

A DROP FROM THE GITA

The Mahabharatha war is a watershed in Indian history. Similarly, the Bhagavat Gita, which is central to the Epic, has certainly influenced the course of the thinking of mankind. To the Indians, it forms part of the *Prastaana Trayam*, along with the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras. It has not only provided a fresh impetus to the ancient Aryan thought but has ushered in new dimensions to it.

How? While there is a central theme in it -- even which may differ from one perceiver to another -- it has thoroughly expounded the veracity of various approaches or avenues to the Almighty. There are a few who have carefully understood that asking for a path is denying the immanence of Him. To them, He is explicit inside. There are those who approach the great riddle with a keen intellect. To them, He is the irresistible clarity. There are those who are comfortable to approach this only by experimenting techniques on themselves. To them, He is the ultimate Yogi. There are those who can respond only when something strikes a resonant cord in their heart. To them, He is the consummate object of love that demands a fee of eternal pining. There are those who are locked in labour. To them He causes the alchemy that converts mindless slogging into labour of love. Human beings present any number of permutations and combinations of these traits and He readily comes out with recipes and prescriptions whose lucidity and relevance stun the ever questioning mind. He has not spoken anywhere that one path is greater than the other. Indeed,

“The Master upholds all the paths but holds on to none”

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

While there is not a trace of ambiguity in any of His statements, He has not imposed either Himself or any of the avenues on anyone. He agrees with the helplessness of His listener before lifting him from his web of confusion. Along the way, He makes him realize that it was he who weaved that incarcerating web. He is evident when the question demands it, but subtle to the extreme at the same time. Of course, He comes into the open without any inhibition, offering Himself as the ultimate refuge for anyone. It is embarrassing that though this message sparkles here and there, it comes out loudly only at the end. Blessed are those who seek refuge in Him at the outset! For,

“The moment you ask for a path, you have created the distance.”

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

The influence of the Gita on the thinking of mankind is multi-dimensional and far reaching. This is not the occasion to discuss that in detail; nor am I up to it. Suffice to say that it continues to remain the intimate companion of Indians to whom the Lord is not different from His word. Of course, it shall continue to amaze the western mind that is ruled by a scientific temper, teasing it without malice and remaining a challenge to their intellect. It is not difficult to say and accept that the Gita will have to reveal itself. For, in the Gita, what seems like a paradox, on closer observation, turns out to be a bunch of master keys to various treasure vaults. Also, the viewpoints that may seem contradictory are after all, complementary. This is because,

“Krishna speaks as a Guru, as a friend, as God! In all the eighteen chapters, he has played different roles, to serve the same purpose!”

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

If we seek a realization beyond understanding, far above the confines of a mind and intellect that are nothing more than obstacles, He has to come to our help. That is why,

“Simply pray to Krishna. Ask Him to reveal the meaning. And open the Book. Enjoy the ensuing magic!”

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

This has to work and nothing else works this well! After all, He is immensely available; understanding the meaning and knowing Him cannot be different!

I stand before this vast ocean of nectar as a toddler! It is blue and vast as Him! But my enjoyment is truly as big as this ocean though I could not even partake of a drop from it! That is His mischief! Here I am, to share my joy with you so that it multiplies! After all, a drunkard wants nothing more than yet another drink!

The Central Theme:

One can pick up any sentence from the Gita and finish oneself. Or, one can take a word here and a syllable there and call it the integral message of Gita. Every child is entitled to its own brand of prattle! So, here goes!

The very purpose of His descent is to retrieve us from the morass into which we have unwittingly sunk, redeem us in wisdom and love and take us to Him. Well, his descent is for our ascent!

Aayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine employs a four-fold method to treat the patients differently according to their level of understanding and response to instructions. To some, you may just give the prescription and that will do. To some others, you have to get the medicine and give them as otherwise they will not procure it by themselves. There are some who will listen only when their friends speak to them. Influence them to take the medicine by talking to their friends suitably. Some others refuse to take the medicine though they need it badly; administer the medicine by applying force! Even after taking all these steps if someone would refuse to take the medicine, give him up! Of course, the Lord does not give up that easily!

Just four words of the Lord explain His loving intent:

Utthishta - Arise !

Yudhyaswa - Fight !

Maam anusmara - Remember Me !

Yaso labaswa - Achieve glory !

With this as a key, let us unlock a treasure or two!

I. Arise!

It was the conflict in the mind of Arjuna that brought out the Gita from the sweet mouth of the Lord. The similarities between Arjuna and us may be irrelevant, considering his prowess and quality as a person, and the unjustified travails that he had to undergo continuously along with his equally illustrious brothers and fire of wife. However, the solutions provided by the Lord are certainly for us as otherwise, the great Vyasa would not have recorded them so meticulously. Arjuna's conflict was mental and the combat physical. Here, we are at war with ourselves that take the form of external circumstances, mostly created by us. Internal conflict can create an external situation, make it look like a conflict that has come from somewhere and demand our response. We commit the cardinal error of reacting instead of responding, which sets in motion a series of consequences, every one of which presents itself as a separate circumstance, once again demanding our response!

Therefore, solutions to our problems depend on the following:

1. Recognizing that we have a problem
2. Making an attempt to emerge out of it
3. Employing a long term methodology instead of repeated fire fighting
4. Learning lessons that stay with us

When did the Lord open His mouth?

In the first chapter called *Arjuna Vishada Yoga*, that consists of 47 verses, He did not speak a word. It was in the second verse of the second chapter, the *Sankya Yoga* that He opened his mouth. He was just allowing Arjuna to exhaust his lamenting. Now, Arjuna was a peerless warrior; honest and truthful to the core; never given to weakness of any sort and a full fledged

human being. However, where and when it mattered, his will was broken as all of a sudden, he saw ‘the relatives’ in his enemies and that killing was sinful when battle lines were clearly drawn! And what were the first words of the Lord?

*Kuta stvaa kashmalam idam vishame samupastitam
Anaarya jushtam aswargyam akiirthikaram arjuna*

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«Éj÷Âf¾%¾¾¾¾¾¾ «ŠÄ÷îÄõ «,£÷ò¾ç¾,Ãõ «÷f¾É

“O Arjuna! In the midst of this perilous state, from where did you get this unaryan trait which will deny you heaven and destroy glory?” (02)

The battlefield is certainly not the place for retreating from a decision or rethinking conclusions. That is why the Lord used the word *vishame* perilous state.

The word *unaryan* is in fact an insult. If anyone had said this to Arjuna at any other time, he would have killed him! For, the word Aryan does not refer to a nationality or race or a linguistic connotation. People were addressed with this term not only in the north but also in the south. One comes across this word in many of our scriptures in all Indian languages. The word Aryan signifies a quality – a person who is righteous, valourous, a devoted worshipper of God, respectful towards elders, chivalrous, loving towards children and an upholder of the culture of the land. By addressing him as *unaryan* Krishna really hit Arjuna where it should have hurt him most. It is similar to reviving a person who is sinking in shock with a resounding slap! Among the tribals of north east India, who are generally tolerant, the most provocative remark that could lead to murder is, ‘You speak untruth before your mother.’ For, that trait is *unaryan*. Bhagawan also says that such a trait blocks the warrior’s journey to the heaven, the *veera swarga* and is also inglorious. To the warrior who is prepared to die, in defence of his principles, the denial of heaven and glory is unthinkable. Death is nothing for him. The Lord really gave Arjuna a shock treatment, when anyone else would have tried to console him! By asking him sternly, ‘From where did you get this unaryan trait?’ the Lord reminds Arjuna of his original state or status. While looking at the word *aswargyam*, we must also understand that Krishna never promised Arjuna victory in the war anywhere!

He made this very obvious in his very first sentence, even when Arjuna was inconsolable!

When we superimpose Arjuna's plight on us, the meaning becomes sharper. Do we not become indecisive when we are expected to put our foot down? Do we not often suffer from the syndrome of misplacement? Do we not break down when we are supposed to stand firm? To be honest, we require the Lord to speak the Gita to us daily!

*Klaibyam maa sma gama: paartha! Na eetat tvayi upa patyate
Kshuthram hrudaya dourbalyam tyaktvaa utthishta param thapa!*

ī'ÄôÃõ Áj ŠÁ Á: ĩ^{23/4}ò òÄÄç⁻ÄÄòÄ§^{3/4}
‡ðòÃõ ‹Ö^{3/4}Ä^{3/4}Ç÷ÄøÄõ òÄìòÄj⁻ò^{3/4}ç%o^{1/4} ÄÃó^{3/4}Ä

“O Partha! Do not attain unmanliness. This does not befit you. O scorcher of enemies! Give up this petty weakness of the heart and **ARISE!** (03)

(Sankya Yoga)

As if calling him *unaryan* was not sufficient, Krishna calls this trait unmanly! Bhagat Singh was in prison and was doomed to the gallows. His father, out of his concern, appealed to the British Govt for mercy. When the father met Bhagat Singh in prison, the lion of a son told his father, “You have killed me before they could hang me because by appealing for mercy, you ceased to be a man and you have made me an eunuch.” That is what Krishna meant. *kshudram* demeaning! *Hrudaya dourbalyam!* Poverty of will! Then the Lord says, ‘Arise!’ We come across this electrifying word *utthishta* in the Upanishads, which was made hugely popular by Swami Vivekananda.

All our attempt in life is only to awaken the presence of God in us that has been allowed to lie hidden under a heap of ignorance by us. So, when the Lord Himself uttered this word, it would have produced a magical impact in Arjuna.

Thus, in a matter of two verses, the Lord makes Arjuna realize that he is in a problem created by himself and wants him to pick himself up immediately in order to get out of it. It is only then that he starts

expounding. Even there, he offers the ultimate solution at the outset. Of course, it required many more verses from the Lord's mouth for Arjuna to understand its import.

Truly, all of us come to understand the original truth, ultimately!

The Lord's Advice:

After arousing the spirit of Arjuna and alerting him to his original state by his candid and uncompromising remarks, the Lord gave him a series of advice. Among them, this gem is worth looking at for its universal approach, making the individual responsible for both his incarceration and freedom.

*Uddaraet aatmanaa aatmaanam na aatmaanam ava saad ayet
Aatmaa eeva hi aatmana: bandu: aatmaa eeva ripu aatmana:*

Ṛò¼§Āò ṚòÁÉj ṚòÁjÉõ ¿ ṚòÁjÉõ «Ā...j¼§Āò
ṚòÁj ²Ā†ç ṚòÁÉ: ÀóÐ: ṚòÁj ²Ā ĀçÒ ṚòÁÉ:

“Elevate yourself by your self. You should not demean yourself. Verily, you are your own friend and you are your own enemy.”

*Bandu: aatmaa aatmana: tasya yaena aatmaa eava aatmanaa
jita:*

An aatmanastu satrutve varta ita aatmaa eava satruvat

ÀóÐ:ṚòÁj ṚòÁÉ: ¾ŠĀ ²É ṚòÁj ²Ā ṚòÁÉj fç¾:
«ÉjòÁÉŠÐ °òÕò§Ā Ā÷§¾¾jò“ĀĀ °òÕĀò

“If you conquer yourself by your self, your self is the best relative. If not, your own self acts inimically like an enemy.”

