of *karma*. *Nishkama karma* creates a special bond of love between the Creator and the *jiva*. Let us suppose that we have engaged a coolie in our garden. He works perfunctorily from

morning to evening, collects his wages and goes away. He never really worries himself about the garden. At the same time, a housewife toils throughout the day and though she is not paid anything, she performs her duties with selfless devotion expecting nothing from her husband. The coolie can never be dear to the master of the house as the housewife is. So, too, one who performs action without desire for its results is alone dear to God.

The body is born for the performance of *karma*. *Kala* (time) should be spent by man in the performance of sacred acts. Time is divine, God is extolled as "*Kala Swarupaya namaha.*" Therefore, we must utilise time for performing good *karma* without aspiring for the fruits thereof. The renunciation, however, must be total, not merely superficial.

There was a gentleman who had renounced everything and became an ascetic. Once as he sat in meditation on the banks of the river Ganges, a tourist bus came to halt there. The ascetic heard the tourists speaking in Kannada. He at once stopped his meditation and went towards them. "Where do you come from?" he asked them. They replied, "We come from Karnataka." The man felt very happy because Karnataka was the state from which he hailed. He became very fond of the tourists because they came from his own state and spoke his own language. He felt so glad that he made further enquiries. He came to know that they had come from his own district, his own *taluq*, his own

village, and even his own street. They were, in fact, his neighbours! He was swept by a wave of attachment and he enquired about his father. He was informed that his father had died a few years earlier. Hearing this, the ascetic, who thought that he had renounced all attachments, broke down with grief. All his asceticism was useless. *Dhyana* is of no avail if attachment to body and kith and kin continues to linger. The physical body has to be dedicated to the performance of *nishkama karma* for the benefit of others.

You have to try and experience in meditation the oneness of the *Sarvatma* (cosmic soul) and the *ekatma* (individual soul). *Ekagrata* (one-pointedness) for a single moment does not amount to *dhyana* (meditation). Meditation is sustained concentration and identification with the *dhyeya* (the object of meditation). If you give food to a dog continuously for ten days at a particular time, it will come regularly and punctually every day thereafter. A dog's loyalty is well known. Faith is very important. In fact, *viswasa* (faith) is like our *swasa* (life-breath). In other words, faith is our *elan vital.* Life without faith is living death.

In the beginning, meditation may be easy and interesting. The first few steps will be encouraging. But when you begin to ascend the higher steps of the stairway of *dhyana*, unforeseen obstacles will crop up. However, one should not get disheartened by these unexpected hurdles. They must be taken in their stride

with courage and conviction. A person should not undertake the *sadhana* of *dhyana* without the strong will to do so.

For the weak-minded persons there is an easier alternative, that of *nishkama karma*. They have to sow the seeds of love in their hearts. They must radiate *prema* (divine, selfless love) and compassion. Pure love promotes peace and harmony among human beings. Selfless love puts jealousy and malice to flight. When the heart is filled with love, there will be no room for hatred. When love is directed towards God it is spiritualized and sublimated into devotion. Man's heart is like a "musical chair" on which only one can sit. Allow *prema* to occupy this chair and meditate on God.

21

Control Of The Mind

Bliss is the experience when the soul is known;
Anguish, if the Truth remains unknown.
The Knower of God verily becomes HIM.

Embodiments of the Divine Atma!

The *kundalini sakthi* lies dormant in the *mooladhara chakra* beneath the navel in man. In order to awaken it, he should undertake *dhyana*. The awakened *kundalini* proceeds from the *mooladhara chakra* to the *sahasrara chakra* (thousand-petalled lotus) through the *swadishtana, manipura, anahata, vishuddha*, and *sjna chakras*.

The aspirant should sit in the *padmasana* with his head, neck and spine in one straight line, as it were, to facilitate the smooth and unimpeded movement of the *kundalini* power. Some hold the view that while

engaged in *dhyana* the gaze should be fixed at the point between the two eyebrows. However, the *Gita* advises us to fix upon the tip of the nose (*nasagra*) and to contemplate upon the Lord who resides in our hearts. To experience the true delight of *dhyana*, the *sadhaka* should not shut his eyes completely, as this would induce him to *laya* or sleep. They should be kept half-open as this would help eradicate the *rajasic* and the *thamasic gunas*.

It is often the experience of the one who is newly initiated into the path of *dhyana*, that he is not able to enjoy fully the bliss of *dhyana* for want of mental tranquillity. His mind, as a result of the intimate association it has had with the external world, with all its fantasies and temptations, is unable to fix itself steadily on the object of meditation. The first imperative in *dhyana*, therefore, is the proper channelisation of thoughts in the desired direction through mind control.

"Practice makes man perfect." To gain perfection even in the most ordinary and routine acts like walking, reading or writing constant practice is necessary. The process of *dhyana* too, calls for steadfast and sincere practice.

The first step in controlling the mind consists in impressing upon it the fact that the world is transient and that, consequently, the pleasures derived therein are momentary. Sensory pleasures give no contentment. The more the sensory desires are satisfied, the more they

grow in number and intensity, just as the fire increases in fury as we feed it with more and more faggots.

The mind has no independent identity of its own. It is a conglomeration of the desires that sprout from the impulses. A cloth is essentially a bundle of threads. Threads, in their turn are basically cotton. Similarly, desires arise from basic impulses and the mind is constituted of these desires. Just as a piece of cloth disintegrates if threads in it are pulled apart, the mind too can be destroyed by the eradication of desires.

The heart can be compared to the sky, the mind, to the moon, and the intellect, to the sun. The thoughts that are generated in the mind are like the clouds that pass away. The cause for one's happiness and misery or pleasure and pain lies in his thoughts. However, these twin ideas of happiness and misery or pleasure and pain obtain relevance only in the world of dualities. Just as the camera gives photographic impressions of the objects upon which it is focused, the mind absorbs the impressions of the objects it is directed at. The more it is directed towards the world of sensory pleasures, the farther it takes man away from God. An episode in the *Ramayana* clearly illustrates this.

Sita, accompanying Lord Rama, went to the forest in an attitude of total renunciation of the world. However, she was enchanted by the golden deer in the forest and desired it. This desire separated her from Lord Rama and she had to languish in Lanka.

Sita is the divine daughter of Mother Earth. She knew fully well that the golden deer in the forest was not real. But she chose to play this drama to warn man of the dangers wrought by a mind that hankers after worldly possessions.

The seeker in his practice of *dhyana,* should not, therefore, be pulled by the fanciful vagaries of the mind. For the pursuit of *dhyana*, purity of heart is essential. Man should realise that the same *Atma* activates all creatures. He should share the joys and sorrows of others as if they are his own. When man develops this feeling of spiritual empathy, he becomes eligible to attain Divinity through the pursuit of *dhyana*.

Man's greatness is not revealed in the mighty tasks that he undertakes ostentatiously. It is displayed rather in the little acts executed with absolute sincerity and largeness of heart. We must seek to sanctify every little work we perform with a sense of dedication to God.

What is the cause of man's misery? Is sorrow natural to man or is it a mere artefact? Ignorance is the ultimate cause of sorrow. Attachment arises from ignorance and leads to birth, which may be called the immediate cause of sorrow. We must, therefore, strive to remove our ignorance and avoid sorrow. Sorrow is not natural to man. Were it so, its elimination would have led to the extinction of the human nature. The baby bubbling over with joy in its cradle points to the fact

that joy is natural to man. With the child playing happily in its cradle, the mother nonchalantly carries on with the household chores. But a sudden cry from the baby makes the mother give up her work and rush to it and search for an insect or an ant that could possibly have made the baby cry.

We never ask anyone why he is happy; on the other hand, we ask a troubled man the reason for his sorrow. Joy is indeed the natural state of man and sorrow is unnatural to him. Human life must radiate joy and happiness; to think otherwise is the result of ignorance. We must recognise and proclaim the real nature of human life and its innate divinity by observing certain disciplinary regulations.

Krishna taught the path of Truth to all mankind through Arjuna. "Arjuna" means purity and sanctity. There is a renowned place of pilgrimage named Srisailam in Andhra Pradesh. A great shrine where *Easwara* is worshipped as Mallikarjuna with His consort as Bhramaramba. If we grasp the inner significance of these two names, we shall be in a position to understand the inner meaning of life. *Mallika* is jasmine and Arjuna means pure and white. Parvathi, the mother of the world is compared to a *bhramara* or a dark bee. Thus the Divine Mother, who is like the dark bee, enters the heart of *Easwara*, who resembles the pure and white jasmine, and drinks the nectar of His love. The bee of our mind must enter the flower of our heart and drink

the nectar of the grace of *Easwara* installed therein.

Often we refer to the "brotherhood of man" as an ideal. But there are several brothers who quarrel among themselves and carry their litigation even up to the Supreme Court. To recognise the oneness of the Spirit is an even higher ideal than that of the brotherhood of man. Therefore, seekers must strive to go beyond the level of brotherhood of man and realise through experience that the same *Atma* dwells in all creatures.

22

Akshara Brahman— The Universal God

Whom the Muslims call Allah,
The Christians address as Jehovah,
The Vaishnavites adore as Phullabjaksha (Lotus-eyed Vishnu),
The Saivites worship as Sambhu,
Whom people at all time regard with devotion,
He who bestows wealth and prosperity on all
He is our Saviour!
Know that He is the one and only Paramatma.

Embodiments of love!

People give various forms and names to God according to the type of devotion they

practise. In modern times, however, a universal concept of God acceptable to all religious traditions is necessary. The monistic concept of Divinity expounded to Arjuna by Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* harmonises the teachings of all religions and reconciles all traditions.

Akshara means a letter. But etymologically, *akshara* means something that is imperishable. *Akshara* is the Form; *Aumkara*, its Name, and spirituality, its, content. It is a universally acceptable Form of Truth. Its *swabhava* or intrinsic nature is not the interaction of the *trigunas,* or the three primordial attributes, but is *Divya Prakruthi* or Divine Nature from which emanates the entire universe. This monistic divine *Atma* manifests multiplicity in the world and this is the *Gita* concept of God. The monistic *Atma* undergoes no change; it neither increases nor decreases. That is why it has been designated as *akshara* or the imperishable. It is an undecaying integral reality.

Unity is the primal number. "One" contains all other numbers and all numbers can be derived from "one." We have to recognise the inner significance of this fact. All other numbers are not different from "one". They are only forms of "one". For example, "four" contains four ones or 1 + 1 + 1 + 1=4. If you add 1 to 4, you get 5. In such arithmetical processes, numbers either increase or decrease in their value. But number "1" remains an integral number without any change or modification.

While the phenomenal world is subject to change and decay, the divine Reality is indestructible. *Akshara* symbolises the indestructible divine Reality. All religious traditions proclaim that God the manifestation of *akshara* is eternal and people of all faiths accept this idea. The so-called theological differences are not really fundamental. *Aum* is the primordial *akshara* and all the other letters are its derivatives. The divine letter *Aum* represents the *Parabrahman*. The comprehension of the essence of the *Parabrahman* is known as *Brahma Vidya* or the knowledge of *Brahman*. That is why the eighth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* has been given the title of *Akshara Parabrahma Yoga*.

Secular knowledge is no doubt necessary for getting on in life. The Bliss of spirituality cannot be achieved without the minimal necessities of life. But secular knowledge is not the be-all and end-all of human existence. Spiritual knowledge is, as a matter of fact, more important than material knowledge. All branches of human knowledge are like rivers and spirituality is like the unfathomable and uncharted ocean. Just as the rivers flow into the sea and merge in it, all secular knowledge fulfils itself in spiritual knowledge.

The primordial nature of *akshara* transcends all attributes. It is *nirguna* or devoid of all attributes, and it is *niranjana* or devoid of attachment. Every *akshara* or letter in *Bhagavad Gita* proclaims the transcendental and immanent reality of the *Paramatma*.

