

Action rather than inaction

The special characteristic of humanity among all created beings is the power of wisdom with discrimination (*viveka*). One is therefore bound to act, always using the discriminating capacity. But two forces are putting obstacles in the way: (1) the ignorant, who prompt toward inaction, and (2) the teachers of *Sankhya*. The first set of people, though they may desist from activity through their senses, are unable to withdraw their minds and continue to commit acts in their minds. So, their inactivity is meaningless and unreal; it is relatively or apparently but not absolutely true (*mithya*).

The *Sankhyans* use a number of arguments against action. “Action causes both good and evil,” so, it is said, “the wise must give up all action.” In the *Gita*, Krishna met this argument and showed the way to get the good out of action and avoid the evil. The *Sankhyans* further say that action results in a mixture of pain and pleasure, of benefit and loss, and it leads the doer to heaven, to hell, or back again to the earth, that is to say, to bondage of some sort. So, they ask people to give up action and take to inaction.

The *Gita* has a reply for this also. Action will bring about bondage only when it is engaged in with a view to the fruit thereof. When done without any thought of the fruit, on the other hand, it leads to liberation (*moksha*) itself! Why, even liberated persons engage in action, although they do not derive any benefit therefrom, just to promote the welfare of the world! Or rather, whatever a liberated person does must automatically be conducive to the welfare of the world. Action has to be engaged in; that is the means of securing the peace already won.