(06:Dhyana Yoga:05:06)

They say man is a creature of his circumstances. It will be more pertinent to say that man is what his mind is. Our problem is our mind. What exactly is this mind? We can call it, *‘the functional aspect of brain’* or even a field of

energy. To be more specific, a ceaseless flow of thoughts is called mind. Yes, mind is nothing but thoughts. The extreme end of this conclusion is that everything -- our ideas, aspirations, desires, concepts, judgments, philosophies, body, life and the world – is thought. We are supposed to drive it as our vehicle. Instead, we allow it to take us for a ride. This is the crux of our entire problem. He said, “Arise!” and that means we have to do this on our own! A hundred cannot make the horse drink! In cricket, there is a saying, ‘A bowler is only as good as a batsman allows him to be.’ What does this mean? No one can make anyone happy or unhappy without his permitting it. The formula for happiness is so simple that it is often overlooked. ‘If you want to be happy, just be happy!’ When we depend on anything for becoming happy, such happiness will be short lived and this external dependence will drain our precious-little energy. What is our understanding of happiness?

“There is only sorrow in this world. The intermission amidst this sorrow is mistaken for happiness by man.”

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

This statement upsets us and our feverish mind is not prepared to accept it immediately. That is simply because we seek happiness, we try to become happy instead of being happy and we always depend on this or that for happiness. Since everything shall pass, since every desire and action brings in its wake a consequence we have to contend with, such a seeking meets with a disappointing end. That is why, our scriptures state emphatically that you seek pleasure and you end up in pain. Are we to remain sad and seek sorrow instead? Certainly not!

“What you call as happiness and sorrow is nothing but experiencing prakruti. You are not asked to seek sorrow. But your undue preference for happiness leads only to sorrow. How does it matter whether you break your teeth with a white stone or a blue stone?!”

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

This is exactly why the Lord asks us to elevate ourselves by ourselves! For, no one can do this for us! However, if even happiness is not preferable, what do we do? There is certainly a higher dimension! Understanding that will enable us to realize the import of the Lord’s advice:

“Peace is happiness. Happiness is not peace. Contentment is the threshold of peace. You must be content with what you have and also with what you do not have! Contentment is not sufficiency! You must be content with your problems also! You should be able to say, ‘Ah! I am content, I have enough troubles,’ and laugh heartily! Peace is neither happiness nor sorrow.”

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

Now, the Lord makes it very clear that unless we befriend ourselves, we cannot lift ourselves! We allow us to be tossed by happiness and sorrow instead of seeking peace. Happiness is a package deal; it comes together with sorrow! When peace becomes our priority, the real happiness emerges! All mind control methods flop because we overlook this vital truth. Peace of mind is a misnomer because movement is the very nature of the mind.

“Peace emanating from the soul, reflecting on the canvass of consciousness, is understood by the mind only as happiness.”

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

Every one of us is a strange combination of good and bad. When love arises, we behave as good Samaritans. When envy pops up, we grow ugly horns like the devil. If we entertain qualities like love, we live in the real sense of the term. If we play fiddle to the negative traits, we die in every sense. That is why Krishna says that we are our best friend if we decide to rise and worst enemy if we have chosen to fall! So, a few things emerge very clearly from these two verses:

- Mind is nothing but thoughts
- Mind can understand only happiness while peace belongs to the realm of the soul
- Peace is reality while happiness is not only fleeting but it also ends up in sorrow
- We are what we want to be.
- We have to rise – on our own! No one can do it for us
- We are our best friends and worst enemies depending on how we want to be

Therefore, this prescription is worth contemplating upon:

“Consciousness at peace, mind in happiness, body at rest!”

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

II. Fight!

Arjuna has now realized that fight he must. In response to this understanding, the Lord offers him the methodology, all encompassing, long term and personal.

Dealing with the mind and senses:

The explanation is convincing. The prescription is all right. The call of the Lord is loud and clear. Even then, is it that easy to quieten the mind? The moment we wake up in the morning, millions of thoughts gush in from all sides. The end of sleep also appears to be the end of peace! Well, Arjuna also felt the same way! Despite his reverence for Krishna and the relevance of His advice, he did not hesitate at all to express this question:

*Sanchalam hi mana: Krishna pra maathi balavat dhrudam
Tasya aham nigraham manye vaayoriva su thushkaram*

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¾ÄŠÄ «†ö ççiÄ†ö ÁýŞÄ Äj!ÄjÄçÄ ...¤Ð%Äö

“O Krishna! The mind is unsteady, turbulent, strong and obstinate. I feel that controlling the mind is as greatly difficult as controlling the wind.”

The mind is unsteady *sanchalam*. We have seen that perpetual movement is its very nature. It is turbulent *pramaathi* because it is a boiling cauldron of desires and disappointments, affection and enmity. It is strong, *balavat*. When it is unhappy, nothing can make it happy. When it is drunk with happiness, there is no way one can make it look at others' unhappiness. Why, even when you want to wake up early for a workout or meditation, does it not come out with a long list of astounding justifications that it is a sin to get up early?! And do we not obey it wholeheartedly and cuddle in the couch? And, it is obstinate, *drudam*.

Mahakavi Subramania Bharati explains this superbly. There are only two qualities that the mind has. It will either hold on to something very dearly or it will keep jumping from one branch to another without any break. The problem here, according to the great poet is, it will cling tightly to that which is not at all good for us and will not stay for more than a moment in that which is good for us!

In reply to our question, posed by Arjuna, the Lord did not give any high-pedestal answer or a queer formula like 'Say shut up and it will become quiet.' He agreed with Arjuna totally!

*A sam sayam mahaabaaho mano durigraham calam
Abhyaasaena tu kountaeya vairaagyeena ca gruhyate*

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«öÄj\$...É Ð |, Çó\$¾Ä ¨ÄÄj\$Ä½ ° iÖ¿Ä\$¾

“O mighty shouldered one! Undoubtedly, the mind is intractable and restless. It is brought under control only by practice and non-attachment.”

(06:Dhyana Yoga:34:35)

By agreeing with Arjuna, the Lord demonstrates three beautiful qualities:

- *Not judging Arjuna's ignorance with His knowledge*
- *Empathizing with him though He would not accept 'the concept of sorrow'* This is civility, wisdom and compassion rolled into one

- A psychological approach. If you want to make the other person understand his fallacy, agree with him first! You cannot help a man without extending your hand!

Once Arjuna is convinced that the Lord has agreed with his point of view and is prepared to listen keenly, Krishna comes out with the solutions: Practice, *abhyasa* and non-attachment, *viraagya*.

Why should he mention ‘practice’ at all? That is because everything is a matter of habit. A habit is picked up due to sheer curiosity. Later, it could become our core character, depending on the intensity with which we nurture it. And, after a while, it becomes our very nature. Therefore, we are unable to realize that it was, after all, a habit, to start with!

To an ordinary man, speaking truth is a habit that he has picked up. To a Rishi, it is his very nature. The difference is practice. To a weakling, telling a lie or two is a habit. To a dishonest person, it is his very nature. The difference is the latter sustained this habit. All our traits are nothing more than habits. The only problem is, it is easy to pick up a bad habit and very difficult to give it up. With a good habit, it is just the opposite!

So, it is a question of replacing bad habits with good ones. It is only by developing a taste for higher things that lower tastes are given up. Thus, practice or *abhyaasa* becomes necessary for two reasons:

1. Replacing the afflicting traits with elevating ones
2. Sustaining them

It is also necessary to know how to practice!

Dheerga kaala :

Nothing happens in a jiffy except road accidents and perhaps marriages! While miracles are welcome, it must be remembered that behind every miracle, there is a lot of hard work. Any practice bears fruit only over a time. Sustained attempt gives strength to the practice and helps us achieve the purpose.

Nairantaryam:

Conquering the mind is a great task. It cannot be achieved through partial or part-time effort. And, we should not look ‘sideways.’ Sri Ramakrishna says: If you want to dig a well, dig the earth in one place and not dot the landscape with potholes. And how long should you dig? Well, till you strike the water table!

“Tapas is 24 hours business.”

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

Satkaara Sevitam:

Total dedication to the goal is necessary for achieving the desired result. Watch the scientist who spends all his life time, directing all his energy and resources in his project; with no guarantee for success and any number of possibilities for failures! Watch the social worker in a slum in a distant land, attending to the sick and poor, casting aside a glittering material career that his brilliant academic qualifications offered. Or, look at the spiritual aspirant sitting under the tree in a jungle, trying to delve into himself, again with no assurance of success, treading a path fraught with dangers.

Therefore, it is with single pointed attention and total dedication that the goal is reached. *Sradhhaavaan labate gnanam*, says the Lord.

Krishna spoke about the need for practice and we have understood the constituents of quality practice. He did not give specific practices. Of course, He mentions Om and Tat Sat etc. but did not suggest a school of thought. Perhaps, there are two reasons as to why He did not do so:

1. As many men, so many paths! This is the Aryan understanding. As many tongues, so many tastes! Each human being is a separate design and each psyche has its own specific requirements. It is the great Aryan concept that every human being is entitled to work out a path on his own and walk on it.
2. Spiritual journey is an inner process. Stress on external methodologies may divert the attention of the seeker or tempt him to don an altogether new identity and lead him to egotism. The spirit of understanding is more essential. Any type of practice is secondary.

What is *vairaagya*?

Vairaagya is not detachment but non-attachment. By design, all our senses are focused outward and there is a perennial contact with the outer world and its objects. Therefore, detachment is impossible. Non-attachment is possible and necessary, if peace be our goal. That steadfastness is feasible if the man is alert and watchful. Patanjali gives a terse description of *vairaagya*.

Dhrusya, anusraavika, vishaya, vaitrushnya iti vairagyaha.

(Patanjali Yoga Sutras)

‘One should remain non-attached to the things pertaining to this world and the heaven.’ This is possible only through a clear understanding of the ephemeral nature of objects, the world and the pleasures and also by continuous remembrance of this hard fact.

Tasmin ananyata tat virodishu udaaseenata

(Narada Bhakti Sutras)

Remain in it totally. Refrain from anything that is opposed to it. And, remain taller. This is Narada’s golden advice. What is progress? Being at it! Through diligent observation and sustained care, we realize the fallacy of the apparent reality and strive to see the truth. We leave behind the concepts and conclusions of our past. We understand that they are eminently renunciabile.

“You are standing at the threshold. The doors are open. You want to peep in. You wonder what to do. Progress is not stepping inside. Not looking back is progress.”

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

Sri Ramakrishna says, ‘You must weep for God.’ What he means is that we must desire Him intensely. If someone asks, ‘Why have I not realized myself?’ the honest reply will be, ‘How serious have you been about it?’ Ramana Maharishi says: “Like soldiers rushing out of the fortress, thoughts keep coming. You must wield the sword of *vairaagya* and kill them at their source itself.” Keen observation leads to a clear understanding of the transient nature of anything. Clear understanding turns our focus from the

outer to the inner. Inner focus leads to longing . Sustained longing negates everything else that is not the truth. And, to sustain longing, *abhyaasa* and *vairaagya* are the correct tools.

How does a man fall?

We have seen that senses are focused outward by design. We also know that it is so for all living beings and all have five senses. In the animal kingdom, there are many creatures who are lured by one particular sense:

Sound	-	Deer
Touch	-	Elephant
Sight	-	Moth
Taste	-	Fish, Mouse
Smell	-	Honey bee

Man is the only creature who is lured by all the five senses!