"O, Ignorant fool! Chant the name Govinda. Your knowledge of grammar will not help you in the hour of death," said the great philosopher-saint Sankara. All our encyclopaedic knowledge and profound scholarship cannot rescue us from the certainty of life and death.

There was once a very learned *pundit* who had mastered all the *Vedas* and the *Sastras*. He set out one day for a neighbouring village. On the way, he had to board a boat to cross a river. To pass the time, he began asking the boatman some questions. "Can you tell the time by looking at a watch?" was the first query. The simple boatman replied that he could not. At this, the arrogant *pundit* laughed derisively and told the poor man that a quarter of the latter's life was as good as wasted in the river.

The next enquiry was whether the boatman could read a newspaper. When the boatman confessed his illiteracy, the proud *pundit* mockingly told him that half of his life was lost in the river. The scholar then asked the boatman if he could sing a song. Upon giving the answer in the negative for the third time, the simple boatman was derogatorily told that three-fourths of his precious life was sunk in the river, as it were. After some time, the sky was overcast with dark clouds and a terrific wind began to blow. A fierce storm having broken out, the boat was being tossed hither and thither by the swirling waters of the river. The boatman then asked the proud *pundit*, "Sir, can you swim? If you can't,

the whole of your life has been wasted." The hapless *pundit* could not swim. All his pedantry and scholarship failed to come to his rescue at this hour of need and he was swept away by the current. The unlettered boatman who could swim like a fish crossed the river and reached the other bank safely.

Samsara Sagara is the ocean of life. For crossing the ocean of life safely, a person should develop faith in *Paramatma*. Spiritual awareness alone will enable us to swim across the perilous ocean of life.

A person may follow any religion he likes or join any sect he likes. But all people, consciously or unconsciously, chant *Aumkara*. There may be denominational differences and the modes of worship may change. Each religion has its own set of dogmas. Muslims may not approve of the Hindu mode of worship. Similarly, Christians may condemn the Muslim mode of worship. But those are only superficial differences. *Akshara* or the divine letter that represents the imperishable substance of the divine monistic Reality is indisputable. It is the immutable and indestructible reality of Divine Omnipresence.

The division of the *Bhagavad Gita* into various chapters is only meant to suit our convenience. The entire text has an inseparable and indivisible organic unity. All the chapters are interdependent. The human body consists of various limbs and organs but they cannot, however, have an independent and isolated

existence. In the same way, the Omnipresent Divine Reality of the *Paramatma* constitutes the central theme of all the chapters of the *Gita* and interconnects them.

Just as there is divine nature behind the phenomenal nature, there is also the divine mind behind the phenomenal mind. True spirituality lies in the recognition and apprehension of the Divinity underlying the phenomenal world of mind and matter.

The universe can be regarded as an integral number. Just as the primal number "1" is an integral part of all other conceivable numbers, divinity is substantial to the world. Similarly, *Aum* is the primordial *akshara* from which all other sounds and letters have emanated. We must ultimately recognise and experience the one monistic and non-dualistic reality behind the phenomenal multiplicity of forms and names. We must give up attachment to the mutable and perishable physical body in order to appreciate and apprehend the spiritual unity in material diversity. We must try and merge with the *akshara* or the undecaying reality of *Brahman*. We must go from darkness to light and from death to immortality.

The *deha* or the physical body is only an *upadhi* or instrument. It is the spirit within which is the *sakthi* or the witness. *Karma* cannot cease as long as attachment to the decaying body continues. Attachment to the body should be substituted by the realisation of the reality of the Atma. The *deha* or the physical body

composed of the five elements, namely, earth, fire, water, air and ether, and subject to disease, decay, and death, cannot cross the ocean of *samsara*. That is why one must surrender himself at the Lotus Feet of God and realise that he is not the *deha* (the mortal body) but the *dehi* (the divine *Atma* inhabiting the *deha*), not the *sarira* (body) but the *sariri* (the divine *Atma* residing in the *sarira*).

Why should you buy an ordinary cow when you have with you the kama dhenu, the wish-fulfilling divine cow? Why should you grow fond of a fruit tree in your orchard when you have found the *kalpatharu*, the wish-fulfilling divine tree? Having found the Bliss of the *Atma*, why should you crave for the inferior pleasures of the body?

The sky is reflected in the water in a vessel. When the vessel breaks, the image of the sky merges with the limitless sky. So also, with the disintegration of the physical body, the Atma merges with the *Paramatma*. Krishna exhorted Arjuna to meditate on the Immutable *Akshara* in order to experience the Omnipresent Reality of the *Paramatma*. Reminding Arjuna of his role in the divine drama of the universe, Krishna told him that he was only an instrument of the Divine Will. He poured the nectar of the *Gita* into Arjuna's being and granted him immortality.

23

AUM—The Name Of God

Born in water and momentarily floating on it, the water-bubble disappears into the water; Nara (man), likewise, emerges from Narayana (God) and merges back into Him.

Embodiments of Love!

The concept of the indestructibility of the Supreme Being or the *Akshara* aspect of Reality is acceptable to all religions and creeds. The basis for the acceptance of God as the Eternal Being and as the Cosmic Enrapturer is His indestructibility. *Aksharathwa* or indestructibility is the Form of God and for this indestructible God, *Aum* is the name. *Aum*, the primordial Word, contains the essence of all the *Vedas* and is the source of all the *Sastras*. It provides the basis for the core of all religious teaching and eclectic knowledge.

Aum is comprised of three syllables, "A", "U" and "M", each of which has profound connotations. *Aum* is the primordial Word, which gives life (*chaitanya*) to all other words. All the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, and the *Puranas* have extolled the *Pranava* (*Aum*) in many ways.

It is not possible for anyone to fully cognise or even describe the integral form of the sacred word *Aum*. It is an integral word that stands for the Divine. It is *Sabda Brahmamayi* (the audible form of *Brahman*), *Charachara Mayi* (pervading the universe of the animate and inanimate beings), *Jyothir Mayi* (resplendent, divine Light), *Vaang Mayi* (Speech), *Nityananda Mayi* (Eternal Delight), *Paratpara Mayi* (Transcendental), *Maya Mayi* (the mother of *maya* itself—the creative consciousness of *Brahman*), and *Sri Mayi* (Auspiciousness). *Aum,* thus, has the foregoing eight *Aishwaryas* or divine treasures. It is divinely precious and should be recognised as the Name of God.

This world is *kshara*, subject to decadence and destruction. Nevertheless, in this world, which is destructible, the *Akshara Parabrahman* or the indestructible, transcendental *Brahman* manifests Itself. *Brahman* permeates the world (*kshara*), but *Brahman* is not subject to *kshara* (destruction).

In the pot you have mud. But in the mud, pots do not exist. Pots are the result of a process of *kalpana* (creation) and therefore perish. Yet, mud exists in the

pots. A bubble of water arises from water because of the process of *kalpana* and hence dissolves back. Nevertheless, in the water-bubble too, water is present as the film that envelopes the air within. In a similar manner, the *Akshara* manifests itself in the creation and is present in it along with *kshara. Aum* demonstrates this.

In the *Ramayana*, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna exhibit the qualities associated respectively with the three syllables "A", "U" and "M" of *Aum*. *Aum* itself is personified in Rama. In the *Bhagavad Gita,* Krishna declares that He is the *Pranava* (*Aum*) in the *Vedas*—"*Pranavasya sarva Vedeshu*". Patanjali has extolled the *Pranava* as being an apt name for God, "*Tasya vachakah Pranavah*". In the Hindu religion, there is no *mantra* or *Sastra* that does not have *Aum* as its basis. We should, therefore, try to understand the profound significance of the sacred *Pranava*, the primordial word.

Aum is a Name of God which can find universal acceptance. The Christians say Amen in their prayers every day. It is only a different form of *Aum*. *Aum* has universal relevance and applicability. It cuts across all barriers of time, place, religion and culture, and can be uttered by all men.

Life is a mighty river and desires constitute its water. Thoughts are the innumerable little waves in this river. Aspirations are the crocodiles that abound in it

and illusions are its whirlpools. Only a *yogi* can cross such a terrible river, as he alone has gained control over the modifications of the mind, "*yogah chitta vritti nirodhah*", as Patanjali says.

The flow of water in an ordinary river may increase or decrease, but the river of life, with ever-multiplying desires as its water, knows no decrease. It may become so wide as to be a boundless expanse of uncontrollable, turbulent waters. To cross such a river, therefore, a boat is absolutely necessary. *Aum*, the name of God, is the boat that takes you across this river. The ancient *rishis* had crossed the turbulent river of life with the help of the boat of *Pranava*, with ease. *Pranava* has the power to save the world from *pralaya* (great deluge).

In our worldly affairs, we follow several paths to fulfil our desires. In experiencing the fulfilment of our desires, we invariably pass through three stages. They are *priyam*, *modam*, and *pramodam*. Here is an illustration. You hear that some delicious mangoes are available in the market. This news itself gives you a sense of pleasant anticipation and makes your mouth water. This pleasure is really the experience of *priyam*. It is illusory and is brought about primarily by thought or imagination. Then, you go to the market and buy a mango. The act of purchasing the mango also gives you some pleasure or happiness called *modam*; this too, however, is not lasting and cannot satisfy you. You finally eat the mango and experience the joy of

satisfaction. This is the ultimate experience of happiness and is called *pramodam*.

But even this *pramodam* is not a lasting experience so long as the object desired is a worldly object. Man gets real and everlasting happiness only if he desires for God and treads the Godward-path. When the mind is steadfastly centred on the Lord, *priyam*, *modam* and *pramodam* acquire a divine character and confer the Bliss of Immortality on man.

In philosophical parlance, desiring, acquiring the object desired and enjoying the object acquired (*priyam*, *modam*, and *pramodam*) are also regarded as relating to the three stages of *sravana* (listening), *manana* (ruminating in the mind over what has been heard), and *nididhyasana* (imprinting in the heart what has been ruminated upon). Merely listening to sacred words will not help. It should be followed by recapitulation and deep contemplation.

Sravana may be compared to the act of cooking in the kitchen, *manana,* to that of bringing the food to the dining room, and *nididhyasana*, to that of eating the food and absorbing it in the human body. It is only when you eat the food that you get nourishment. So also, only *nididhyasana* can help you attain *jnana.*

It is only when you follow this threefold path of *sravana*, *manana*, and *nididhyasana* do you understand the nature of the three *gunas* (*sathwa*, *rajas*, and *thamas*),

visualise the forms of the Holy Trinity (Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwara), and recognise the transience of the three worlds, that you can get the eternal Bliss of the Atma.

Remember that you should merge in God even as the bubble of water merges in the water whence it comes from, and chant the *Pranava* within you repeatedly!

24

The Perennial Philosophy

People have lost the fear of sin. Wickedness has become rampant. Devotion to God has disappeared. Indescribable vice has become the order of the day. Even anchorites have become engrossed in worldly avocations. It is high time that man thought of the Lord and sought the pathway to HIM.

Indian mysticism and the perennial philosophy of spirituality are based on the *Bhagavad Gita,* which enshrines the quintessence of all the *Upanishads*. In those ancient times when modern empirical science had not yet blazed a new trail, *Vedic pundits* had gained an insight into nature. They had developed the tremendous faculties of the mind and even acquired control over natural phenomena. With the aid of their higher spiritual powers, they were able to harness the

material forces of nature. They exemplified the triumph of mind over matter. India has inherited this spiritual tradition of the great *rishis* and holy men of antiquity.

Knowledge of the *Vedas* enabled our ancient *pundits* to do good and to ward off evil. *Karma Kanda*, the chapter on rituals, consists of *mantras* or spiritual incantations. The Brahmanas also constitute an important part of the *Vedas* and deal with the correct procedures for performing *yajnas* and *yagas*. Being ceremonial rites for acquiring mundane pleasures, such ceremonies, however, cannot offer *Atmananda* or the pure bliss of the *Atma*. They can only enhance sensory enjoyment and provide epicurean pleasures which are intrinsically transient. The search for the pure abiding bliss of the *Atma* led the ancient *rishis* to the solitude of forests. There they performed *thapas* for enlightenment and liberation. These sages have communicated the spiritual wisdom revealed to them through the *Upanishads*. These mystical revelations are known as the *Upanishads* because they take one closer to the Divine.

Many regard the *Upanishads* as the end-portion of the *Vedas* and therefore designate them collectively as the *Vedanta*, the essence and acme of Indian mysticism. There is an intimate relationship between *jnana* (wisdom) and *vidya* (education). Education can become an aid to wisdom. Education imparts information that is formally known as knowledge.

Wisdom is the spiritualization and sublimation of this knowledge. Real education should not end with the acquisition of knowledge alone, but should transform it into wisdom. True education should lead to liberation from the world of sorrow. But, modern education has, instead, a paradoxical effect on the individual. It has led to the accretion of sorrow and not its elimination. As modern education has advanced, sorrow also has increased. With the explosion of education, the totality of misery in the world has increased enormously. Modern education is thus not conducive to redemption from *dukha* or worldly sorrow. The cause for this multiplication of human sorrow may be traced to man's lack of faith in the essential unity underlying the phenomenal multiplicity. Selfishness, the source of human sorrow, is a concomitant of *ahamkara* or egoism. *mamakara* is extended egoism or selfishness extended to kith and kin and to personal belongings. The combination of *ahamkara* and *mamakara* results in *moha* or attachment to the evanescent objects of the world.

Jnana or spiritual wisdom is an immediate and intimate experience of the absolute, eternal and divine Reality. Truth is one. It becomes false and self-contradictory if it involves dichotomies and relativities. The universe is not composed of two ontologically distinct substances.

"*Aum iti ekaksharam Brahma,*" "*Sathyam*, *Jnanam*, *Anantam Brahma*." *Akshara* means the

undecaying, undying and imperishable substance. *Akshara* is the Absolute Reality. *Jnana* or spiritual wisdom is *Akshara*. *Anantam* or infinitude is also *Akshara*. The primordial *Akshara* is immanent in all *Aksharas*. A vision of the primordial *Akshara* is vouchsafed to one who has acquired spiritual insight or to one who is endowed with the eye of spiritual wisdom. The trinity of *sathyam*, *jnanam*, and *anantam* (truth, wisdom, and infinitude) should be visualised as an integral and inseparable Reality. The essence of spiritual wisdom lies in apprehending and experiencing the oneness of the trinity of *sathyam*, *jnanam*, and *anantam*. This mystical experience can be acquired by cultivating *samyama* or equanimity. *Samyama* is synonymous with the control of sensory organs.

Control over sensory organs can be attained by constant, steady and systematic practice. It is the privilege of man alone to overcome his natural instincts and change his habits. The tiger in a circus can be taught many kinds of feats. However, it is by nature a carnivorous animal and can never be changed into a mild, herbivorous animal. The tiger wants meat when it is hungry. Can a tiger ever eat *puries* instead of meat? It is an instinct of the tiger to eat flesh. You cannot think of a vegetarian tiger. Instinct cannot be changed. You may feed a cat with milk and curds, but at the very sight of a rat, it will pounce on it and gobble it up. A cat's instinct is to eat rats.

Man has the ability to learn new things and to change himself. Unlike animals, he is endowed with infinite capacity for learning and can transform himself into a better person. He can sublimate and refine his instincts and give up his vicious habits. He can achieve anything by his own effort.

Nevertheless, today we find man's inhumanity to man everywhere. He has lost his capacity for pure and selfless love. If an ant sees a lump of jaggery, it will not eat it up selfishly. It brings all other fellow ants and eats the lump of jaggery in their company. It selflessly shares its food with others. An ant is instinctively unselfish. But man is selfish in all his activities. He seems to be habitually narrow-minded and selfish.

We look down upon the crow with contempt. When it caws near our houses, we pelt it with stones. But a crow never eats alone. It is the most gregarious bird. When it comes across a heap of rice it invites all other crows and shares the rice with them. What have the ants read? What university degrees do the crows possess? Every human being must learn the lesson of mutual love and co-operation from ants and crows.

Man does not live by bread alone. He lives by the Atma. *Bhakthi* (devotion) and *prapatti* (surrender), and not *bhukti* (greed) and *yukti* (deceit), should form the basis for man's life and lead to the blossoming of spiritual wisdom in his heart.

Saint Ramdas was a great devotee of Rama and

he composed thousands of verses in His adoration. He wanted to know which of them really appealed to Rama. However, he had no way of knowing and so he gathered the leaves of his manuscript and dropped them into the river Godavari. All but a few leaves, containing a hundred verses, sank in the water. Only a hundred appealed to Rama as they were composed with sincerity of feeling and one-pointed attention. They were the greatest compositions of Ramdas. They were spontaneous creations of a heart inspired by sincere devotion and absolute self-surrender. The verses which sank into the water were those composed by him with pride and for pomp. Sincerity is the essential criterion of devotional poetry. *Bhakthi* or devotion to God is not enough, it must be coupled with purity of heart.

Sense-control too is a necessity. To stop a running train or a bus, the brake has to be applied. An engine driver brings the train to a halt by pulling a small lever. The sensory organs of man work at a tremendous speed. The terrific agitation to which our sensory organs are subjected can be tranquillised almost instantaneously by filling our hearts and minds with compassion and wisdom. Every person must cultivate universal compassion and develop pure love. He must undertake activities which are dear to the Lord, who is an ocean of compassion.

Usually all parents excuse their prodigal sons who utter lies and steal money at home. But if a servant steals a petty thing, he is at once handed over to the police. If

a son in a family turns out to be a thief, his parents try to reform him by means of affectionate advice and all sorts of inducements. Instead, severe punishment is meted out to a kleptomaniac servant because he happens to be an outsider to the family. In a similar manner, all of us belong to God's family. We have to love God like our father and establish an intimate bond of affection with Him. We must deserve his boundless love and infinite Grace. We may commit sins knowingly or unknowingly, but if we love God wholeheartedly and surrender ourselves to Him, He will surely forgive us.

Krishna advised Arjuna to follow the path of selfless love, implicit devotion and total self-surrender. The unity of divinity must be recognised, comprehended and experienced. The essential unity underlying the phenomenal diversity has to be perceived.

Akshara is the imperishable reality. *Jnana* or spiritual wisdom is the essential nature of *Akshara.* The indestructible form is the refection of Akshara. It is the perfect primordial sound *Aum*. The entire universe is vibrant with the sound of *Aum*. It is erroneous to imagine that sound does not exist just because we cannot listen to it. Sound is a concomitant of all vibrations. Our hearing may not be sensitive enough to register the subtle sounds produced by subtle vibrations. All movements are accompanied by vibrations and vibrations are accompanied by sound. Even the winking

of an eye causes subtle vibrations which produce subtle sounds.

Aumkara is the primordial sound of *Brahman*. It is the primal effulgence and the source of all knowledge. It is the ultimate, absolute and eternal Reality. Krishna imparted the esoteric knowledge of *Aumkara* to Arjuna with great love and affection.

During *sandhyavandana*, every sentence should be preceded by the utterance of *Aum*. But some ignorant people utter *Aum* at the end of each sentence as a matter of practice. *Aum* is like a powerful engine which leads all the compartments—incantations and invocations. India is the country which has led other countries along the path of spirituality. She is the land of the *Avatars*, of the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, and the *Bhagavad Gita*. The *Vedas* have prescribed various ceremonial rites and rituals for the welfare of humanity. India is a *Yoga Bhumi*, the land of *yoga* or communion with the Godhead. India is a *Thyaga Bhumi*, the land of supreme self-sacrifice. India is a *Karma Bhumi*, the country destined to lead other countries along the path of spirituality. However, it is our sacred duty to see that spiritual decadence and degeneration are not allowed to change this great country into a *Roga Bhumi*, a land of diseases.

Thyaga is sacrifice. Indeed, life cannot exist without *thyaga*. The inhalation of oxygen and the exhalation of carbon dioxide and blood circulation in

various organs of the body symbolise sacrifice. Thus, sacrifice is indispensable for the physical well-being of the human body. Similarly, sacrifice is of paramount importance for the spiritual well-being of man. Students should have the spirit of sacrifice for their physical, mental and spiritual welfare. The value of *yaga* has been emphasised by the *Bhagavad Gita* in the most vivid manner and in the most picturesque language.

25

The Voyage Of Death

When the thoughts in the mind are pure,
Our actions are blessed with success.
The fruits of our actions are tainted,
If the mind is full of impure ideas

Embodiments of Divine Love!

The fruit of love grows in every tree of life. However, it is covered by lust, anger, envy and ego, making it difficult for us to taste the hidden sweetness. Only those who can peel off the outer skin can enjoy the sweet juice within, although anyone is eligible for such an experience. Untainted by selfishness and fear, this fruit is above the distinctions of race, caste, religion and the stage of life (*varna*).

The supreme *Vedic* wisdom is called *rasa* (juice) by the *Upanishads*. This highest spiritual wisdom has love as its nature. To taste this love, one must rid oneself

of lust, completely surrender himself to the Lord and experience identity with Him. The experience of identity with the Lord leaves no room for desires, while the feeling of being separate from Him, engenders desires. Control of the senses is essential for the attainment of Divinity. One may begin with ordinary love in the beginning and achieve the sanctity of total surrender through gradual and constant practice.

Dhruva, who started his penance with the desire for a kingdom, turned this desire into a longing for spiritual beatitude after he had been blessed with a vision of the Divine. However, the desire for sovereignty was responsible for his getting the vision of the Lord. Therefore, it is remarked that a man cannot develop a yearning for liberation without passing through the initial stage of desire for worldly objects.

The nature of *Akshara* and *Aumkara* as expounded in *Akshara Para Brahma Yoga*, the eighth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita,* should be understood. The phrase "*Prana prayane prabhoh*" compares life to a journey. Krishna taught Arjuna about the nature and destination of this journey of life. The various journeys by car, bus, train or aeroplane undertaken by man in daily life are regulated by considerations of time. But the journey of *prana* or life has been going on ever since creation began and shall go on forever. Unlike other journeys, this journey can never be canceled or even postponed! It is inevitable for all men, be he prince or

peasant, messiah or mendicant. Forgetting that this ultimate journey is unavoidable for all those who come into this world with a body, man is foolishly arrogating immortality unto himself. Engrossed in the transient matters of the world, he is becoming a victim of misery and suffering.

Childhood is spent with companions and playthings; youth is thrown away in romance and dance; middle age is wasted in the pursuit of wealth and old age is a sad tale of repentance and relentless attachments. Unable to discard evil habits and seek the path of liberation, man wallows in the mire of worldliness and fritters away the precious gift of human life!

To man, who is unable to recognise his innate divinity and is forgetful of his real abode, the *Bhagavad Gita* preaches that divine bliss and perfect love can be attained through surrender and dedication. The absence of trust consumes a man with anxiety and worry. A person on a tour of another region and staying in the house of a friend there, cannot be free to visit the sights of that place if he lacks confidence in his host and does not leave his valuables in the latter's custody. So also, by not reposing trust and faith in the Almighty who is our dearest friend, we are subjecting ourselves to endless worry, difficulty and fear.