The Lord has already said that it is by practice and steadfastness that mind is made stable. Here, He explains how man falls if he does not rule over the senses. The consequence of past lives presents itself as predispositions and tendencies in the present life. We have also heard that while *karma* is the cause of birth, desire is the root cause. However, here, the Lord has chosen to lay emphasis on controlling the senses. It is interesting indeed! One good way of conquering the mind is to lend a direction or give it a tough job. It is something like employing an over-zealous genie. If you do not keep it occupied, it swallows you! Ramana Maharishi gives an illustration: ‘The temple elephant keeps on swaying its trunk. All that the mahout does is hand over a small stick. It simply holds it and stays still! So keep the mind occupied!’

What better occupation we can give the mind than asking it to control the senses! Is that not a full time job! A man falls only by falling a prey to the call of the senses. A man rises only by calling the shots by controlling the senses. Krishna gives a scintillating step by step account of the fall of the man:

*Dhyaayato vishayaan pumasa:sangas taeshu upajaayate
Sangaat sanjaayate kaama: kaamaat krodha: abhi jaayate*

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...í,jò ...i°jÂŞ¾ ,jÁ: ,jÁjòìŞÁjŞ¾jÅçfjÂŞ¾*

“When one dwells on objects, attachment arises. Attachment grows into desire. From desire arises anger.”

First, let us understand the alignment of the phenomenon called man. It is in this order:

1. The physical body with the five senses
2. The mind that is moving, full of thoughts
3. The intellect, the field of discrimination and discretion
4. The consciousness that is the ‘*atmosphere of the soul*’
5. The inner fellow or the ego or the soul

How does the mechanism of senses work that lead men to disaster? The senses perceive the objects. The contact is reported to the mind. The mind seeks the decision from the intellect. The intellect just shows its decision to the consciousness for approval, for namesake and implements the decision. The point is, the consequences of that decision are binding on the inner fellow only! For, the senses, mind and intellect disappear along with the physical body in the funeral pyre but the inner fellow continues to suffer the consequences of every action for a long, long time! All because the senses were allowed to dwell on the objects for a moment longer! So Krishna takes us to the root of the root. Desire is not the root cause but attachment to objects and that arises because of undue dwelling on objects! There are only things in the world! And nothing stays forever!

“When the senses peep put, why do you pop out?”

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

Why does the wood catch fire! That is because fire exists in it already! Dattatreya explains to Parasurama that it is not the object that is responsible for attraction but our attitude of attachment to it. A tiny seed that gets mixed

“But, if the man perceives objects with the organs that are free from attachment and repulsion; if the organs are under his control, he has conquered the mind. He attains serenity.”

(02:Sankya Yoga:62,63,64)

Same objects! Same senses! Here, serenity is the end. There, punishable insanity is the result. The destination is determined by attitude. If we can condense the wisdom contained in all the scriptures and convey it in a single word, it is ‘attitude.’

“Your viewpoint determines your point of view”

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

The secret of enjoyment is maintaining optimum distance. It is certainly all right for us to relish good food. But if we crave for it wildly as if we are born only to eat, then, we are inviting trouble. And, if we become inconsolable when we do not have it the way we wanted, then, be sure, we have been eaten by the food which we were supposed to eat! Like maintaining a physical distance between us and others, like we do before a camp fire, we must create a mental distance between us and things! That is the way to save ourselves from being washed away. Otherwise, what is the use of protecting things and losing ourselves?

Can't I see a beautiful girl when I come across her in the street? Should I have to turn my face away? No! Bhaktaraj Maharaj says, *“Appreciate beauty! Don't get personal!”* If we leave hold of our *abhyaasa* and *vairaagya*, practice and non-attachment, we have to reap undesirable consequences. If we stay with us, in us and look at things, then we are safe. The difference between enjoyment and indulgence becomes clear. The difference between consuming and being consumed is understood. Everything that we seek by way of happiness, beauty and peace is inside us. If the same senses that are looking outward are turned inward, the mind will gladly follow suit. The intellect will leave all decisions at the threshold of consciousness. The voice of conscience will turn melodious. We will lead a very normal life like anyone else outside and an extraordinary life inside. Therefore,

“Do not look at anything in particular”

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

Nothing belongs to us in this world. As for us, right from the moment we entered our mother’s womb, the clock of death has started ticking. The Yaksha at the poisonous pond in Mahabharata asks Yudhishtra: ‘What is very surprising in this world?’ Yudhishtra replies: ‘Everyday, thousands are born. Everyday people die in thousands. But those who are alive try to believe and behave as if they are never going to die. That is what is very surprising!’ How can we forget that everything that we desire or do brings in its wake a consequence? Depending on its quality, it binds us or protects us. Devilish desire destroys us. Spontaneous charity protects us. Krishna assures us of serenity if we choose to act sanely with our senses. Is not serenity an extension of civility?

“Everything in this world carries a tag along with it. Check the tag before you touch anything!”

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

Body Management:

We have seen the mechanism of the mind and the senses, the consequences that follow if we do not regulate them and that practice and non-attachment are the ways to accomplish the task. Now, let us take up the physical body. The human body is considered the pinnacle of creation not only for its symmetry and precision but also for the purpose for which it has been given to us. Destiny can be transcended only by working it out. For this, the human body is vital. True, that which deteriorates is called *deha* or the body. True, we are not supposed to identify ourselves with the body because we are not the body. True, the body is, like any of the billion things of the world, is more fleeting than the life. But then, body is necessary to understand all this and achieve the ultimate freedom. Yoga is not possible without the body. *Jnana* is not possible so long as we mistake the body to be us. We have to understand this and work our way up. The body is a veil for the ignorant and a vehicle for the wise.

The Lord’s methodology is practical and relevant to all of us.

depression. Sleep without many dreams is good sleep. If you feel fresh and cheerful in the morning, then, you have had a quality sleep.

If we are moderate in food and sleep, Yoga helps us in destroying sorrow. Otherwise, it is spent on trying to digest what we hogged and the resultant amnesia.

*Yukta aahaara vihaarasya yukta caeshtasya karmasu
Yukta swapnaava bodhasya yogo bhavati du:kahaa*

Ôi¾4j†jĩÃ Åç†jĩÃŠÂ Ôi¾4§°%¼ŠÂ , ÷Á...¤
Ôi¾4 ŠÂÔÉjÅŞÀj¾4ŠÂ ŞÂjŞ, jÅ¾4ç Ð:,†j

“Yoga becomes a destroyer of sorrow for one whose eating and movements are regulated, whose effort in works is moderate and whose sleep and wakefulness are temperate.”

(06:Dhyana yoga:16,17)

Here, Krishna mentions about work also. Work you must. Workaholic you must never become. That is not a respectable term at all. Those who do not know how to handle work while in service and those who do not know what is retirement or what to do with themselves turn into workaholics. That is pathetic. We must exert only to the extent necessary. If you know to work in rest, you will also know to rest in work!

Similarly, labour is not exercise. The idea of exercise is to rejuvenate all the systems and not to make us tired. Even our physical movements at home or the work place or outside must be monitored and regulated.

Here, we must pause for a moment to remember a vital fact about creation. Whatever we see or know has been created on the basis of three major qualities called *trigunaas*. They are *satva*, inertia, *rajas*, dynamism and *tamas*, sloth. Anything in creation, from the asterisms yet to be discovered to the porridge that we take in the morning, is a combination of these three.

“Food that augments life, firmness of mind, strength, health, happiness and delight and which are succulent, oleaginous, substantial and agreeable are dear to one endowed with sattva.”

“Foods that are bitter, sour, salty, very hot, pungent, dry and burning, and which produce pain, sorrow and disease, are dear to one having rajās.”

“Food which is not properly cooked, lacking in essence, putrid and stale, and even ort and that which is not fit for sacrifice, is dear to one possessed of tamās.”

(17: Sradhhatraya Vibhaga Yoga:08,09,10)

“On the other hand, know tamās which deludes all embodied beings, to be born of ignorance. O scion of the Bharata dynasty, that binds through inadvertence, laziness and sleep.”

(14:Gunatrāya Vibhaga Yoga:08)

Thus, the formula that must govern food, work and sleep is:

“Pampering the body is foolish. Punishing it is a sin.”

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

Why does a man fall?

The Lord has elucidated the manner in which man falls. Interestingly, we see that not only man’s progress but his fall is also step by step, in a way! Dwelling on the objects leads to attachment. Attachment causes desire. Desire is followed by anger. Anger brings in delusion. Delusion destroys understanding and memory and with that man perishes.

‘I know what is righteous but I have no taste for it. I know what is wrong but I find it tasty. There is some power sitting inside me and driving me here and there.’ This is what Duryodhana says! Arjuna was a personal witness and victim of Duryodhana’s inexplicable jealousy. He was fascinated by a strange trait in the human beings. They fall helplessly. They

go wrong unavoidably. They falter without desiring to be so. Krishna has explained to him how a human being falls but Arjuna wants to know why at all man should fall? He asks the Lord straightaway:

*athakaena prayuktoyam paapam carati purusha:
aniccannapi vaarshnaeya balaadiva niyoojita:*

«¾ §,É ôÃÔì§¾jÂõ ÀjÀõ °Ã¾ç âÕ„:
«Éçî°ýÉÀç Âj÷%o§½Â ÄÄj¾çÄ çç§Âjç¾:

Arjuna asks: “ Why does a man commit sin much against his wish, as if compelled by a force?” (36)

The Lord offers an explanation that will keep enlightening the human beings for ages to come. He provides an insight into the limitations of the *antahkarana*, and suggests methods to tackle them.

The human body is the result of the consequences of our action in the past births. Transmigration of the soul must be accepted at the outset to understand what is spoken by the Lord. Through the senses, man, instead of merely experiencing nature, gets deluded, plunges into indulgence, forgets his original unbound nature and through a series of commissions and omissions, causes an intricate mosaic of consequences that binds him to the earth for ages since that cannot be undone easily. At death, the body, senses, mind and intellect are destroyed. But, the consequences of his action accompany the *jeeva* as a sheath of tendencies and predispositions in a seed form. The moment he gets another birth, they sprout again. The same story goes on without any break. Though the same soul dons different bodies, it is not the same ego. Rather, the memory of its previous existence is veiled by ignorance caused by its own action. This is why when man suffers, he feels injustice is done to him. Of course, when he enjoys pleasures, it is very just indeed!!

The hand that was the hindrance

There was a mendicant who used to roam about from place to place. He was an ardent devotee of Panduranga. He was a free soul; well, that was what he thought. One day, he reached a village. It was already late in the evening. He sought shelter on the outer platform of a house. The husband and wife gladly agreed. The wife came out and served him food. While doing so, his hand happened to touch her body. That unintended contact, unfortunately aroused her passion. At night, when her husband was asleep, she came out and persisted that he should sleep with him. Being a mendicant, he refused. Infuriated, she raised an alarm and everyone in the village gathered. She complained to them that he made sexual advances towards her. His hand was immediately cut and he was driven away. Justifiably crestfallen, he was walking aimlessly thinking of Panduranga and at the end of the village, the Lord Himself appeared before him!

When he wept before Him and sought an explanation for his plight, the Lord told him:

'You were a good devotee even during your last birth. While you were having a bath, a cow was being chased by a butcher and you saw it hiding behind a thick bush. When the butcher asked you whether you saw the cow, you simply shook your head mildly, in order to avoid telling a lie. He tried to corner you by saying that it would be a horrible sin for a Brahmin to tell a lie while bathing in the Ganga. Instead of trying to protect the cow by all means, you simply extended your hand in the direction of the cow, thinking that you have neither uttered a lie nor spoken the truth. The cow was born as the lady and the butcher as her husband. Well, after all, that hand which betrayed the presence of the cow was the only hindrance that prevented you from reaching me. Now that it is gone, I have come to receive you!' Saying so, Panduranga took him in both his hands and the mendicant merged into Him.