The human body composed of the five elements, can drop off at any time and at any place. The wise person recognises the inevitable nature of death and

knows the frail mortal body to be a mere water bubble. Swami Vivekananda used to remind his disciples of this and tell them that the knowledge and awareness of death enables man to understand the nature of truth. We often see that the goods wagons carry the word, "Return" along with the date on which they should be returned to the workshop. The human body is like a goods wagon sent to this illusory world by the Creator. Though the date of return is not marked on it, the body has to be returned on some day or the other. Unable to grasp this truth, we seek ephemeral pleasures and subject ourselves to endless anguish.

We are so engrossed in worldly affairs concerning the present moment that we become mindless of our future. One person is said to have remarked that he has no time even for death! How foolish it is to think so, because death shall never spare anyone. Fascinated by the world of the senses, man is not able to know the truth of his own existence. Recognising the transitory nature of wealth, power and pomp, he should prepare himself for the ultimate journey. When we want to go to a cinema or for an evening walk, we get ready by putting some money in our pockets or putting on our shoes. When we wish to visit a nearby town, we pack our clothes in a bag. But what preparations are we making for the ultimate journey, the voyage of death?

Death is certain. As long as we have this body we must discharge our obligations in an exemplary manner.

When a photographer is taking your picture he tells you to be ready at the time he clicks. If you are not posing correctly at that instant, the photograph taken will not be a good one. However, the Lord is a photographer who takes the photograph without cautioning us with the word, "Ready". Therefore, for us to be photographed well in the film-plate of the Lord's Heart, we should be ready always.

Our body can be compared to a camera. Our mind is the lens and our heart is the film-plate in the camera. Our intelligence acts as the switch and our thoughts provide the flash. When all these synchronise properly, we attain the stage of perfect concentration. Control of the senses is essential for such concentration. Youth is the best period of life to achieve control over the senses. If the senses are not mastered when one is young, they will be irrepressible during old age.

"The old monkey cannot move; its eyes have grown dim; its face is wrinkled; its hair has turned grey", saying thus, youngsters gather around old men and dance mockingly. Sense control must be practised when the mind and intelligence are in proper trim. By turning our vision inwards, we should prevent agitation and excitement from entering our minds. With our spiritual strength enhanced, we should be able to wander fearlessly like a lion in the forest of life and undertake service activities. Instead, however, due to the cultivation of body-consciousness, we are becoming timid and nervous like mere sheep.

Every young man should be like the heroic Abhimanyu who had exclaimed, "When I wish to pounce like a lion on an elephant and tear the enemy to pieces, is it proper for you stop me from going instead of sending me with your blessings?"

Students must plunge into the field of service and reform India. They must banish the rampant ignorance, unrest and injustice from their motherland. They must spread the ideals of truth, righteousness, justice and love, and work for the happiness and prosperity of their fellowmen. Where there is faith, there is love; where there is love, there is peace; where there is peace, there is God and where there is God, there is Bliss. Therefore faith is the basis for the experience of Bliss. Faith is like our Life-breath; it is impossible to live even for a minute in this world without faith.

It is My hope that you will develop your self-confidence, strengthen your faith in Divinity and discharge your daily duties in a spirit of absolute surrender. Just as a torch light is superfluous to see the moon which can be visualised with the aid of its own light, God (the embodiment of love) is perceived only through Love. Thus, in order to realise Him, we should enrich our hearts with Divine Love.

26

The Sovereign Knowledge

Can we say, "This is good" and "That is bad" when both this and that are God's creation?

Embodiments of the Divine Atma!

Among all the branches of knowledge, spiritual knowledge is unique. It is also the most esoteric of all secrets. Vyasa, who was a *trikala jnani* (one aware of the past, present, and future) was the first to codify spiritual knowledge and he was its foremost exponent. It was he who defined and delineated the discipline of spirituality.

Spiritual knowledge has been designated in the ninth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* as the *raja vidya* (sovereign knowledge). This *raja vidya* is the most invaluable treasure of our ancient heritage. It has been preserved and nurtured for millennia by our great *rishis*.

However, today, we are witness to a degradation of the moral and spiritual wealth of our country. In this land of spirituality, there is a poverty of spiritual thought and discrepancy in moral conduct. Like begging for cheap food outside when in the house itself there is an abundance of rich and tasty food, Indians, not realising the fund of spiritual wisdom available with them, are beseeching the materially advanced countries for new-fangled ideas and ideologies. We are seeking to acquire and promote secular knowledge at the expense of spiritual knowledge, just for the sake of eking out a livelihood.

Sraddha (perseverance) is an essential precondition to the acquisition of spiritual knowledge. Nothing can be accomplished without perseverance, patience and tenacity of purpose. Students of the present day forego food and sleep and cram guidebooks and notes for the mere passing of their examinations. This way, they do display a fair amount of *sraddha* in their secular studies. But alas, as regards their spiritual progress, they do not exhibit even an iota of *sraddha*.

Spiritual knowledge is the *elan vital* of man. It is indispensable for attaining inner tranquillity and a comprehensive world view. While the gaining of mastery over the sciences or the arts cannot determine our destiny, it is spiritual knowledge alone that can draw our fate line.

Anasuya or the absence of envy, jealousy, and malice is a prerequisite for gaining an intimate, immediate and personal experience of the omnipresent reality of Divinity. Every spiritual aspirant must necessarily cultivate the quality of *anasuya*. It is a divine characteristic which makes a man's personality pure and pellucid.

Asuya or chronic jealousy is the source of all mental and physical ailments in this world. In order to acquire mental equipoise and inner tranquillity, man should make his heart pure by purging his mind of this psychological mania called jealousy. Man must first humanise himself before attempting to divinize himself. To feel jealous of others, even in trivial matters, suppresses the humanitarian instincts of a person. Men, today, waste all their time and energy in blaming others without realising that to search for and find faults in others is the most grievous and ghastly sin. Arjuna was completely free from the deadly qualities of envy, jealousy, and malice. That is why he acquired the appellation of *Anasuya* and deserved the nectarine message of the *Bhagavad Gita* from Krishna.

The ninth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* is of paramount importance. It deals with the *raja vidya* (sovereign knowledge) and *raja guhya* (sovereign secret). It is concerned with occult experience and the esoteric mysteries of the human soul. This chapter is in the middle of the *Gita* text and is like a beautiful bouquet

that links the two halves of a gorgeous garland of fragrant flowers that the various other chapters in the *Bhagavad Gita* are. And in this central chapter is contained the supreme knowledge of the Atma.

Bhutabhrit means the bearer, supporter and sustainer of the myriad of living creatures. *Bhutasthah* implies that He dwells in all creatures. In other words, God is the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer of all creatures and dwells in them all.

The *adheya* (supported) cannot exist without the *Aadhara* (supporter). All mundane pleasures constitute the *aadheya*. The essential substance of the *Atma* is the *aadhara*. That is to say, all experiences, both mundane and spiritual, are regulated by the *Atma*.

Laymen glibly talk about the mind without knowing what exactly the form and shape of mind is. People say that they are feeling happy. But what is the form of happiness? They also talk of *Ananda* or bliss. What is the perceptible evidence for bliss? Words like mind, happiness and bliss are abstractions which do not have existence in space and time. Nevertheless, they subsist in a special sense. Though they do not exist in form, none can deny the fact that they are real individual experiences. In a similar manner, all spiritual experiences are incommunicable, non-demonstrable and subjective.

We may read in the newspaper that a certain king has died in a foreign country. As such, we have no

personal knowledge of the king's death. Neither have we seen his dead body. The news of his death has been telegraphically transmitted to us. Nonetheless, we believe in the news. But, at the same time, we doubt and deny the personal testimony of great *rishis*, who gained the sublime experience of the Self through vigorous austerities and penance. A person with discrimination and an open mind should not deny or condemn the self-certifying validity of the profound and mystical experiences of the great *maharishis*.

Spiritual knowledge can be acquired by every individual. "Where there is a will, there is a way." The first step on the path of spirituality is the acquisition of *anasuya* or freedom from envy, jealousy, malice, and covetousness. *Asuya* or jealousy should be completely rooted out of the human heart and *sraddha* or perseverance should be cultivated instead. The *Atma* should be visualised through meditation. The sincere and persistent *sadhaka* will then certainly have spiritual experiences and mystical revelations.

We may want to prepare delicious "sambar". For this purpose, we may make use of fresh vegetables, good dal and clean tamarind. Like Nala or Bhima, the cook may be an expert. But if the brass vessel used for cooking is not properly silvered or coated with tin, all the "sambar" cooked in it, is bound to be spoiled. Similarly, though there are nine modes of worship, unless the devotee has a pure heart, none of them will be effective. Of what

use is all the counting and telling of beads if the heart is tainted with envy, jealousy and malice?

Egoism and divinity are incompatible. An egoist can never aspire for the life divine. Ego should be completely annihilated in order to progress along the path of spirituality. However, self-confidence, as different from ego, is of supreme importance in spiritual progress. A man who has no faith in himself cannot have faith in God. Self-confidence and faith in God are always found in juxtaposition. They complement each other.

Faith is a cardinal virtue and faith in God is a prop in life. Though God dwells in everybody, unless one has faith in God, he cannot become divine. Some people might say that they will believe only after they experience. But that is like putting the cart before the horse. In spirituality, faith always precedes experience.

"*Vidya* without *sraddha* is futile", said Swami Vivekananda. *Sraddha* (perseverance coupled with the capacity to take pains) is absolutely indispensable for *adhyatma vidya* (the science of the Self). Young men and women of the present day do have an abundance of *sraddha*. But, unfortunately, all their *sraddha* is diverted to dramas, novels, cinemas, radio, television, cricket and horse racing. This misplaced *sraddha* has resulted in their physical debilitation and mental corruption, with the result that they have not only lost faith in God but in themselves too.

Spirituality is an activity. It is an activity of the Atma. Just as a man cannot say that he will jump into the water only after he has learned swimming, he cannot say that he will plunge himself into the depths of spiritual experience only after he has fully comprehended spirituality.

Consider the example of earth's rotation about its own axis and its revolution around the sun. The sun, all of us know, is stationary and it is the earth that revolves round it. The so-called sunrise and sunset are effected by this revolution of the earth rather than by the movement of the sun. This is scientifically proved. Nevertheless, the scientists also do talk in the language of the layman in daily life and speak about sunrise and sunset concealing the truth which they know. Similarly, the language of words is gloriously inconsistent to express and explain the great truths of spirituality. The language of experience is the only means to comprehend spirituality.

The scientists have discovered that the earth has the power to attract things to itself and based on this have enunciated the "law of gravity". However, this does not mean that the earth did not have the gravitational force of attraction before the scientists discovered it. Moreover, the force of gravity is imperceptible. We may see a flower dropping from the branch of a tree and falling to the ground, but we cannot perceive the force of gravity that has caused the flower to reach the earth

after disengaging itself from the tree. Similarly, empirical affirmation cannot grant evidential validity to spiritual experience. Neither can man perceive, with his five senses, the subtle forces of spirituality that divinize him.

If a magnet is to attract a piece of iron, the latter should be free from impurities and rust. If a rusted piece of iron is not attracted by a magnet, the magnet is not to be found fault with. Similarly, if the *Atma* is covered with the impurities of the mind, it will not be attracted to the *Paramatma*.

If you look at the world through coloured glasses, it will assume the colour of the glasses. The colour belongs to the glasses and not to the world. To a patient who is suffering from malaria even a sweet "laddu" tastes bitter. The fault lies with the patient and not with the "laddu". Thus, a self-deluded individual cannot grasp the ultimate absolute and eternal Reality of the Atma.

There is electricity in matter. But it does not manifest itself everywhere. Its effect is seen when an electric bulb is connected in the circuit. So also, God is immanent and omnipresent. He is everywhere, but His presence is manifested only in a pure heart. The ninth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* emphasises the need for purity of heart for the realisation of God.

Divinity is permanent while human life is impermanent. We see around us many creatures that are born, grow up, live for some time and perish. This way,

we are aware of the sequence of birth, growth, decay and death. Nevertheless, we delude ourselves and live considering ourselves immoral beings. This is a sign of ignorance and spiritual bankruptcy.

One night, Janaka Maharaja had a dream in which he dreamt that he had lost his kingdom and become a beggar. He was going around the streets of his city and begging for alms. The pangs of hunger made him cry. Some kind-hearted person gave him a morsel of food, but to his great misfortune, even that morsel slipped down from his palm. Just then the horror-stricken king woke up from his dream. He found himself again in his royal palace. The king asked himself, "Which is real—dream world or the conscious world?" The queen who was observing him was also perplexed. They decided to consult the great sage, Vasishta. The sage said, "O King! Both are real in one sense. But there is also another point of view. You became a beggar in the dream world and you are king in the conscious world. You exist in both the worlds. While they are both unreal, you alone are real. You are the absolute reality of the dreaming state as well as the conscious state."

Ekam Sath—the One is Real. Truth is one and its manifestations are many. This is the central doctrine of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

27

The Nature Of Prakruthi

Just as water is needed to make a pot out of dry mud, the combination of Siva and Sakthi is necessary for the creation to come into being.

Embodiments of the Divine Atma!

Purusha and *prakruthi* are the two eternal entities involved in creation. *Purusha*, the masculine entity, is imperishable and permanent; *prakruthi*, the feminine entity, is perishable and impermanent. While *Purusha* is the eternal reality of Divinity or the Cosmic Witness, *prakruthi* or primal matter, is given a motherly connotation. Thus Prakruthi is also referred to as *Bhu Matha* (mother earth), *Loka Matha* (mother of the world), *Jagan Matha* (mother of creation), and *Vishwa Matha* (mother of the universe). Likewise, *Prana Natha* (Lord of life), *Loka Natha* (Lord

of the world), *Jagan Natha* (Lord of the creation), and *Vishwa Natha* (Lord of the universe) are the various names given to the masculine entity—*Purusha*.

In order to understand *prakruthi*, we must know the essence of femininity. *Stri* in Sanskrit means woman. This word *stri* consists of "*Sa*" which stands for *sathwa guna* (purity); "*ta*" which stands for *thamo guna* (inertia) and "*ra*" which stands for *rajo guna* (activity). The essence of femininity, thus, is the conglomeration of these three *gunas*: the *sathwic*, the *rajasic*, and the *thamasic*.

Politeness, humility and forbearance are *sathwic* qualities; shyness, fear, and indolence are *thamasic* qualities; and aggressiveness, wilfulness, and envy are *rajasic* qualities. Generally, *sathwic* and *thamasic* qualities are found to be predominant in women.

Abala or lack of strength is believed to characterise women. They are considered to be timid and capable of performing only the household chores. They are disqualified from performing *yajnas* and *yagas* except when they do so along with their husbands.

However, the converse is also true. For instance, a householder in the *grihasthashrama* (period of domestic life) who is supposed to perform several *yajnas* and *yagas* cannot do so in the absence of his wife. Rama, in the absence of Sita, had to make a golden idol of the latter, as her substitute, when he undertook the

performance of the *sswamedha yaga*. Similarly, Sathya Harischandra was permitted to gift away his kingdom to Viswamitra only when the former's consort, Chandramati, was physically present by his side. Thus, the characteristic of weakness (*abala*) attributed to women is equally applicable in the case of men. Men and women are both the conglomeration of their *gunas—sathwa*, *rajas* and *thamas*—and are subject to the universal laws of *prakruthi* (nature). Viewed from the point of view of creation, both are essentially feminine in their attributes. All creatures suffer from some weakness or the other. When in distress, both men and women cry. Joy and sorrow are common to both. It is improper then to say that women are weak and men are strong.

Moreover, history is replete with instances when women have proved their heroism and valour. Anasuya made Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara little babes and lulled them to sleep in a cradle. Sumati caused the sun not to rise in order to ward off the curse on her husband that he would die at daybreak. Savitri vanquished Yama, the Lord of death and resurrected her dead husband Sathyavan. Madalasa proved her spiritual status and intellectual genius by imparting spiritual knowledge to her sons; and Sulabha defeated Yajnavalkya in philosophical disputation. How then can we call women *abalas* or weak beings? In fact, the *Upanishads*, the *Ramayana*, and the *Mahabharatha* have portrayed

women as *sabalas* or those endowed with strength and courage.

The world is a stage in which every individual is an actor. However, the forms and names of the actors change according to the environment, conditions and circumstances. The *Bhagavad Gita* proclaims that the divine essence of the *Atma* is the same, although forms and names may vary.

"*Ekam Sath viprah bahudhavadanti"*—the One becomes the many. Unity ramifies itself into diversity. The vessel containing water may be made of brass, copper, silver, gold or any other metal, but the sun's reflection is seen in the water with equal brilliance. Similarly, the same divinity is embodied in all creatures.

Prakruthi or nature is the vestment of *Purusha*, the primary principle. The bounties of nature should be enjoyed only with the benediction of *Paramatma*. The miserable fate of Ravana who carried Sita away to the extreme displeasure of Rama, is well known. People with limitless desires cannot recognise the essence of the Atma. Man can gain an insight into the nature of the Atma only when he burns his desires in the fire of wisdom.

There are four *Ashramas* or periods in life—*brahmacharya* (life as a celibate), *grihastha* (life as a householder), *vanaprastha* (life as a recluse), and *sanyasa* (life as an ascetic). There are also four goals in

life—*dharma* (righteous living), *artha* (material well-being), *kama* (achievement of desires), and *moksha* (ultimate liberation). These four can be grouped in pairs. While *artha* and *kama* thrive in modern times, *dharma* and *moksha* have almost disappeared. Modern man craves for wealth and sensual pleasures and neglects righteousness and salvation. Since *dharma* and *moksha* are like the feet and the head of a body, man today seems to be existing without these two essential organs. These four values of life should instead be grouped as *dharma-artha* and *kama-moksha*. In other words, wealth should be acquired for the sake of righteous living, and man should aspire only for liberation. Only such a judicious combination of these four goals shall enable man to find fulfilment in life.

In *grihasthasrama*, the householder is engaged in the pursuit of wealth and fame. In this stage of domestic life, the lady of the house should play the role of the "Goddess of Wealth" by being the custodian of her husband's earnings, and as women are acknowledged to do, spend the money judiciously and wisely.

People who look down upon women and hold them in contempt fail to appreciate their nobility. "Men might have learnt much and seen much, yet they are the servants of their wives", said Thyagaraja. Vice-chancellors who control thousands of students and police officials who protect the public are often found being afraid of their wives at home! Every individual

has to submit to *prakruthi*, the feminine aspect of the universe. *Sakthi* is the essence of feminine energy, which man cannot afford to ignore. The *Bhagavad Gita* has repeatedly stressed the element of femininity in the universe.

"*Sarvajiva namaskaram Kesavam pratigacchathi"*—obeisance to all creatures is obeisance to God. "*Sarvajiva tiraskaram Kesavam pratigacchathi*"—contempt of all creatures is contempt of God. Our scriptures repeatedly affirm that God dwells in every being and that He can be realised here and now. He is within the reach of all. *Prakruthi* is like a *kshetra* or field and *Paramatma* is the *kshetrajna* or the Lord of the field. *Kshetrajna* contains in Himself the *kshetra*. If from the word *kshetrajna* we remove the word *kshetra*, the syllable *jna* remains. *Jna* stands for *jnana* or wisdom. Thus, a person who is a part of *prakruthi* becomes its master by acquiring *jnana* and cognises the eternal reality of the *Purusha*. He realises that the universe is a combination of the *kshara* (destructible) and the *Akshara* (indestructible). He sees the indestructible as immanent even in the destructible world. He develops *ananya bhakthi* or one-pointed devotion. He transcends the man-made barriers of caste, creed and religion. He becomes dear to God.

28

Ananya Bhakthi

From the moment you wake up in the morning till the time you go to sleep at night, your time is spent in eating and drinking alone. Your efforts are directed only towards mundane gains. Forgetful of the Lotus-eyed Lord, what joy can you get in life?

Santhi or peace is a divine attribute. It is the sweet delight of the *Atma*. It is the prized possession of the *Paramahamsa* or the one who has attained the summit of immaculate discrimination. Peace cannot reign in the malice-ridden hearts of selfish people. It can be attained only by those who, with patience, perseverance and forbearance follow the sacred path of spirituality.

Effort is required for achieving results both in the world of mundane affairs and in the spiritual realm.

Sadhana or steady, systematic, and sustained effort alone can confer peace of mind and inner tranquillity. However, the path of *sadhana* does present obstacles to the seeker who will have to overcome them by his perseverance. *Na sukhaat labhyate sukham*—pleasure cannot be the source for further pleasure. There is no joy without sorrow, no pleasure without pain, and no gain without loss. Therefore, abiding joy and everlasting bliss, conferred by the absolute peace and tranquillity of the mind, can be attained only through sincere and painstaking *sadhana*.

"Ask and ye shall be given; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened", says the Bible. These words contain the eclectic essence of all religions. People who claim today that they are asking, seeking and knocking at the door must realise that they are merely asking nature, seeking ephemeral pleasures and knocking at the gates of hell. Such being the case, they cannot expect God to answer, find the path of *moksha* or have the gates of Heaven opened for them. How can *Paramatma* be expected to answer the prayer addressed to *Prakruthi*?

Ananyaschintayantomaam yejanah paryupasate
Tesham nityabhiyukthanaam yogakshemam vahamyaham.

I bear the burden of the welfare and well-being of those who worship Me, and Me alone, with steadfast devotion and are attached to Me at all times.

Thus has the concept of *ananya bhakthi* been fully and vividly explained in the *Bhagavad Gita* by Krishna. *Ananya bhakthi* is one-pointed devotion to God, involving total surrender. One should not fragment his mind and offer just one bit of it to God. The mind in its entirety must be immersed in the Almighty. Once, Uddhava advised the gopis thus, "Ignorant as you are of the *Sastras*, the *Puranas*, and the *Vedas*, you should follow the path of the adepts in *yoga* to attain communion with God." Niraja, one of the gopikas, answered, "We have only one mind, not many; that mind has gone away to Mathura along with Krishna. Devoid of a mind, we are unable to understand you!"

A person with a fragmented mind cannot attain *ananya bhakthi*. A disintegrated mind is an obstacle to spiritual progress. Concentration on God with a fragmented mind is an exercise in futility. Single-minded devotion is the easiest path to salvation. In fact, the *ananya bhaktha* becomes a *jivanmukta* (one liberated during life).

Understanding the essence of *prakruthi* enables one to understand the meaning and mystery of life. Life has seven supreme values namely, *keerthi* (reputation), *sampada* (prosperity), *vaak* (eloquence), *buddhi sakthi* (power of discrimination), *medha sakthi* (suprasensory intelligence), *dhairya* (courage), and *sahana* (forbearance). In order to imbibe the essence of divinity, man should gain mastery over the powers associated with these values of life.

The doer of virtuous deeds commands respect and reputation. Thus, one should engage himself in the performance of action that will benefit all. God's Grace is the greatest wealth. To consider the amassing of money, gold or other material objects as symbols of wealth and social prestige is incorrect. The goal of life, instead, should be the acquisition of the divine wealth of God's Grace.

Real eloquence consists in the exercise of restraint over speech. Excessive talking, use of abusive and obscene language and losing of one's temper while speaking are some of the blunders that the tongue is bound to commit if it is engaged in constant chatter. The tongue is really meant for chanting the various divinely potent names of the Lord like Govinda, Damodara, and Madhava.