So, perfection is not easy but is very much necessary to achieve!

The Lord explains that losing control over senses is the beginning of his fall or the continuation of his ignorance. For, the tendencies that come along with us over births, ride on senses, mind and intellect.

*Indriyaani manopudhhi asyaadhishtaanamucyate
Eatair vimohayathaeyesha jnaanamaavrutya daehinam*

we “see” them! This is why, in this verse, the Lord states the hierarchy in the reverse order! Also, He says, “*Aahu*, which means, ‘They say.’”

There are two interesting reasons for this:

1. It is the great Indian tradition to quote ancestors or elders in response to serious questions. In Mahabharata itself, in Shanti Parva, we see the grandsire Bheeshma quoting his ancestors while answering questions, lying on his bed of arrows.
2. To Krishna the Lord, there cannot be anything other than or apart from the Self. Everything is in it. Everything is it! However, for making the listener understand, he has to use terminologies.

*evam budhte: param budtvaa samstabhyaat maanamaatmanaa
jahi satrum mahaabaaho kaamaruupam duraasatam*

²Åõ Òò§¼ ÅÃõÒòòÅ¡ ...õŠ¼ôÂ¡òÁ¡ÉÁ¡òÁÉ¡
f†ø °òÕõ Á†¡À¡§†¡ ,¡ÁåÀõ ÐÃ¡...¾õ

“O mighty shouldered one! Thus with the help of the self that is superior to the intellect, remain established in the self with its help. Vanquish the enemy that is in the form of desire, which is difficult to subdue.” (43)

(03:Karma Yoga)

We instinctively look for *pramaanam* or source of authority. Here, when the Lord Himself says that the Self is superior to everything, we should find it convenient and prudent to believe it totally. Our behaviour should reflect our belief. We must believe firmly that we are the Self because Krishna said so and only then, we will be able to subdue the senses and combat the duo of desire and anger.

“Truth is realized by assuming it because it is true!”

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

We can never solve a problem after becoming a part of it! Unless we rise above, we cannot look at it properly, unaffected. A patient’s wound should

not stupefy a surgeon; he has to deal with it! *Saadhana* is nothing but a refined attitude kept up without any let up. Constant remembrance of the inner reality is the chief component of attitude. So, unless we believe that we are *Aatman*, free and pure, it will be difficult to perform the task of dismantling the sheaths of ignorance. Outer life and inner process, that is the combination that works in a human life.

“The fruit ripens from inside and spreads outside. The colour and the flavour are the last part of the process of ripening. And, when the fruit is ripe, the tree drops it. An unripe fruit can never leave the tree on its own.”

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

The best way to close an advice is to leave a note of warning at the end. Krishna does this in style, after a thorough discourse and unambiguous instructions.

*naasti budhhi: ayuktasya na ca ayuktasya bhaavanaa
na ca abhaayavat saanti: asaantasya kuta: sukham*

¿jŠ¼ç Òò¼çÃÔì¼ŠÂ ¿°jÔì¼ŠÂ ÀjÂÉj
¿ ° «ÁjÂÀò °jó¼ç: «°jó¼ŠÂ l¼:…¤,õ

“For the one with an unsteady mind, there is no wisdom. There is no meditation for the unsteady man. The unsteady man does not have peace. How can there be happiness for the one without peace?”

Happiness without peace is more fickle than a bubble. Success in life, can never be measured in terms of the millions we earn, the mansions we build, the titles we receive and the felicitations we accept. Peace and peace alone is the measure of success.

“We have a duty towards others but a responsibility towards ourselves. The only question that God asks us - in spite of a long list of our so called achievements – is ‘What have you done with yourself?’”

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

The Lord explains what is action and what should be our attitude.

*Buddhi yukto jahaateeha ubhae sukruta duskrutae
Tasmaat yogaaya yujyasva yoga: karmasu kousalam*

Òò¼çÔì§¼j f†j¼£† ¯\$À...¤jÕ¼ Ð%oiÕ§¼
¼ŠÁjò\$Áj,jÂ Ô^ÂîÂ \$Áj,; ÷Á...¤ |, Ç°Äõ

“One who works in equanimity renounces both good and bad. Therefore, remain established in Yoga. Yoga is dexterity in action.”

(02:Sankya Yoga:50)

We think we are affected only by sorrow. What about happiness? Don't we lose our head when we are happy? What is the great difference between being dismantled and being destroyed? Like God who is equidistant to every species, why, even every living being, we must remain neutral to good and bad. That is renouncing! *Karmasu kausalam* is explained as efficiency, skill or dexterity in action. It certainly does not mean that a teacher must become the best teacher and a doctor the numero uno in his place. If that is efficiency, what about the skills of a smuggler, terrorist or a thief? No, the message is very clear. Equanimity is that *kausalam*. One gets a clue here that it is not only attachment to the results but attachment to the action itself that is advised against. Our action should only be a response to a circumstance or duty. It has to be appropriate and genuine but should be free from attachment. For, attachment leads to desire to anger to delusion to loss of *buddhi* and finally to destruction.

Thus, it is our attitude to action that is vital. If that is impersonal, neutral and free from slant, the general efficiency will be of a high order; that is also there; it also ensures that we will not be caught in the whirlpool of expectation that leads only to disappointment.

All this is convincing indeed but how does one remember a lesson with all its detail when it matters, i.e., in the battle? Krishna says, ‘Remember Me!’ The Lord offers Himself as the solution!

*mayi sarvaani karmaani sanyasyaadhyaatma caetasaa
niraaseer nirmamo bhuutvaa yudhyasva vigatajvara:*

ÁÂç ... ÷Á_i½ç ÷Á_i½ç ... òýÂŠÂîòÂîòÂŞ^{3/4}... î
¿çÂ^o£ ÷ ¿ç ÷ ÁŞÂîâòÂî ÔòÂŠÂ Âç, ^{3/4}^ÂÂ:

“Dedicate all actions to me; fix your consciousness on the soul; give up expectations and egotism; keep your mind free of fever and fight the battle.”
(30)

If we work for Him, won't we submit our report to Him and stand humbly before Him? Only when we think we are working for us, attachment arises! Here is someone, who is our very own, offering to own everything on our behalf! If we leave that all to Him, He is ours!

While expectation leads to disappointment, exultation at the so called success betrays egotism. Both are eminently avoidable. A man with an agitated mind does not perform efficiently. Anger is not valour. Even here, Krishna simply asks Arjuna to fight, with a proper attitude and does not guarantee victory.

“The Mahabharata is not a story of war victory but a chronicle of the victory of righteousness.”

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

Patanjali says everything in his first *sutra* aphorism itself. ‘*Yoga: citta vrutti nirodha:*’ ‘Yoga is arresting the outward movement of consciousness.’ Krishna says, ‘Fix it on the soul and remember Me!’

*mayyaeva mana aadhatsva mayi buddhim nivaesaya:
nivasishyasi mayyaeva ata uurdhvam na samsaya:*

ÁöŞÂÂ ÁÉ ¬¾òŠÂ ÁÂçÒò¾çõ ¿çŞÂ°Â
¿çÂ...ç%oÂ...ç ÁöŞÂÂ «¾ °÷òÂõ ¿
...õ°Â:

«ôÂj§...ôÂ...Á÷ò§¾j...ç Áò, ÷Á ÀÃ§Áj ÀÁ
 Á¾÷ò¾ÁÁç , ÷Áj½ç l÷Áý °çò¾çÁÁjôSÂ...ç

“If you are unable even to practice, do the works that are meant for me. Even by undertaking works for Me, you will attain perfection.”
 (10)

If we cannot fix the mind on him or even make the mind turn towards Him, then, we can at least work for Him! What are his works? The lord is compassionate without any cause, *avyaaja karuna*. Therefore, any work that benefits others and do them good is His business. Charity and all philanthropic activities have their origin in this thought. However, it must be remembered that charity is done not merely for earning merit but for the primary purpose of cleansing our soul. In the Aryan concept of charity, the giver is the real receiver. For, he has entertained the Lord Himself who visited him in the guise of a guest. Sai Baba of Shirdi, who had the element of fire and water under his control, had no other reason to beg for his food than remind us of this ancient lesson. In the same manner, we must understand another important point. A wealthy man donates a super specialty hospital for the society. A poor man picks up a banana peel lying on the road and drops it in the bin. In the eyes of God, both are same! Lord looks, not at the quantum of but the intention behind our action.

If we remember, we are working for Him, we will not make claims and remain humble.

*athaitatadap yasaktosi karthum mathyookamaasrita:
 sarvakarma phalatyagam tata: kuru yataatmavaan*

«¾¾¾¾ôÂ°i§¾j...ç , ÷Dõ Áò§Áj, ÁjîÃç¾:
 ...÷Á, ÷Á ÀÀòÂj, õ¾¾¾: ÌÕ Á¾jòÁÁjý

“If you are unable to do even this, resort to the Yoga for seeking refuge in Me. Remaining humble, offer the fruits of action completely to Me.”

(12: Bhakti yoga)

If we cannot even work for Him, then, is there still a way out? ‘Yes,’ says the Lord emphatically. If you cannot work for me, seek refuge in Me. How? Offer the results or rather the consequences of your actions to Me! Leave everything to Me and remain humble. Even then, you are saved.

“There is only one problem and there is only one solution. The problem is, looking at you and the solution, looking at Me.”

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

*ananyacheta satatamyomaam smarati nityasa:
tasyaaham sulabha: paartha nityayuktasya yoogina:*

«ÉýÂŞ^{03/4j}: ...^{3/4}/₄õ ŞÂj Ájõ ŠĂÃ^{3/4}ç ¿çòÂ⁰:
^{3/4}ŠÂj†õ ...⁰ÄÄ: Àj÷ò^{3/4} ¿çòÂÔi^{3/4}ŠÂ ŞÂj,çÉ:

(08:Akshara Brahma Yoga:14)

IV Achieve Glory

Arjuna, keen and transparent, listened to the Lord attentively, sought clarifications whenever necessary and realized that it was time for implementation. He now has a thorough idea of the process in its detail. He wants to know how the finished product would look like! This is a tendency typical of any sincere aspirant. He would like to know the result of following instructions, which is the only proof for it. If there is a description, he would like to observe the changes that emerge after sustained practice and see whether they tally with the description given. Arjuna does not hesitate to ask the Lord:

*Sthitapragnyasya kaa bhaashaa Samaadhistasya kesava
Sthitadhee kim prabhasheta kimaaseeta vrajate kim*

Š^{3/4}ç^{3/4}ôÃi»ŠÂ ,jÀj,,i ...Áj^{3/4}çŠ^{3/4}ŠÂ Ş,°Â
Š^{3/4}ç^{3/4}/₄£ ,çõ ôÄÄjŞ,,^{3/4} ,çÁj...£^{3/4} ùÄŞf ,çõ

Arjuna asks: "O Kesava! What is the description of the one who is steady of wisdom and who is Self-absorbed? How does he speak? How does he sit? How does he move about?" (02:Sankya Yoga:54)

If man becomes wise and free, does he look it? And how does that look like? Very straightforward questions! It is an inner process all right but does it show any outer symptoms?