Of the five sensory organs, the tongue is the most important. It has a dual role to play, unlike the eye, the ear, the nose and the skin, which have only the single functions of seeing, hearing, smelling, and touching respectively. The tongue has not only the capacity to taste but also the power of speech. The tongue has tremendous alertness and forbearance as is shown by its survival in the midst of thirty-six sharp teeth which may inadvertently bite it at any time. Besides, it displays enormous self-respect and does not leave its abode, the mouth, even under the most difficult circumstances! The wound caused by a slip of the foot may be healed by

medication; on the other hand, the damage caused by a slip of the tongue may be irreparable. That is why the tongue must be carefully controlled at all times.

Aum Bhur Bhuva Suvah
Tat Savitur Varenyam
Bhargo Devasya Dheemahi
Dhiyo Yo Nah Prachodhayat.

So runs the sacred *Gayatri Manthra*, an invocation addressed to the Sun for the improvement of the faculty of *buddhi* or intellect. The darkness of ignorance is dispelled by the incandescence of the *buddhi* which shines its light like the glorious sun. "Among the faculties, I am the buddhi", proclaims Krishna in the *Vibhuthi Yoga* of the *Bhagavad Gita.*

Medha sakthi, which is also essential for the spiritual regeneration of man, should be carefully distinguished from *buddhi sakthi*. *Buddhi* is the power of discrimination exercised over the sensations and perceptions pertaining to the five sensory organs of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. *Medha sakthi* is associated with suprasensory experiences, extrasensory perceptions, intuition and spirituality. It transcends the sensations and perceptions provided by the phenomenal world.

Man should be courageous. Lack of courage leads to doubts, despair, dejection and depression. A person with a faultless and blemishless character shall never

behave like a frightened, trembling sheep. Therefore, developing intellectual integrity and strength of conviction, man should proceed ahead and conquer the evils and temptations of the world.

Forbearance, the paragon of virtues, makes a man remain unruffled by the vicissitudes of life. Neither elated by a happy turn of events nor dejected on the occurrence of a tragedy, a man with fortitude is unperturbed by the ups and downs in the endless drama of life. Such a person endowed with inner tranquillity and peace of mind is the *sthithaprajna* portrayed in the *Bhagavad Gita.*

In the Buddha's times, there was a particular village headman who despised the holy man and his teachings. Once, he heard that Buddha and his disciples were coming to his village. The tyrannical headman ordered all the villagers to shut the doors of their houses and refrain from giving alms to them. While the villagers followed his order, the headman himself stood near the entrance to his own house. Arriving with his followers, Buddha went to the headman's house to ask for alms—"*Bhavati bhikshaam dehi*", he said. The latter lost his temper and hurled abuse upon abuse at Buddha in the most uncivil language. Just as he was about to hit the sage, Buddha smiled and said, "I have a doubt. Suppose you give me alms thatI do not accept. What will you do then!" The haughty headman answered, "I will take them back." Hearing this, Buddha asked in the most polite

manner, "You have offered me insult and calumny. I do not accept them; you must, therefore, take them back." The headman became silent and hung his head in shame and remorse.

A little forbearance and patience on our part will make the abusive epithets of our enemies boomerang on themselves just as a registered letter goes back to its sender if it is returned unaccepted by the addressee.

The aforementioned seven qualities are essential for the development of *ananya bhakthi* and must be cultivated by all *sadhakas*. Krishna told Arjuna, "I am in you and you are in Me. I will be in your vision and you will be in My vision if the barriers between us are broken and spiritual proximity attained. The essence of *ananya bhakthi* is the discovery of your self in Myself and Myself in yourself. You and I are One."

Isavasyam idam sarvam—all this is inhabited by God. Every person is a sanctuary of the divine *Atma*. Therefore, if you hurt others, you will hurt Easwara who resides in them.

29

Work, Worship And Wisdom

If there were no clouds in man's life, it would be difficult to discern the true value of light. So too, there can be nothing extraordinary about happiness which does not arise out of genuine exertion.

Without sathya (truth), dharma (righteousness), santhi (peace), and prema (love), the education that one would have acquired would be meaningless. Charity would bring no merit and the results of all good deeds would verily become naught if man lacks these few virtues. Even so, no heavenly good would accrue to those who wield power in the world, yet lack these cardinal virtues. sathya, dharma, santhi, and prema are the four foundation walls on which the edifice of the grand mansion

of Sanathana Dharma (Eternal, Universal Religion) stands. What else can I make known unto you, O assembly of good and gentle persons!

Embodiments of Love!

Knowledge of *Brahman* is denied unto them who discard the intellect and are enamoured of ephemeral knowledge. To the man who stands on the shores of the sea and observes the stultifying external manifestations, the waves alone appear. Only the daring expert diver who can search the seabed finds the precious pearls lying there. The *Bhagavad Gita* declares that knowledge of *Brahman* is attained only by the person who seeks the Atma in the innermost recesses of his subtle being.

The human body is affected by the impurities connected with the three humours present in the body (*vata* or wind, *pitta* or bilious humour, and *sleshma* or phlegm). So also, the subtle body represented by the mind is tainted by *mala* or impure, evil thoughts and tendencies; *vikshepa* or projection of the unreal as the real, and *avarana* or concealment of the real. As a result of this threefold impurity of the mind, man is unable to attain divine knowledge. So long as his mind has these taints, he cannot gain the knowledge of the Atma.

Mala can be got rid of by means of sacred work,

while *vikshepa* can be removed by worship and *avarana* by wisdom. The *Gita* teaches us that by good and sacred work we can purify our hearts; that by worship we can attain one-pointedness of the mind and that by wisdom we can remove the veil of ignorance and attain union with God. Thus by work, worship and wisdom, man can become divine. However, according to the *Gita*, all these three, that is to say, purification of the mind, one-pointedness of the mind and unitive knowledge of the Godhead, can also be attained by the practice of *Yoga*.

Yoga also means *samathva* or equal-mindedness (*Samathvam yogamuchyathe*). Having regard to the environment in which the ordinary man is placed and to his duties, both secular and spiritual, *samathva* has been found applicable in five different ways. We, accordingly, cognise *samathva* in relation to *prakruthi* or nature, *samaja* or society, *jnana* or knowledge, *karma* or action, and *upasana* or worship. *Prakruthika samathva* is equanimity in relation to *prakruthi* or the various natural phenomena. In cold seasons, warmth gives us comfort, while in hot seasons coolness gives us joy. This way both heat and cold, at one time or the other, give us happiness. Neither subjects us to misery. At times, however, due to the varying intensities of heat and cold, we might be put to some inconvenience. But then these are only subjective and superficial experiences rather than universally applicable realities. Essentially, both heat and cold give us happiness.

In the same manner, pleasure and pain also bring

happiness to us. Without pain, one cannot appreciate the true value of pleasure. It is only in the light of sorrow that joy assumes greater prominence. Thus, pleasure and pain or happiness and misery should be looked upon with an unruffled mind and with the same sense of detachment.

It is very necessary for us to develop *prakruthika samathva*. This is specially so for students who tend to be impulsive and let success and failure influence them easily and profoundly. To be impulsive is a sign of human weakness. Everyone should recognise the truth that pleasure is but an interval between two pains and face the trials and tribulations of the world in a calm and collected manner. The alternating experiences of pleasure and pain actually prod us on along the path of righteousness.

Samajika samathva or the equanimity which man, as an integral part of society, should possess comes next. Society too subjects man to the dual experiences of joy and sorrow. For instance, both praise and blame come to man from the society in which he lives. Praise and blame are like the two faces of the same coin and they always haunt each other. We should be perturbed by neither. We should regard both adulation and censure as stepping stones to progress.

When a well is being dug, the earth that is removed from the pit forms a mound by the side. The mud in the mound is the same mud that was in the pit.

Praise and calumny are like the mound and the pit and are essentially of the same origin. Realising this, the mind should be trained to develop equanimity in terms of man's relationship with and existence in society.

Jnana samathva is the third type of equanimity which we should try to promote in us. This basically consists in recognising the identity of the Atma that permeates all beings, irrespective of caste, colour or creed. Religions may be different, but all of them lead man to the same goal—God. Garments may be different, but the fabric is the same. Ornaments may be various, but the gold is the same. Cows may be of different hues, but the milk is one. The electric bulbs may have varying wattage, sizes and colours, but the electricity that lights them all is the same. Similarly, the *jivas* and the animals are myriad and multiple, but the life-force in all of them is essentially the same. The realisation of this unitive aspect of creation is *jnana samathva*.

The performance of right and sacred actions in a detached manner, without being ruffled by their consequences, either good or bad, is the spirit of *karma samathva* or equanimity in action. And *bhakthi samathva* (equanimity in devotion) consists in the realisation of the truth that Easwara pervades the entire universe and that He is everything, the refuge for all. *Twameva sarvam mama deva deva* is the cry of the person endowed with equanimity in devotion.

It is only when his *bhakthi* (devotion) is constant,

enduring and unwavering that the devotee can attain *bhakthi samathva*. The flow of love for God should always remain the same and be steady. Krishna declared in the *Bhagavad Gita:*

Ananyaschintayantomaam yejanah paryupasate
Tesham nityabhiyuktanaam yogakshemam
vahamyaham.

"I shall look after the material welfare and the spiritual well-being of those who worship Me through one-pointed devotion and are ever attached to Me."

This *ananya bhakthi* or one-pointed devotion comes as a result of the five kinds of *samathva* (equanimity). *Samathva* should be steadfastly maintained and promoted at all times, at all places and in all climes.

The word *manava* (man) has three letters: "*ma*", which stands for ignorance; "*na*", which stands for the negation of the ignorance, and "*va*", which refers to the power to attain divine knowledge. If man is to deserve his name, he should be free from ignorance.

The *Bhagavad Gita* contains the sacred lore of the spirit. Krishna gave unto mankind, through Arjuna, the core of the *Gita* message on the battlefield at 10:30 a.m. on the *Karthika Bahula Amavasya* day. This was the day on which the great Mahabharatha war was commenced. Ten days later, when Bhishma fell in battle,

Sanjaya was informing Dhritharashtra of the proceedings on the battlefield. Dhritharashtra asked Sanjaya:

Dharmakshetre Kurukshetre samavetayuyut-
savaha Mamakah Pandavaschaiva kimakurvata
Sanjaya.

"Gathered on the holy plain of Kurukshetra, O Sanjaya, what did my sons and the sons of Pandu do?"

This was on the *Margasira Suddha Ekadasi* day. Some consider this day as the *Gitajayanti* or the day on which Krishna vouchsafed the message of the *Gita* to Arjuna. But this was the day on which Sanjaya narrated the story of the battle to Dhritharashtra. The *Gita* was actually given by Krishna to Arjuna on the *Karthika Bahula Amavasya* day.

Why did Krishna choose the *Amavasya* day for the commencement of the battle and so for the teaching of the *Gita*? Normally, nothing auspicious is done on an *Amavasya* day. However, such examples of Krishna's divinely enigmatic ways are there in the other episodes of His life, too. His birth on an *Ashtami* day itself is a case in point. Krishna was born on July 20, 3227 BC, during the early morning at 3 a.m. The battle of Mahabharatha took place in the year 3141 BC, when Krishna was 86 years old. In these 5119 years that have passed since the Mahabharatha war, the *Gita* message has spread to every nook and corner of the world.

Students of the present day conveniently forget

the injunction to engage in *ananya chinta* (constant remembrance) but crave for *yoga kshema.* The Lord assures you that He will look after your *yoga* and *kshema*. *Yoga* is the *prapti* (obtaining) of the unattainable and the Lord should confer it on you; while *kshema* is the experiencing of something that is rightfully your due. Here is an illustration for this. While reading a book, you keep a five-rupee note in it and as time passes, you forget about it. However, on a later date, you are in need of five rupees and so ask for it from a friend who has come to visit you. The friend accidentally picks up the book, comes across the five rupees in it and hands it over to you. The money is actually yours and the friend has only given you what is really your own. In the same way, joy is within you though you are unaware of it. The *sadguru* is the friend who helps you unearth this treasure of happiness that is lying hidden in your own heart.

"Duty without love is deplorable. Duty with love is desirable. Love without duty is Divine." Duty implies force or compulsion while love is spontaneous and expresses itself without external promptings. All the *japa*, *dhyana*, and the deeds of merit you perform will be futile if you do not cultivate universal and selfless love.

Even if you offer only a leaf (*patram*), a flower (*pushpam*), a fruit (*phalam*), or a drop of water (*thoyam*) to God in the true spirit of devotion and surrender, the

results will be infinitely good.

You have been listening to the teachings of the *Gita* for about a month now. No purpose, however, will be served by mere listening. *Sravana* (listening) should be followed by *manana* (recapitulation) and *nididhyasana* (assimilation).

30

Vibhuthi Yoga And Practical Life

Who makes the sun rise and set regularly, and race across the sky everyday?
Who makes the stars that spangle the sky at night vanish by day?
Who makes the Wind-god sustain, without respite for a moment, billions of lives the world over?
Who has made the bubbling brook that gurgles along its winding course forever?
Why then should there be man-made barriers of caste, creed and wealth?
Worship Him, the Lord of the Universe, to whose command all are bound.
Do not deny the Lord just because you do not see Him. Your ignorance denies you the vision of God even as daylight renders the stars invisible to you.

Embodiments of Love!

For many millennia, the *Bhagavad Gita* has been propagating the high ideals of the life divine. It is a peerless spiritual text that has brought great fame to Bharath. It has been the special privilege of Bharath to have received the *Bhagavad Gita.* The *Gita* is a unique scriptural poem, unsurpassed in metaphysical content by the texts of any other country.

Unfortunately today, however, there is a growing miscomprehension of the message of the *Gita*. Some say that the *Gita* teaches the path of action or *karma marga*. Others aver that it proclaims the path of devotion or *bhakthi marga* alone. And quite a few hold that the *Gita* expatiates on the path of wisdom or *jnana marga* alone. Thus, depending on their own subjective experiences and powers of understanding, different people have been developing varying ideologies based on the teachings of the *Gita*.

The *Gita* observes no distinctions on the basis of caste, creed, community, or nationality or between men and women. It is an eclectic and catholic scripture, transcending all man-made barriers, and is of universal relevance. It reveals the importance of one's own *dharma* or duty (*swadharma*) to all those who study it in a spirit of adoration.

"*Dharmakshetre kurukshetre*...." So runs the first verse of the *Gita*. The first word of the first line is

Dharma. The last word of the last verse of the *Gita* is *mama* (*Yatra Yogeshwarah Krishna....Dhruva nitir matir mama*). The fusion of *mama* and *dharma* is *mama dharma*, which means one's own *dharma* or *swadharma*. Thus, the *Bhagavad Gita* teaches each individual the principles of his own *dharma*.

The articulator of the *Gita* is Krishna. Krishna, however, is also the person who heard the *Gita* and wrote it. This statement may be surprising to you. "Was it not Arjuna who heard the *Gita*? How could Arjuna be Krishna? Was it not Vyasa who wrote the *Gita*? How could Vyasa be Krishna?" it might be asked. The answers to these questions have been very simply given by Krishna Himself!

"*Pandavanam Dhananjayah*" or "among the Pandavas I am Arjuna", said Krishna in the tenth chapter of the *Gita*, the chapter titled *Vibhuthi Yoga*. Furthermore, among the nine names which Arjuna has, the epithet Jayakrishna equates him with Krishna (God). Since Krishna was firmly established in Arjuna's heart and since there was total spiritual empathy between them, it is absolutely correct to say that Krishna was not only the articulator of the *Gita* but also the person who heard it.

In the same manner, Krishna has identified Himself with Vyasa. "Among the *munis,* I am Vyasa", said Krishna. Not only this: the Lord dwells in the hearts of the sages. It would, therefore, be quite correct to say

that Krishna Himself wrote the *Gita*. We are reminded, in this context, of the words of Potana, the poet, by which he declares that the *Bhagavatha,* which he had written in Telugu, was composed by Ramachandra, the Lord. Potana was so devoid of the ego that he became the medium of divine poetic afflatus.

In the chapter *Vibhuthi Yoga*, Krishna proclaims His identity with the best and the most exalted of all the sentient and the insentient beings in creation. It is no doubt true that Krishna is omnipresent, that He pervades the whole universe. Nevertheless, He identifies Himself only with the best, the foremost and the highest of various beings, both animate and inanimate. "I am the Himalayas among the mountains, the Ganges among the rivers, Vasudeva among the Yadavas, the peepul tree among the trees, the lion among the beasts, the cow among cattle, Prahlada among the demons, the king-cobra among snakes, and Garuda among the birds", Krishna declared, for He is the integral incarnation of superlative excellence and perfection.

Krishna declares that He is the *prana* or life-force in all beings. The head is of great importance for man, and the body comes next. But body and head are not enough for man as there must be *prana*, the *elan vital,* to keep the body and the head functioning. Thus, Krishna says, "I am the *prana* in all *jivas*." He is the *prana* for the physical body just as *mumukshatva* or desire for liberation is the *prana* or life-force for all spiritual

endeavours of which *nityanitya pariseelana* (differentiating the real from the unreal) is comparable to the head, and *sama* (tolerance), *dama* (endurance) and other virtues, to the human body.

Krishna also states in the *Vibhuthi Yoga* that He is Light (*Jyothi*), Prosperity (*Aishwarya*), Courage (*Dhairya*), and Bliss (*Ananda*). The divine utterances of Krishna should inspire students to perform right actions in their daily lives. God manifests Himself as divine effulgence and we must, therefore, make an optimum use of the Divine light of wisdom. On the physical plane too, we must ensure that the body is kept healthy by well-illuminated and clean surroundings.

Aiswarya is also a divine *Vibhuthi* (attribute of the Lord). Therefore, you should try to uphold the divine nature of *aiswarya* by spending your money and wealth properly, and for the promotion of *dharma* (righteousness). Misuse of money is an evil and it leads to sin. If the students of today are developing evil thoughts and habits, it is because they have too much money to spend. You should be careful in your spending and must curtail your expenditure. If you require ten rupees to meet your needs, ask for only nine rupees from your parents. On the other hand, if you ask for fifty rupees, you will be spending only ten rupees rightfully and you squander away the other forty rupees, ruining yourself. You should regard money as being as precious as blood and use it with prudence. It is only when you

spend money properly and for the promotion of *dharma* that it can be regarded as *aiswarya,* or divine *Vibhuthi*—otherwise, it could only be considered as the devil's gift!

Courage or *dhairya* is also a divine *Vibhuthi*. True courage is the *dhairya* that comes from the practice of *dharma* (right action) and as a benediction from God. All other forms of courage, such as the courage which is based on physical prowess or intellectual strength, are of no avail. Physical and mental strength, economic power and public influence are like passing clouds.

The body is meant to enable man to perform sacred actions and spend his time in such a manner that Time, the ultimate destroyer, is itself destroyed by him. This transition to the deathless state is brought about by spiritual evolution. Just as the minerals became the tree, the trees gave rise to animate life, and the lower animals evolved into man, man too should evolve further and become God.

Mukti or liberation is the attainment and experience of pure, unalloyed and absolute Bliss. Some ignorant people think that *mukti* is attained only after death or in some future life. This simplistic view involves a gross misconception of *mukti*. *Mukti* really means freedom from bondage and implies an ascent from a lower state to a higher state. It is the result of a process of transcendental evolution by which the human becomes the Divine. Your mother liberates you from

the pangs of hunger by giving you food, and your doctor liberates you from the agony of disease with some medicine. These, however, cannot be examples of true liberation. Food and medicine are palliatives that only temporarily relieve you of pain. True liberation is attained when you merge with the Almighty and experience absolute Bliss.

Will the snake die if you keep beating the anthill? Will the vices in man die if the body is punished? Does one become the knower of the Self merely by giving up food and water? How can the science of the Self be known unless you know yourself? Therefore, first try to realise who you are. You must know from where you have come and whither you are going. When you write a letter, you put on the envelope the "from address" and the "to address" and only then drop it in the mailbox. But, if the envelope does not have these addresses, there is every likelihood of the letter finding its way to the wastepaper basket in the post office. Your life is like a postal envelope and you must know the name of the sender as well as that of the addressee; otherwise, it will be lost in the dustbin of worldliness.

Thus, you must know where you have come from, what you are and where you are going. In other words, you should comprehend your divine antecedents, your divine nature and your divine destiny. You must strive to get back to the spiritual haven from which you have come. You have come from the *Atma*, you are essentially

the *Atma*, and you must realise your identity with the *Atma*. Dedicate your faculties for the realisation of the sublime truth of your divinity.

Man should realise that his relationships with his family and friends and all his worldly attachments, are primarily based on the physical body. A man and his wife are strangers before they got married. The relationship between a husband and his wife does not exist prior to their marriage. Similarly no filial love could be there between a baby and its mother before the birth of the baby. It is only after the baby is born that the relationship between the child and the mother arises. All mundane bonds are ephemeral. The *Atma* that you really are knows no parents or other relations. To realise the truth that you are the *Atma*, you must acquire spiritual knowledge (*Adhyatmika Vidya*).

Secular knowledge is no doubt necessary to eke out one's living, but spiritual knowledge is essential if the purpose of life is to be fulfilled. Spiritual knowledge is comparable to the infinite ocean, whilst the various branches of secular knowledge are like the rivers which ultimately merge in it. Spirituality enables an individual to harmonise the separate elements of his psyche into an integrated experience of the immanent Divinity. Secular knowledge, on the contrary, has brought about the dehumanisation and the fragmentation of the human personality.

Here is a small illustration. Ten students specialise

in different branches of medicine. One of them becomes an ophthalmologist and another, a cardiologist. A third becomes an ENT specialist. Like this, they become specialists in ten different fields. They acquire so much expertise in their respective fields that they cannot see a patient as a harmonious, integral personality and are unable to look after his general well-being. Each of them performs an operation by which the patient is cured of the ailment which falls within the ambit of his own limited knowledge. None of them can ensure, by himself, total health for the patient. All their specialisation is directed merely for their own individual prosperity. The vivisection of the human body into many parts for the purpose of medical attention is designed to promote the selfish interests of a few.

We have to recognise the divine macrocosmic principle which governs and regulates all microcosmic entities in the universe. When you see a piece of cloth in its entirety you can know that it is, say, a handkerchief. But if only portions of the piece of cloth are exposed to your gaze, how will you be able to identify it and know that it is a handkerchief? Thus, the prevailing tendency towards specialisation in modern education is leading to the atomisation of the human psyche.

"Why should you study and stuff your mind with all sorts of useless knowledge and then die in ignorance to be born again and again? Acquire that knowledge which will make you immortal", said Vemana. You may

be well-versed in worldly knowledge, but without knowledge of the Self, you will remain an ignoramus. Man searches in the world outside but fails to find his true self therein, just as a person who looks for some article in a room is unable to see himself. Seek within, realise the Self, which resides there, and then experience the Bliss of God.

Bliss or *Ananda* is a divine *Vibhuthi*. That is why it is said, "happiness is union with God." Your true nature is bliss. Know this and be cheerful always. The mind that is morose harbours nothing but malice and jealousy. Divinity cannot reside in such unholy minds. Cheerfulness is the first sign of spirituality. Therefore, strive to be happy always. Live in contentment and with cheer and thereby qualify yourself for the experience of Divinity which is Bliss supreme.