*Prajahaati yadaa kaamaan sarvaan paartha manogataan
Aatmanyaevaatamanaa tushta: sthitapragnya: tadaa ucyate*

ôÃfj|†i³⁄₄ç Â³⁄₄j, jÁjý °÷Ájý Àj÷ò³⁄₄ ÁŞÉj, ³⁄₄jý
-òÁýŞÂÁjòÁÉj Ð%oo¹⁄₄: Š³⁄₄ç³⁄₄ôÃî»Š³⁄₄Ş³⁄₄jîÂŞ³⁄₄

"O Partha! When one fully renounces all the desires that have entered the mind and remains satisfied in the Self alone by the Self, then he is called a man of steady wisdom." (02:Sankya Yoga:55)

The Lord makes it very clear that not even a vestige of desire should remain in the mind of man who seeks steady wisdom. Kabir says, 'When there is Kabir, there is no Rama. When there is Rama, there is no Kabir.' Wisdom and desire cannot exist together. A person who desires nothing but the self, abides in the self alone as the self! Till then, the journey continues; the practice persists; alertness sustains.

Golden days

It was less than six decades ago that Ramana Maharishi was living with us. He was the perfect example of non-attachment and renunciation. He had only a small strip of cloth around his loins. Whenever it developed a small hole or two, he used to pick up a thorn, use it as a needle, untie a thread from the same strip and stitch the affected portion! Recalling this incident, he would say, 'Oh! Those were the golden days!'

*dukhaeshvnud vignamanaa sukheshu vigataspruha:
vita taiga bhaya krodha: sthitadheer munirucyate*

Ð:Ş, %ooÂÛòÂçìÉÁÉj ...¤Ş, „¤ Âç ³⁄₄ŠôÕ†:
Â£³⁄₄Ãj, ÂîŞÃj³⁄₄ Š³⁄₄ç³⁄₄³⁄₄£÷ ÓÉçÕîÂŞ³⁄₄

“ One whose mind is unperturbed in sorrow, who is free from longing for delights and has gone beyond attachment, fear and anger is called a monk and a man of steady wisdom.”
(02:Sankya Yoga:56)

Even an average man knows that happiness is short lived. An above average man understands that if happiness is transient, then, sorrow cannot be permanent. The wise man, the *Jnani* treats them alike by remaining equidistant to them, i.e., remaining above them, i.e., not being attached to them. Since he has no attachment, there is no fear or losing anything. Since he has no desires, there is no scope for anger.

“Imperturbability is the hallmark of Jnana. Ordinarity is the quality of spirituality.”

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

The Essence of Gita:

*karman yaeva adhikaara: te maa palaesshu kadaacana
maa karma pha;a haetu bhuu: maa te sanga: astu a karmani*

*... ÷ Áñ\$ÂÁj¾ç, jÃŠ\$¾ ÁjÀ\$Ä,, ¢¾j°É
Áj ÷ ÁÄÄ\$†Ð ÷ â ÷ Áj \$¾ ... í\$¾, jŠòÁ ÷ Á½ç*

“Your right is for action alone, never for the results. Do not become the agent of the results of action. Do not have any inclination for inaction.”

(02:Sankya Yoga:47)

This advice is as sharp as the arrow of the great archer! Action is unavoidable. Inaction is impossible. So, act prudently, on the basis of duty and responsibility. The moment we attach ourselves to the fruits of action, our attitude to action will itself be blurred. The difference between action and result will cease. The factor of uncertainty which govern both will not be remembered. Then, we will get caught in a mire of consequences.

Duuraena hi avaram karma buddhiyogaat dhananjaya

Budhhou saranam anvisca krupanaa phala haetava:

àŞĀ½ ĀĀĀõ ÷Ā Òò¾çŞĀj, jò ¾ĒifĀ
Òò¾ç °Ā½ĀýĀçr° iŌĀ½j ĀĀŞ†¾Ā:

“Action with expectation is inferior to action with Yoga. Take resort in equanimity. Those who thirst for rewards are pitiable.”

(02:Sankya Yoga:49)

Karaikudi Sambasiva Iyer

We need not always look for saints to quote examples. Karaikudi Sambasiva Iyer was a renowned Veena maestro. For the last nine generations, the tradition of using music as a means of *bhakti* for experiencing divinity has been kept up in that illustrious family. He looked at himself only as a humble devotee of the Lord. He had his daily routine of worship, which he would not give up for anyone or anything. The President of India announced the national award for his excellence in music. He refused to go to Delhi to take it. Why? It involved travel which would interfere with his daily worship in which playing the Veena before the Lord was an integral feature. Special arrangements were made for him so that he could carry on with his daily rituals without any break. Consequently, it took him more than a week to reach Delhi by train! What is renunciation after all? Remaning wedded to God!

A man must be unconditionally good. Expecting a reward for being or doing good undermines his humanness. Why? Action with expectation is fraught with the dangers like disappointments, egotism and leads the man down the spiral of disaster. The Lord therefore makes a very caustic remark that such men are pitiable. It is therefore that he professes action with Yoga. What is that Yoga?

Yogastha: kuru karmaani sangam thyaktvaa dhananjaya
Siddi asidyō sama: bhuutvaa samatvam yoga ucyate

ŞĀj, Ş¾: İŌ ÷Āj½ç ...Ā, õ òĀìòĀj ¾ĒifĀ
...çòòĀ...çòòŞĀj °ŞĀjâòĀj ...ĀòĀõ ŞĀj, ĀĀŞ¾

“Remain established in Yoga. Renounce attachment. Remain equanimous in success and failure. Undertake actions thus. Equanimity is called yoga.”
(02:Sankya Yoga:48)

A man whose mind is free from attachment, whose intellect is devoid of machinations, and whose consciousness calm and steady like a flame that does not flicker, is the man in Yoga. That equanimity is peace and remaining wedded to that is the greatest achievement.

Why are you carrying her?

There was an old monk and his disciple. The Master was a devout celibate and the ward an apprentice but a sincere aspirant. They were walking a long distance, on their way to a distant city. On the way, they had to cross a stream which was flowing full and fast due to rains. Suddenly, they saw a young lady struggling in the waters and her dress was greatly disturbed by the raging river. Without winking, the Master took her in his arms, waded through the water and on reaching the other bank, left her on the floor gently after ascertaining that she was all right. The disciple could not take it! How could such a devout celibate pick up a girl, young and that too half naked and carry her in his arms? They kept walking without talking for a long, long time. When the city was sighted, the disciple could not contain himself anymore and blurted, 'Why did you carry that girl?'

The Master replied, 'I had left her on the shore long ago. Why are you carrying her still?!'

That is it!

tam vidhyaat du:kha samyoga viyogam yogasamjitam
sa niscayaena yoktavyo yogonirvinna cedasaa

¾õÀçòÂjò Ðì,...õ\$Âj, Àç\$Âj,õ \$Âj, ...õ»ç¾õ
... ¿ç\$°\$ÂÉ \$Âj¾ù\$Âj \$Âj\$,j¿ç÷Àçñ½ \$°¾4...j

“Understand that severance of contact with sorrow is Yoga. That Yoga has to be practised with perseverance and with an undepressed heart.”

(06:Dhyana Yoga:23)

The Lord wants us to understand that the path to bliss should also be blissful. Certainly, God does not like long faces. Sorrow, if entertained, turns into a killer disease. The root of this disease is in attachment and desire is the symptom. It is by steadfastly remaining non-attached, that sorrow is conquered. Severance of contact with sorrow is Yoga and joining the bliss that is waiting to be embraced is Yoga Siddhi!

Yam labhdvaa chaaparam laabham manyatae naadhikam tata:
Yasminsthito na du:khaena gurunaapi vichaalyate

Âõ ÄôðÄî °jÄÃõ ÄjÄõ ÁýÂ§¾ çj¾ç,õ ¾¾¾:
ÂŠÁçý Š¾¾ç§¾j ç ðì§,½ ÌÖ½jÄç Äç°jøÂ§¾

“Obtaining which one does not think of any other acquisition to be superior to that and being established in which one is not perturbed even by great sorrow.....

(06:Dhyana Yoga:22)

If we own a wish fulfilling tree, we will not be bothered by bills anymore! There is something by knowing which there is nothing else to be known; by obtaining which everything is ours; by reaching which nothing ruffles us anymore.

What is that? Where is that? How does one acquire it?

That is Him, the Lord, our Krishna! He is everywhere, more intimately in our hearts. We can ask for Him; pine for Him; pray to Him; he is accessed easily thus. When we seek Him alone, He is all ours. That is the only way to obtain Him. He has answered everyone’s question. He has shown a path to everyone. By listening to Him keenly, by implementing His instructions diligently, we live a life of peace and reach Him ultimately.

The ultimate reward or the greatest glory is seeking Him. Blessed are those who think of Him. There is nothing else which is worth pursuing in life. Thinking of Him, singing His praise, speaking of His deeds and listening to His words is the real achievement of glory. We are at His feet, by His grace.

Glory to Thee O Govinda. We know we belong to you. There is nothing else to know....

“Even calling Him Yogeswareswara is only belittling Him”

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

Who is dear to me?

In Bhakti Yoga, chapter 12 of the Gita, Krishna the Lord describes the quality of a devotee and says, 'He is dear to me.' It is necessary to know who or what the Lord is, what is Bhakti before understanding the qualities of the devotee.

Who is He?

The invisible Lord descended in a perceivable form that is called Sri Krishna. He is certainly not the person in the sense we use the term. It is also highly inappropriate to use the loose term 'personality' to describe this phenomenal colossus who is beyond our ken and close to our heart. Then, who is He? It requires a great deal of maturity to understand Him. He Himself says so!

"Hardly one amongst thousands of men strives to achieve the goal. And, among those who strive for it, one in reality gains the knowledge of Me as I Am."

(07:Jnaana Vignaana Yoga:03)

How many of us sustain serious questions like 'Who am I? What is the Truth? Who is God? How do I find Him?' and so on. Among those who think on these lines, how many pursue such an enquiry intensely? Among them, how many are able to sustain it over a long period of time? Among them, how many think of that alone, to the exclusion of all other thoughts, desires and aspirations? And, among them, how many achieve the goal? That is the question the Lord wants to remind us about!

When someone complained to Ramana Maharishi that he is not able to quieten his mind, he said firmly, 'Mind control is not your birthright. You must persevere.' Sri Ramakrishna asks, 'Have you wept for God?' How should I feel for God if I want to reach Him? How much? For how long? Our materialistic mind will take such measures to seize God! The Master answers such questions wonderfully not verbally but through an experience. He takes him to a river. Suddenly, he holds him by the scruff of his neck and presses his head under the water. How long would the unsuspecting lad hold his breath? He struggles violently and when he cannot hold himself anymore, the Master brings his head out of water! Ha! He gasps badly and with all his might, he swallows all the air in the world to breathe! When he recovers, he asks the Master, 'Why did you do this to me?' The Master replies, 'Son, this is how you should long for God. If you do so once this intensely, you will find Him.'

"Moksha is asked for in a moment. There is no process involved in that moment. But, living towards that moment requires a process."

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

We are always on the run; not on the move! 'We have no time to stand and stare.' We do not have time for anything because we attempt so many things at a time and also because we do not clearly know what exactly we want. We mistake gratification of the senses for satisfaction without realizing that no fire was ever put out by pouring ghee into it! We are afraid of contentment fearing that it would stall our growth! We think that expansion of physical comforts and luxuries is progress. We consider material accomplishments as achievements. We always crave for more, for the same drink that has dulled our inner alertness and is gnawing at our liver! We want more of the maze that we have created and we do not like to seek a way out of it! If only one serious question engages our attention, we will know one very important truth:

"Life has no purpose. Living is all important. Mere existence is not life. Life is lively existence."

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

Vemana became a Yogi overnight. How? There were only two persons who engaged all his attention in life. One was his concubine he was madly in love with and the other his brother's little daughter who was very dear to him. He had nothing else in his mind and his life consisted only of these two. One day the concubine ditched him and the little girl passed away. Thus, the two tethers that bound him to life were severed. He did not know what to do. He was crestfallen. He ran to the local temple, sat in a corner and wondered what the purpose of life was. There, Siva appeared before him in the guise of an old man and was in splits, laughing at Vemana. Irritated, he asked the old man, 'Why are you laughing at me?' The old man replied, 'You are trying to figure out the purpose of life?! It is as futile as trying to squeeze a fistful of sand to get oil!' Angered, Vemana asked, 'Ha! You say there is no purpose to life? Then who am I?' The old man smiled and said, 'Ah! That is it! One has to raise that question! Ask yourself and you will find out!' Saying so, he disappeared. The aspirant plunged into himself and became Yogi Vemana.

We need not wait for a severe jolt in life to turn inward and enquire! We can turn around, from wherever we are, towards the centre!

What is His nature?

The beauty of a poem is, though it is descriptive, its origin is not known. The mystery about a *mantra* is that it contains in itself the element of unknown and a somewhat known meaning! So is the Lord. We do not know Him. At the same time, we cannot say that we do not know Him at all!

It is with little knowledge that we approach the ultimate wisdom. The Lord describes His nature in clear terms:

"Earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, intellect and ego -- like this, my Nature is woven in eight ways."

"But, this, however, is my lower nature; another than this, understand as my Higher Nature converted into the individual souls by which is O mighty shouldered one! is this moving universe sustained."

(07:Jnaana Vignaana Yoga:04:05)

Things are moving and there is something that moves them all! That which is in perpetual movement is called *jagat*. That does not merely refer to the five elements or the planets and universe alone. It certainly includes the ever moving mind and its higher counterpart, the intellect. 'The steam engine cannot move on its own. It is the steam that moves the engine,' says Swami Chinmayananda. He explains this beautifully.

Suppose someone asks us, 'Where are you standing?' We reply, 'On the floor of my house.' Then, further questions and replies follow. The house stands on the earth in the street, the street rests on the town, the town on the city, the city on the country, the country on the globe, the globe on the milky way and the milky way on space. Now, all this is perceived by the mind, which rests on the intellect. The intellect rests on the consciousness and the consciousness on the Absolute Truth.

That is He!

Therefore, this higher nature which is the basis for the existence, movement and functioning of all other aspects of nature as we know it is the origin and the final destination as well. There cannot be anything higher or greater than that! The Lord makes an ultimate statement here:

"Dhananjaya! As transcending Me there exists nothing else. Upon Me is all this inwoven as upon the string the multitude of beads."

(07:Jnaana Vignaana Yoga:07)

Every bead is sustained by the string but the string is not the bead. It is the substratum of everything. Every pot is made of earth but earth is not the pot. The waves rise, run, fall and return – all within the sea. The wave is not the sea but it is not apart from the sea. The light is only seemingly different from the lamp. Consciousness is not separate from the soul. And, we are not away from Him!

"I am the sapidity in the waters, o son of Kunti; I am the lustre in the Moon and the Sun. Amongst all the Vedas, I am (the syllable) Om. I am the sound in the ether and manhood in men."

"Pure smell in the Earth as well as brilliance in fire I am; life in all living beings and asceticism amongst the ascetics I am."

(07:Jnaana Vignaana Yoga:08:09)

So, He is that which is not qualified by anything but is the reason for the quality of anything.

"As the ever enduring seed of all beings, know Me o son of Prtha! I am the intelligence in the intelligent (talent of the talented) and brilliance of the brilliant."

(07:Jnaana Vignaana Yoga:10)

It is intelligence and prowess that give humans a distinct identity called individuality. Vasishta and Viswamitra are Maharishis but their personalities were different. Trilinga Swamy and Gorakshanath are Maha Yogis but they functioned differently. There is a scientist, a singer, a plumber, a professor, a cobbler, a doctor and so on. We take notice of a person only when there is a distinct, positive streak in him. That is individuality.

"I exist in the strong, as the strength that is devoid of desire and attachment. I exist in living beings, as the desire that is not in conflict with righteousness."

(07:Jnaana Vignaana Yoga:11)

What is *kaama raaga vivarjitam* about the strength? Here, the Lord has not just said 'I am the strength in the strong.' He has used a very important adjective, 'devoid of desire and attachment.' Sankara explains this beautifully. Seeking something which we do not have is desire. Desiring something which we already have is attachment. Strength assumes an aura of morality, wisdom and greatness, only when it is free from both. These two terms can also be described as 'longing and passion.' Swami Vivekananda popularized the Upanishadic statement, **Strength is life;**

weakness is death.' Conviction of truth is strength. Moral courage is strength. Unshakeable fortitude during tribulations is strength. Bowing before lesser mortals for the sake of general good is strength. Not wielding power is strength. Forbearance is strength. Simply, truth and righteousness are strength. He also says *bhuteshu dharma avirudda kaama*. What does it mean?

"Desire per se is neither good nor bad. There are desires that bind. There are desires that release. It is therefore desirable to entertain desirable desires."

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

The desire to offer one's life for the sake of the country will not bind him but instead elevate him to the higher worlds. Why, even the desire to fend for the family does not bind the breadwinner since it is ruled by duty.

"Know that all things that have come to be are due to the composition of the three qualities, satva, rajas and tamas that have emanated from Me. I am not in them. They are in Me."

(07:Jnaana Vigaana Yoga:12)

Yes, He is the string that sustains the beads! The sea is not the wave. When He says, 'I am not in them' we should not delude ourselves by wondering, 'Is it possible that there is something in which God does not exist?' It has to be heard along with the other part of His sentence, 'They are in Me.' It is all right to say that if Ganga is God, then, the gutter is also God. It is true in an all-comprehensive sense. Unlike us, the Lord does not indulge in intellectual gymnastics. He explains His nature in a comprehensible sense. He has also said that He is the dice in the gambling den. Here, he expresses Himself in such a way that would inspire us to approach Him. He is the best in everything. What is this best? The quality of a thing that sustains its identity!

Jnaneswari explains it directly. 'I am not in them. They are in me' means 'I am not contained in them but they are contained in Me.' Space holds everything. Space pervades everything. But, space is never arrested or contained by anything.

Now it is clear to us:

- It is only someone, somewhere who makes an attempt to know the ultimate. By saying so, the Lord has provoked our ego!
- He has two types of nature. One is they that move and function and the other is that which moves everything
- He is the best in everything
- He is the undercurrent in everything

He follows up this explanation of His nature with a few explicit, strong statements.

"They who indulge in sinful actions, the fools, the lowly, they who have lost their sense due to delusion, they who are of demoniac disposition, they do not worship Me."

(07:Jnaana Vignaana Yoga:15)

So, we have a reasonably good idea about His nature and we also know who do not seek Him. To Him, His nature must be natural. To us, despite his scintillating exposition, it is still beyond our grasp. Everything in creation is the play of the combination of the three qualities. They emanated from Him. We are the products of this complex combination of trigunas. At the same time, we are not and we cannot be away from Him. How do we wriggle out of this paradox? The Lord answers in a straightforward manner and that unravels everything that has remained hidden hitherto.

What is Bhakti?

"Truly, my divine delusion composed of these trigunaas is insurmountable. They who seek refuge in Me, they alone transcend this delusion."

(07:Jnaana Vignaana Yoga:14)

In one little sentence, the Lord has revealed two very important things. He has clearly spelt the way to reach Him and in the same breath, has explained what Bhakti is. What emerges on closer observation is that they are one and the same!

"Bhakti is the penultimate step. After that? Nothing! There is only Lord."

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

Like every man is a mute poet, every human being is an unconscious aspirant. Yes, there are those who seek Him knowingly. And there are others who do not even know that it is Him that they seek. The alcoholic who seeks to dissolve his fabricated worries in his glass, the average human being who aims to achieve happiness through material accomplishments, the adventurer who skis through perilous, icy slopes, the itching palm of the dice player and the mendicant who sits under a tree to delve into himself -- all seek Him only; some immediately, some ultimately; some explicitly, some unintentionally. The Lord classifies all of them into four major categories:

"Four sorts of people, the doers of righteous deeds oh Arjuna! betake themselves unto Me. The one in distress, the one eager to know, the one seeking some end and the man of knowledge, o bull amongst the Bharatas!"

(07:Jnaana Vignaana Yoga:16)

When we enjoy pleasures, we often compliment ourselves since we consider them as our achievements. When we experience suffering, it does not strike us that it is after all we have earned. While enjoying pleasures, we don't complain, do we?! In pleasure, God is the last thing we remember. In pain, God is our last resort. A dose of suffering does a man only good. It chastens him, slackens his frenzy and turns him inward, albeit temporarily. Suffering does not necessarily mean poverty. Well, in one sense, poverty of wisdom is suffering! All great lessons are learnt only through suffering. Hence,

"Suffering is washing."

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

The aspirant's case is different. He is not the prototype man of the world who seeks only material pleasures and he is also not a Jnaani who has finished himself. Certainly, he has come out of the throes of the melting pot of the materialistic life. His problem is the door behind him is closed; he cannot go back to the slush that he mistook for reality once, anymore. And, he is impatient that he is beset by one mystery or other, teasing and challenging him to unravel them. He is tossed between agony and ecstasy. When he understands that the door behind him is shut for good and for his own good, he will realize that he *'can only progress'* thereafter. It is constant

seeking that culminates in knowledge that ripens into wisdom. His strength is his seeking Him. For,

"The moment you are accepted, I am bound; you are free."

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

Man who hankers after material pleasures does seek God. How and for what? He seeks God for the fulfillment of his desires, for the uninterrupted continuance of his pleasures and to achieve this, he would pray to Him. It is true that men worship their desires more than they do God. The Lord Himself says so. However, the Lord might keep granting his prayers since He does not know to say 'no.'

"The problem with desires is that they get fulfilled, if not today, tomorrow."

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

Like suffering, satiation tends to turn a man inward. This is why Krishna included him in the category of the big four. After all, is he not eligible to seek material benefits from God for conducting his life, which is essentially material?

The Jnani's case is straight and simple. He has understood a great formula:

"Do not depend on anyone. What does it mean? Depend on God for everything."

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

The Jnani dismisses the very premise of the existence of the world. To him, God alone exists. God alone is. He lives and moves about in God.

The moment the Lord spells out these four categories, Arjuna wants to know who is the best among them. This is the typical trait of an aspirant. Who am I in these categories? Do I come under the best category? If not, what can I do to get to the top? Krishna, who knows all, reveals all:

"Among these, Jnaani, the man of knowledge who shows constant application and single pointed devotion is the one that excels. I am dear to him. He too is dear to Me."

(07:Jnaana Vignaana Yoga:17)

Why is the Jnaani great? He has recognized untruth on his way to realizing the truth. He has left everything for the sake of the Lord. Now, love is a thing which cannot be given; it always comes back. This holds good, in fact, in all certainty, in the relationship between the Lord and man. If God is dear to man, it simply follows that man is dear to God! Do we belong to the category of the Jnaani who is dear to the Lord as declared by Him? The very question betrays that we are not! For, a Jnaani never considers himself to be a Jnaani. Understanding our predicament, the Lord takes the other three also into His fold, though He sticks to His stance.