Sound or *sabda* is also a *Vibhuthi*. Divinity is described as "*Sabda Brahma mayi*" or as being immanent in sound. Use the faculty of your speech in a manner that is becoming of your divine status. Speak gently and softly. Do not let your tongue indulge in evil talk or revile others and misuse the God-given gift of speech.

Embodiments of love, students!

You have been here for a month now and have imbibed the high ideals of Indian culture and spirituality. It is My hope that you will carry their message with

you and live as examples for your brethren everywhere. By *vidya* (education), you get *vinaya* (humility). Humility confers on you the deservedness by which you acquire wealth. Wealth you must put to use for the promotion of *dharma*, and that would lead to both material prosperity and spiritual upliftment.

Students!

It is indeed a misfortune that education these days is making the youth unfit for rendering selfless service to their motherland. Modern education is merely churning out useless degrees which only operate as begging-bowls in the job-market. Make your life meaningful by acquiring spiritual knowledge.

Remember your great ancient heritage and revere your parents as the embodiments of God. Your mother and father are God for you. Do not cause them anguish now, for your children will surely cause you pain in your later life, as for everything in this world there is a reaction and a reflection. For the sacrifices they undertake for you and for your own future well-being, love your parents and serve them with devotion. Be good, do good and see good—that is the way to God!

31

"Sathyam Vada Dharmam Chara"

The trees give shelter to all, irrespective of caste and creed, and proclaim that all men are equal. The plants teach us not to be overfond of the body; and the birds, that are content with the food they get for the day, tell us not to worry about the morrow. In their death, too, the birds give us a lesson about the transience of the world. Mother Nature exhorts us to discard attachment to ourselves and our earthly possessions. Verily, Nature is the school where man, taught by the greatest sadguru, God, can acquire divine wisdom.

Embodiments of Love!

Economic and social welfare programmes promote material well-being and are no doubt necessary in this world. For the spiritual well-being and divinization of man, however, character and

morality are of paramount importance. Spirituality is the life-breath for all human beings. Indian culture has been based on spirituality and ethical values. To recognise the great significance of our ancient culture and hoary traditions and adapt them to meet the needs of the present age, is our primary duty. Indian culture and traditions have stood the test of time. These time-honoured traditions bring great felicity in our practical life.

A system of education that does not take into cognizance the high ideals of spirituality and our ancient culture cannot really promote social harmony. It is precisely because of the conspicuous absence of spiritual and moral values in our present-day education that we are witness to social turmoil and the degeneration of the human personality. Modern man has mastered science and technology, but has thereby become the servant of mammon. He gloats over his apparent success in harnessing nuclear energy, yet, he lives as a moral dwarf.

Culture is the life-blood of a community. It is the backbone of a country. The *rishis* of yore, who attained freedom from selfishness and rose above worldly desires, illuminating society with the lambent light of their spirituality, bear testimony to the sanctity of our culture. Our culture has been giving us sacred norms of behaviour that are best honoured by being put into practice in our daily lives.

The sacred relationship between the *guru* (teacher) and the *sishya* (pupil) has been idealised in Bharath as in no other country. It has come down to us over the aeons as a cherished tradition. The words of the preceptor, at the time the pupils left the *gurukulam* (school in which *sishyas* live with their *guru*, serving him and learning from him) for their homes, were vibrant with meaning. "Worship your mother and father as God. Regard your teacher as God and receive your guest as God Himself", (*Mathru Devo bhavah, Pithru Devo bhavah, Acharya Devo bhavah, Athithi Devo bhavah*), the *guru* would say.

"*Sathyam vada, Dharmam chara*" (speak the truth and practise *dharma*). This is also one of the important aphorisms enunciated by the ancient *guru*s of India. It emphasises the importance of *sathya* and *dharma*. *Sathya* is the eternal, absolute and unchanging truth. *Dharma* is often translated as righteousness, but it is much more than that. *Dharma* is a power-packed term epitomising an entire philosophy and a way of life. It is the *summum bonum* of Indian ethics. A *sishya* or disciple, is one who has grasped the content of *sathya* and *dharma* by constant *sadhana* or spiritual practice. *Sathya* and *dharma* sum up the code of conduct and scale of values explicated in the immortal scriptures of India.

If you want to grow paddy, you have to take a good deal of trouble. You have to plough the land and enrich it with manure and fertilisers. You have to use

good seeds for sowing. You must put up a fence around your land to protect the plants from men and cattle. You should also remove the weeds periodically and irrigate the land properly. You must take all these steps to grow paddy. But, for growing grass you need not make any special effort. Harmful weeds grow by themselves. In a similar manner, *adharma* or unrighteousness grows like poisonous weeds without any special effort. But the delicate plant of *dharma* or righteousness should be carefully tended and looked after for its survival among the wild and poisonous weeds of *adharma* or unrighteousness.

Special *sadhana* and concentrated efforts are essential for the establishment and protection of *dharma*. We should constantly remind ourselves of the sacred statement: "*Dharmo rakshati rakshitah*" (*Dharma* protects those who protect *dharma*). We should, however, also bear in mind a corollary of the foregoing statement: "*Dharma eva hatohanti*" (*Dharma* destroys those who try to destroy *dharma*). Thus, *dharma* is not only a metaphysical concept, but also a powerful moral force to be reckoned with. One who deviates from the path of *dharma* will have to pay a price for it in the long run.

Dharma protects the world (*Dharayateeti dharmaha*). *Dharma* is permanent and everlasting. The sun rises and sets causing day and night, we say. But in reality, the sun neither rises nor sets. The sun is always there, eternally effulgent. Similarly, *dharma* is eternal,

immutable and imperishable. In the *sloka "Yada yadahi dharmasya glanir bhavati Bharata..."*, the word *glani* is used in relation to *dharma*. *Glani* means attenuation, atrophy and decline. *Dharma* is never really subject to *glani* or decline. It is only the practice of *dharma* that suffers from *glani*. Bhagavan emerges as an *Avatar* for the revival of the practice of *dharma* and not for the protection, because it is eternal and absolute. It is only the practice of *dharma* that needs a renaissance.

The *Ramayana* proclaims, "'*Ramo vigrahavan dharmah*" (Rama is the embodiment of *dharma*). As God Himself is *dharma*, the dereliction of *dharma* is tantamount to the neglect of God. We often worship God through a picture or an idol. Some may worship a tree as God. There are, however, some atheists, agnostics, rationalists and humanists, who adore *dharma* itself and treat it on a par with God. Such people cannot be regarded as atheists for their apparent atheism is really theism in disguise. *Dharma* is their God, and they worship *dharma* as God, who, in fact, is an embodiment of *dharma*. This deification of *dharma* is itself theism. On the other hand, there are many who pray to God but ignore *dharma* in practice. Such people are not really God-fearing theists.

There are many people in this world who profess to be theists, devotees, *yogis* and ascetics. But, it is doubtful how many of them have really understood the fact that *dharma* is the essence of divinity. A large

number of pious people go on a pilgrimage to visit sacred places and bathe in holy rivers. There is no use of going on pilgrimages, however, if character does not improve. Instead of wasting time and money in visiting holy places, people should try and purify their minds and apprehend the divinity that exists in humanity. The youth should also constantly remember that physical strength, money and popularity do not last forever. Strength of character is always superior to the power of pelf which is the most ephemeral thing in the world.

Vishwamitra did penance and acquired stupendous powers. Blinded by the powers of his austerities, Vishwamitra challenged Vasishta and suffered defeat and humiliation. The Kauravas who were terribly proud of their power and wealth, waged a war against the righteous Pandavas but were annihilated completely. Their dynasty came to an ignominious end, because they followed the path of *adharma* and fought against the virtuous Pandavas. Ravana also had acquired prodigious powers by doing penance. He, however, became tyrannical and immoral and ultimately destroyed himself. The *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharatha*, and the *Bhagavatha* contain stories of great heroes who died in tragic circumstances on account of their immoral behaviour and unrighteous conduct.

That is why every individual must grasp the meaning of *dharma* and follow the path of *dharma*. During youth, when a person is physically strong and

mentally alert, he should conquer the six vices of *kama* (desire), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (avarice), *moha* (attachment), *mada* (pride) and *matsarya* (envy). Above all, a young person should acquire self-confidence. Faith creates love. Love creates tolerance and compassion, and God reveals Himself to those with tolerance and compassion. Thus, faith in yourself is of primary importance. Students should be full of love and compassion, and thereby acquire great moral and spiritual strength.

The ideal of *dharma* should inspire students to participate in social service activities. They should become the harbingers of the renaissance of *dharma* in the modern world. They should put an end to the unrest in society and re-establish the *dharmic* order. This tremendous programme of moral rearmament should be regarded as a *Yajna*. It is a crusade against evil and injustice.

Young students who have assembled here are like cars damaged in the accidents of life. During this month these damaged cars have been properly serviced and fitted with suitable spare parts. They have also been newly painted. They will now go back to their places invigorated with noble ideals and sacred ideas. They should be guided in all their future activities by the three D's of "Devotion, Duty, and Discipline".

The cataract in a person's eyes does not come from the outside. It is a growth from the inside. A red-hot piece of burning wood or coal is covered by a layer of

embers. This layer of ashes does not come from the outside. The embers are produced by the burning wood itself. The moss growing in water covers the surface. The sun changes the water on earth into water vapour, which rises up into the sky forming clouds. Thus, the clouds formed by the sun cover the sun. Likewise, the ignorance which arises in man's mind clouds his discrimination and leads him to grief. The cataract in the eyes will have to be removed by a surgical operation. Wisdom is the surgical instrument that removes the malignant growth of ignorance. The weapon of wisdom enables the *sadhaka* to conquer ignorance and attain enlightenment. The attainment of spiritual enlightenment by the instrument of wisdom is known as *Vibhaga Yoga,* which is facilitated by constant practice and ceremonial ritual. Students should try and put into practice at least a few of the immortal aphorisms of the *Bhagavad Gita,* though they may not be able to follow the elaborate ritualism of the scriptures.

Selfishness is like a balloon filled with air. If you puncture the balloon, the air inside will combine with the air outside. When the ego is deflated, altruistic love takes its place. Love all and cultivate universal compassion. Love of oneself should evolve into divine love, which is the highest form of love. We should ascend from a lower state of love to a higher state of love, just as we ascend from a lower level of truth to a higher level of truth. It is only through altruism that you

can achieve divinity.

The help rendered by us to others as well as the harm done to us by others should be completely forgotten. Do not brood over the injuries inflicted on you. At the same time, do not expect either recognition or reward for services rendered by you. If you expect good results for your actions, you will have to be prepared for bad results also.

Clay and water are created by God. A potter uses clay and water for making pots. You are of divine origin and have inherited your personality, the totality of your physical, mental, emotional and spiritual characteristics from your father and mother. They are responsible for your birth and nurture. Therefore, adore them, make them happy and implicitly carry out their wishes. They love you regardless of your successes and failures in life. They love you in spite of your faults and foibles. Parental love is the purest and the most unselfish form of love. There is sanctity and purity in the love lavished by parents on their children.

Students should follow the example of a fish in water. A fish purifies water by removing all the impurities in it. Students should be active in society. They should not escape from social duties or civic obligations and should become responsible citizens. They must purge society of all its evils and become the architects of a new social order.

Young people should co-operate with one another in all noble endeavours. They should form associations for the promotion of social justice. You have lived together and taken part in social service programmes for nearly thirty days. This assembly of youngsters must strengthen these personal relations and renew them periodically. This congregation is not a fortuitous concourse of students. They have gathered here as a result of the merit acquired during their past lives. It is their great fortune that they should all have come together to take part in this Summer Course. With the hope that they will put into practice at least a few of the ideals they have been taught here, I bless them all for their material and spiritual well-being.