"All these in sooth are men of lofty souls, but the man of knowledge is – and it is my opinion – my very self; for he, with devoted self, has set Me alone as his supreme goal."

(07:Jnaana Vignaana Yoga:18)

The Jnaani is dear to Him not only because the Lord is dear to him. More importantly, a Jnaani is rare to find. The majority of the people of the world are just worldly. They do not strive to seek beyond. That is why the Lord says,

"(Becoming) at the end of several lives, the man of knowledge, he betakes himself unto Me in the conviction 'Vaasudeva is all.' Such an exalted soul is exceedingly hard to find."

(07:Jnaana Vignaana Yoga:19)

Why is that man dear to the Lord? There is one more reason:

"It is easier to find God because He is everywhere. Rare indeed it is, to find a real devotee."

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

Now, there could be two kinds of seekers. One who seeks the Lord in service and the other who seeks the unmanifest immutable! Arjuna wants to know who among them the best knowers of the Yoga are. The Lord showed him His awesome, awe-inspiring, cosmic form. He realized that this and that or here and there are not real since he experienced the 'here and now.' He wants to know whether he has to worship Krishna who is standing before him or the cosmic formless form that was shown inside of him!

*Mayyaavesya mano ye maam nitya yuktaa upaasate
sraddayaa parayopetaaste me yuktamaa mataa*

"Fixing their minds upon Me, those who, ever steadied in Yoga, seek Me in service, being endowed with supreme faith; they are deemed of Me the best knowers of Yoga."

(12:Bhakti Yoga:02)

We have already heard the Lord saying that only those who seek refuge in Him transcend the delusion. We understood that it was the simplistic and ultimate explanation for Bhakti. People who find it difficult to practice Yoga or not able to read scriptures classify themselves as devotees and claim to follow the path of devotion. Like scholarship cannot make you a Jnaani or long hours of sitting cannot make you a Yogi, illiteracy is not bhakti. It is profounder than the profoundest. What is bhakti?

"Bhakti is faith in the unknown."

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

Is that easy? Is it possible for us to seek refuge Him straightaway? Will our doubts and apprehensions and the fiendish tendencies of the feverish mind permit us such a luxury? After all, why do we believe in God?

"We believe in God because He is invisible."

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

We long for Him and the moment He comes down in a form, we find it difficult to accept Him or offer ourselves unconditionally to Him! We cannot comprehend the all pervasive, abstract principle and if, for our sake,

it takes a shape and form, we cannot accept it either. Once, Ramana Maharishi gave a thrilling, short and crisp discourse on the paths of Jnaana and Yoga. After that, a man asked him, 'Bhagawaan! You have spoken on the paths of Jnaana and Yoga but what about Bhakti?' The great *mouni* replied, 'Bhakti is not a separate path. If you do not have bhakti, you cannot become a Jnaani or a Yogi.' So,

"Bhakti is not easy to attain. If you obtain bhakti, everything else becomes easy."

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

Who are these 'knowers of Yoga' the Lord is referring to? What are their qualities? The Lord gives a three-pointed formula:

mayee aavesya mana: - fixing the mind on Me

Mind is habituated to running out in a hundred directions. It also has the strength to hold on to a particular thing without any let up. Both are mere habits! Habits die hard, agreed. But the only way you can get over an undesirable habit is by giving the mind a new habit. Here, the suggestion is to set one habit upon another, like removing a thorn with a thorn! The tendency to run away frequently should be replaced by a new habit of turning inside, towards Him and fixing itself on Him! The mind's ability to stick to something must be put to good use here.

This the Gopis demonstrated in an amazing measure! The Lord was very dear to them and they too were very dear to Him. But,

"When Krishna left them, He did not give them notice. He did not take leave of them. He just left. He was hardly 12 and he lived in the body up to 120. But, he never visited them again."

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

The point is they never missed Him. Whatever they saw or heard reminded them of Him only. When they churned the curds and made huge balls of butter, they missed the thief. When the cattle returned in the evening, they thought He was behind them. When the dark clouds gathered, they

remembered his dark complexion. Therefore, virtually they connected anything and everything to Him.

"They were so full of His absence that they were totally filled with His presence."

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

The village women in Rajasthan are amazing. They are beautiful, they wear very colourful dresses, they deck themselves up with various ornaments and they are very lively and cheerful. One is reminded of the Gopis when one sees them! They carry two or three pots of water, one upon another, on their heads and walk a long distance, through barren fields. They keep on cracking jokes, chewing *paan*, gossiping and laughing merrily but not a drop of water is ever allowed to spill from the pots! That drop is very precious!

The mother is toiling in the field throughout the day. Her child is in a cloth cradle, hanging from the branch of a tree. She does total justice to her work but her attention is always on the child.

There is a great singer who enralls the audience. His mellifluous voice and the melodious notes that issue forth take us to the top of a snow-clad mountain, dip us in an ocean, open before our eyes wide and green meadows but his attention is always on the *tanpur*. If he lets go his grip, he is gone!

That is fixing the mind on Him!

nitya yukta – established in Yoga

We seek Him by pining for Him. That is the beginning of bhakti. Then must come steadfastness. Penance or devotion cannot be a past time fad. Once the attention of the mind is directed inward, the intellect should ensure that it does not go wayward anymore. It must stay put in the pursuit. Yoga means 'to join.' That which has turned inwards must join the inner fellow and ensuring that is Yoga.

paraya sraddaya upetaa – endowed with supreme faith

Faith moves mountains and melts the Lord. Faith, in fact, is the saviour. Faith opens locked doors. 'O God if there is a God! Please save my soul if

there is a soul,' is not a faithful prayer. God does not require our faith! We require it to snap our chains that bind us.

*"God does not test our qualities, for, no one would pass such a test. God tests only our faith. Hence, **have faith in your faith.**"*

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

Faith in Him for the sake of faith in Him and not for getting something from Him! It is thus simple faith culminates in total surrender.

"In faith, there is you and Him. In surrender, you jump into Him."

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

There are two sterling examples that come to one's mind, one each from Ramayana and Mahabharata. Let us listen to my Master:

*"What was Hanuman when he met Rama? He was a nava vyakarana vaetha, a maha yogi, a great jnaani, brilliant minister, strength personified – well, he was Rudra Himself! There was nothing that he had to get from Rama! Yet, he chose to serve him as his servant! This is called **goalless faith** and this is what we should seek."*

*"When that noble woman was insulted in that blind court of the blind emperor, what were her thoughts? Did she pray? Did she sing an elaborate hymn? No! She simply thought, 'Krishna! If this is all right for you, it is okay with me!' **That very moment she was saved!** That is bhakti. 'You want to throw me into the sea and you want the sharks to bite me to pieces? Oh, if that is all right for you, it is okay with me.' That is surrender."*

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

Practising this may not seem easy but as we observed, this will make everything easy. For, it does not involve the intellect, scriptural knowledge or elaborate rituals. This is the straight road to salvation. This is *saguna upaasana* the worship of the Lord in a form. Now, if we want to approach his formlessness or is cosmic form, what should be the requirements?

sanniyamyendriya graamam sarvatra samabuddhaya:

te praapnuvanti maameva sarva bhuta hite rataa

"By fully controlling all the sensory organs and always being even-minded, they, engaged in the welfare of all beings, attain Me alone."

(12:Bhakti Yoga:04)

For this category of seekers also, Krishna proposes a three-point formula:

sanniyamya indriya graamam – totally controlling all the sensory organs

All of us know that energy follows thought. We lose unimaginable amounts of energy by entertaining and pursuing undesirable thoughts. Control over the five senses is essential even for achievements in this fleeting world. That is a pre-requisite if we embark upon the inner journey. And, that is a vital necessity if we choose not to employ any agency for seeking God and seek Him as It. Losing control over the senses and losing ourselves are not very different from each other. The former is the beginning and the latter the inevitable end. That is why it is said, when the senses are in your fist, the world will be at your feet.

sarvatra samabuddhaya – even-minded at all times

The strange thing about equanimity is this: It is the beginning and the end in one. Shutting the mouth is not silence but it is necessary to experience silence. Practice leads to perfection. Remember our first day on a bicycle? When we wanted to learn, all our friends also wanted us to learn to ride the bicycle. 'Do not bend! Do not apply the front brake! Look straight! Push the pedal fast!' How many instructions? How many of them running behind us? After a few days, we feel as if we are born cyclists! As we pass the bus stop where our neighbourhood girls are waiting for the bus, we take off both our hands from the handlebar, comb our hair, whistle our tune and fly past them! If we had to stay on the bicycle, we had to achieve balance. There was no other way! We cannot know Him without becoming Him! Why? He is *'immutable – aksharam; indefinable – anirdesyam; unmanifest- avyaktam; all pervading – sarvatragam; incomprehensible – acintayam, kuutastam – changeless; acalam – immovable; dhruvam – constant.'*

Unless one is in equipoise throughout, how can he comprehend Him?

sarva bhuta hite rataa – engaged in the welfare of all beings

Aryans had finalized two great concepts and concluded that they are to be pursued by every individual. One is a responsibility and the other, duty. They informed that self-realization is the personal responsibility of every individual and active concern for the welfare of all living beings is everyone's duty. From feeding the bird to taking up environment issues, from writing an indignant letter to a newspaper to galvanizing mass support for a cause, from tending to an accident victim to donating a super specialty hospital, one can pick up anything from this wide gamut. It is not the food that the mother eats but her love that nourishes the baby in her womb. Life is sustained by love alone. When we approach the macro form of the Lord, we must have a mega view. Realizing that all of us belong to one large family should motivate us to contribute conscientiously to its welfare.

The Lord's assurance

So, we are free to pursue either the form or the formless nature of the Lord, depending on the design of our psyche. To Him, they are not greatly different. Either way, we are saved by Him. That is His assurance:

*ye tu sarvaani karmaani mayi samnyasya matparaa
ananyenaiva yogena maam dhyaayanta upaasate*

*teshaamaham samuddartaa mrutyu samsaara saagaraat
bhavaami naciraat paartha mayyaavesita cetasaam*

"As for those who, having dedicated all actions to Me and accepted Me as the Supreme, meditate by thinking of Me with single-minded concentration only ---

O son of Prtha! for them who have their minds absorbed in Me, I become without delay, the Deliverer from the sea of the world fraught with death."

(12:Bhakti yoga: 06:07)

First, he listed out the requirements for the two different categories of seekers. Then, he made us understand that the difference does not matter to Him. Now, He expresses the same instructions concisely. Only after doing so, He has given a direct assurance – I will save them from the ocean of life fraught with death, without any delay!

He tells Arjuna: 'All that you have to do is to fix your mind and intellect on Me. If you do so, you will reside in Me! Have no doubts about that! If this is not possible, pursue the Yoga of Practice. If even this is not possible, renounce the results of all the works by becoming controlled in mind.'

If you follow this closely, it will be clear that every alternative is more difficult than the previous one! How clever of Him! Is practicing higher Yoga easy? Is controlling the mind or renouncing the results easier? Certainly not! If we understand carefully, we will realize that the highest, which He has mentioned first, i.e., fixing the mind and intellect on Him – sounds more practicable. How, we may ask. If we really feel that He is very dear to us, very vital for our freedom, will it not be easy for us to think of Him alone uninterruptedly? If we love Him as we must, that should be easy!

However, materialism is our problem, though by itself, it is neither good nor bad. Our world, our body, our thoughts, our dreams – well, our entire life is material. The world does not love us; only we love it. It is our attachment to the material world that has become the obstacle.

"The quantum of attention you pay the outer world – to that extent, your inner journey is delayed. What is the difficulty in understanding this?"

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

This is why, despite giving several options and alternatives, Krishna wants Arjuna and all of us to understand that renunciation is far superior to any other approach.

*na karmanaa na prajayaa dhanena ca
tyaagaineke amrutatva maanasuh*

The Vedas declare: " Not by action, not by progeny, not by wealth but by sacrifice (sacrificing these three) alone immortality is attained."

What is that we are asked to renounce or sacrifice?

First, let us remember that nothing belongs to us in the first place! So, the question of sacrifice should not arise at all! Secondly, when life is fleeting and world a bubble, our properties are not going to last. Same would be the fate of our concepts that we hold so dearly to our heart, even if it meant a loss of friendship. We are holding the tree and complaining that the tree is not letting us go! Therefore, it is the sense of ownership of things, people, actions, circumstances and concepts that we have to give up. We cannot lock ourselves in a sealed room and look for fresh air.

The qualities of devotee

The explanation is accepted because it makes sense. Even then, it is not so easy to give up the sense of ownership. How can we renounce in a moment? Is there any method that the Lord would tell us by which we will be able to renounce? Most certainly! The Lord wants us to follow certain principles, presented by him in an inspiring sequence, which will lead us to the attitude of renunciation:

1. *advēshta sarvabhūtaānaam* – non-hatred towards all living beings
2. *maitra*: - friendly
3. *karuṇa eva ca* – having only compassion
4. *nirmama* - no idea of 'mine'
5. *nirahankara*: - no feeling of "I" or egoism
6. *sama dhukha sukha* – one who remains the same in sorrow and happiness
7. *kshami* - forgiving and patient
8. *santushta: satatam* – he who is ever content
9. *Yogi* - who is a Yogi
10. *yataatma* – who has self control
11. *dhruda niscaya*: - who has firm conviction
12. *arpitah mano buddhi mayi* – who has dedicated his mind and intellect to Me

sa me priya: - he is dear to me

(12:Bhakti Yoga:13:14)

It is interesting that the Lord has used a negative term first. He could have said friendliness straightaway instead of non-hatred. The Lord of all knows that it does not work that way! Our problem is not the absence of positive qualities but the presence of negative traits! And hatred is their chieftain! When he goes, friendship emerges. Friendliness is the gateway to the mansion of compassion. The moment compassion is established, the feeling of 'mine' disappears. We stop holding on to things, trivialities and even silly memories. When mine goes, 'I' disappears. Only then, it becomes possible to remain neutral amidst sorrow and happiness. Here too, He has mentioned sorrow first. For, only he who remains unshaken in sorrow remains unswept in happiness. Such a man who has already given up the feeling of mine and I becomes more forgiving and patient. He is not tickled by praise; nor is he upset by abuse. Hence, he is contentment personified. Therefore, he becomes a Yogi. Thus, he has total control over his entire being. Then, only then, his conviction becomes firm. After all, he has dedicated his mind and intellect to Him.

No wonder, he is dear to Him.

*yasmaannodvijate loko lokannodvijate ca ya:
harshaamarsha bhayodvaigar mukta: sa me priya:*

"He, too, owing to whom the world is not disturbed and who is not disturbed by the world, who is free from joy, impatience, fear and anxiety, is dear to Me."

(12:Bhakti Yoga:15)

Someone asked my Master, 'How long should I do *saadhana*? and he said:

"....so long as the world exists in you.

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

All of live in the same world, but, each one of us carries a distinct, separate world inside us. There is nothing wrong with the outer world. But, when we carry this world inside, it becomes one confusing mass of perceptions and delusion. And, my world is different from yours. Thus, conflict, which starts inside expresses itself in all possible ways outside. How is one

disturbed by the outer world? That is because of the convoluted version we carry inside which shows reality as untruth and untruth as truth. And, how do we disturb the outer world? Since every one of us carries a separate world in us, we rarely agree with one another and that causes agitation and disturbance all around.

However, when one loses mine and I, the world in him will have disappeared and the world outside would have become irrelevant. For, his mind and intellect are fixed only on the Lord. This is how he becomes free from joy or exultation. One who has established himself in Yoga will not suffer from impatience. One who has no hatred, will not have fear also. One who is even minded in sorrow and happiness will not have any anxiety.

No wonder, he is dear to Him!

*anapetsha: suchirdatsha udaaseeno gatavyatha:
sarvaarambha parityaagi yo madbhakta: sa me priya:*

"He who has no desires, who is pure, who is dexterous, who is impartial (indifferent) who is free from fear (misery) who has renounced every undertaking – he who is such a devotee of Mine is dear to Me."

(12:Bhakti Yoga:16)

My Master says:

"Agreed, this life is as uninteresting as eating hay and drinking hot water. There is nothing to be liked in this world. But, a Jnaani cannot have dislikes."

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

There was a king of a small city. He had a very peculiar trait, which was an embarrassment to his citizens. He was madly in love with a prostitute. He used to hold an umbrella while she was walking and how? He will be walking backwards, looking at her eyes all the time! His subjects were distressed by this delusion of their leader. At that time, Sri Ramanuja happened to pass by. He was informed of this and he agreed to talk to the king. He asked him what was so appealing to him about that woman. The king said, "Her beautiful eyes!" Ramanuja asked him, "Suppose if you see a more beautiful pair of eyes than hers?" The king said, "It simply cannot be!"

The Saint said, "Suppose I show?" The king agreed to accompany him. The great devotee of Vishnu quietly took him inside the Srirangam temple and showed the face of the reclining Lord. When he said, "Look at these eyes!" the king looked in the direction of the Lord's face, lost his heart in those pair of lotus eyes and from that moment, his direction changed forever. The great Alwaar sang, 'O those big eyes ran riot in me and drove me mad!'

He who seeks Him alone will not have any other desires and such a devotee will not suffer from any dislike either. And he who has no desires will have a pure heart. For, in the canvas of the heart, the desire is but a blemish. Such a pure hearted person will be dexterous in his work for two reasons. One, he considers understanding and attending duties as they present themselves as part of his service to God. Secondly, he has nothing in his mind except the Lord. So his power of attention will be excellent. Here, *udaaseena*: refers to intelligent indifference, which is very necessary for holding on to peace. As he is free from expectations, he is also far removed from the misery of disappointments and the resultant fear. No proposal will emanate from him. No project will originate from him. He will not start anything of his own. He has no agenda. He has no programmes. Whatever is presented before him, he merely responds appropriately.

The Lord claims him. He is my devotee. He is dear to Me!

*yo na hrushyati na dweshti na socati na kaankshati
suba asuba parityaagi bhaktimaan ya: sa me priya:*

*"He who does not rejoice, does not fret, does not lament, does not hanker;
who gives up good and bad, who is filled with devotion – he is dear to Me."*

(12:Bhakti Yoga:17)

Dr.Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan used to say, "*Brahma Tejas*, God-intoxicated faces..." What is the reason for that light, the *tejas* on their faces? One, they do not rejoice when they get something and they do not fret when that something is taken away from them. For, they are full of Him! They can neither get nor lose anything anymore! What they have is forever! They chase no more. There is no sense of not having anything or having lost something. So, they do not lament. They have neither good nor bad anymore; they own nothing. To an apprentice, a good or a positive thought is recommended. To a God-intoxicated heart, anything else is a hindrance.

"In meditation, even prayer is an aberration. In consciousness, even conscience is junk"

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

One who is devoted to the Lord turns into a beacon of light. No wonder, he is dear to Him!

*sama: satrou ca mitre ca tathaa maanopamaanayo
seetoshna sukha dukheshu sama sanga vivarjita:*

"He who is the same towards friend and foe, and so also in honour and dishonour; who is the same under cold, heat, happiness and sorrow, who is free from attachment to everything.."

(12:Bhakti Yoga:18)

How can one be the same towards a friend and a foe? When he has practiced *maitri* and *sarvabhuteshu hite rataa*, has he not become a friend of all living beings? Also, when he has befriended the Friend of all the friends, who is not his friend in this universe? Moreover, by practicing *advashtha* and devotion, he has conquered enmity forever. Now, he has conquered his inner enemies. Yes, enemies are inside only. That is why the Lord listed out an elaborate methodology! So, he does not look upon anyone as his enemy. He simply responds to the need of the person at that moment. Even if the person who meets him did him harm earlier, he does not take notice of it. My Master says,

"The previous information should not cause a bias in your mind. You must look at his present difficulty only."

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

In short, as he has only friends, and as he has no attachment, he treats all alike. He is not swayed by honour or dishonour as they are nothing more than others' opinions. He is *udaseena* indifferent to them. It follows that he is calm in heat and cold like he is with sorrow and happiness. After all, he is not attached to anything.

*tulya nindaastutir mounee santushto yenakenacit
aniketa: sthiramatir bhaktimaanme priyo nara:*

"The person to whom denunciation and praise are the same, who is silent, content with anything, homeless, steady-minded, and full of devotion, is dear to Me."

(12:Bhakti Yoga:19)

For the purpose of emphasis and driving home the point, the Lord repeats the qualities over and over. What is the Lord's quality?

"The more you grow, the merrier I grow."

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

Whatever we think He is, He is only that much, to us! This is the refrain of one of the beautiful songs of Sage Annamaya. Arjuna saw Him as the most beloved friend. Yudhisitra looked upon Him as the ultimate well-wisher. Vidhura knew that He was the Lord. Bhishma openly said that He and Arjuna were Narayana and Nara. Duryodhana saw Him as nothing more than a trickster. Sisupaala had nothing but hatred for Him. To Draupadi, He was the intimate, personal God. There are many who loved Krishna. And there were those who were full of hatred towards Him. He was neutral to both.

"I have always been the object of love and hence the subject of hatred."

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

It is the *mouni*, the silent one who can converse with God! Also, the Lord speaks only to him who is silent. What is silence?

"Absence of noise is not silence. Silence is absence of mind."

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

Thoughts betray lack of concentration. When consciousness is full of Him, thoughts subside, mind becomes tranquil and the inner recesses of one's being open up. They say, 'In prayer, you speak to God. In meditation, God speaks to you.' We can listen to God only when become silent. Verily, silence is the voice of the Lord. That is why, my Master would say,

"The Master does not answer questions. He responds to silence."

(Satguru Sivananda Murty)

That *mouni* is essentially content with anything – *with what he has and also with what he does not have!* He remains pleased. He has *stiramati*, i.e., he is steady of mind. Stillness and steadiness go together. The lofty mountain is steady. The sky is still. The *mouni* here is both. He alone is full of devotion. No wonder, he is dear to Him!

With this, Krishna has elucidated 36 significant qualities of a Devotee and has used the sentence, 'He is dear to Me' five times in this chapter. He concludes by saying:

*ye tu dharmyaam amrutamidam yathoktam paryupaasate
sraddadhaanaa matparamaa bhaktosteteeva me priyaha*

"But those devotees who accept Me as the supreme Goal and with faith seek for this ambrosia which is indistinguishable from the virtues as stated above, they are very dear to Me"

(12:Bhakti Yoga:20)

Dharma is the elixir and that too, our Sanatana Dharma is the protector and saviour of the entire mankind. The constituents of this dharma are these qualities or virtues explained by the Lord. All those who seek them and practice them become immortal. And they are dear to Him!

Anyone who considers the Lord to be dear to him is dear to the Lord as well:

"No one is unspecial to Me. Pure love is My nature. My love is neutral."