

# **Pilgrim's Gita**

**Srimad Bhagavad Gita – A Pilgrim's  
Perspective**

## **Comments about the Bhagavad Gita and this group:**

Hello dearest friends, I've been motivated to start this discussion group for the Bhagavad Gita (in English, the "Song of God"). Thank you for joining.

Our discussion won't be so traditional, for I am not a scholar nor have I studied or taught the Bhagavad Gita for fifty years or more as have several great souls, including one that I was given the grace of learning from. My perspective is that of a pilgrim, and the insight that I'll be able to share is from the gifts I've been given on my pilgrimage for Peace. The timeless teaching of the Bhagavad Gita has featured prominently in my own journey to Peace, and I look forward to exploring this great practical spiritual work with you and to sharing the perspective that I can.

Commentary in this work is primarily from either Swami Chinamayananda or Swami Venkateshananda, both great souls and great teachers, both direct disciples of Swami Sivananda, a 20<sup>th</sup> century Buddha and Yogi. To this I have added my simple observations which come from my effort to put this teaching in to practice, particularly from the time that I left my guru's feet in Ganeshpur, Uttarakhand, India, and began the two years plus of walking pilgrimage across and through the USA. I see this teaching not as some distant philosophy, but as the most practical guidance from the Lord of the heart, at the center of each of us and of these infinite universes. This guidance, if we choose to listen to it and to follow it (in how we live, in each and every moment), will quite simply lead us home.

Then we too can say, as Arjuna does in the 695<sup>th</sup> sloka (#18-73) – “Destroyed is my delusion, as I have now gained my memory through your grace, O Lord. I am firm; my doubts are gone.”

One of the joys of my pilgrimage is to be able to actively honor all peoples and all religions. All of the religions are beautiful, and I also meet the sweetest and most amazing people that call themselves Atheist. I have not once asked anyone their religion, of what value is this? I have been given the grace to attend services in temples, churches, stupas and mosques, and in our group of friends here all of the world's major religions are represented. I've joined silent meditation, chanted in English, Sanskrit, Hindi, Urdhu, Pali and Arabic, sung beautiful hymns and participated in drum circles, sweat lodges and boisterous prayer ceremonies. Not one of them is wrong. Each of them contain perfect teaching for the upliftment of mankind, when we follow them. Let us not sow divisions between those of one religion and another, between "us" and "them", or between "you" and "me". This is a path of suffering, not of light. Each religion has at its core the same teaching. The differences are cultural and nuanced, and a holistic view helps us even to understand our own path better.

For those participating here I want to be clear that we will not advocate a religion, that is not what the Bhagavad Gita's teaching is about. Yes there are some that interpret it this way, but this is a limited interpretation. Always universal interpretations lead us to freedom and limited interpretations to slavery; this is so for every teaching and for every walk of life. I shared Swami Chidananda's guidance about the Gita for the westerner for just this reason. The Gita's teaching is universal. I've invited you all here to our giant living room to participate, to offer your ideas and questions, and for us to have a great dialogue together with the goal of helping each of us to expand our understanding. I've

found that in comparing the various teachings across the faiths there is this beautiful common thread and that this practice helps us in our own path.

Finally each of our paths lead to the same Truth, and even though we apparently have our own path we each walk it hand in hand with all in this vast universe. After all, where would we be on any path without brother sun and sister moon? The same can be said for each of us. We are hand in hand, and the more clearly we can see this the better for our development. We must follow our own path, but we cannot reach the place that we want to be (eternal happiness, God) without accepting all of us.

I do not wish to convert anyone. I wish only for you to find happiness and peace, understanding that for this discovery you must transform your own self. Transformation is not about "what religion?", it is about striving for our ideal self, about finding and following what it is that inspires us. Dear Lord, let us help to inspire and lift up all, let us resist the urge to tear down another.

**Gita Dhyanam**  
**Meditation on the Bhagavad Gita**

**OM,**

**O Bhagavad Gita, by which Arjuna was illumined by Lord Krishna himself and which was composed of eighteen chapters within the Mahabharata by the ancient sage Vyasa;**

**O Divine Mother, Destroyer of rebirth, who showers the nectar of oneness on us;  
O Bhagavad Gita, my affectionate Mother, on Thee I meditate.**

**All the Upanishads are the cows, the milker is the cowherd boy, Krishna; Arjuna is the calf; people of purified intellect are the drinkers; the milk is the supreme nectar of the Gita,**

**My salutations to the Lord who is the source of supreme bliss, whose grace makes the mute eloquent and the crippled cross mountains.**

## Introduction - Lesson #1

The Bhagavad Gita consists of 701 (some versions are 700) slokas, or couplets. It is a discourse between the Lord (in the form of Krishna) and his disciple Arjuna. The Lord is the Lord of all names and forms, the same Lord that is inside you although veiled such that we cannot yet see. Arjuna is you, Arjuna is each of us. This dialogue takes place on the Kurukshetra, or the divine battlefield. This battlefield is inside each one of us.

Although this discourse is set within the Mahabharata, or the Great Battle of India (Bharat), the Bhagavad Gita's external setting is entirely allegorical. Whether this great war ever took place is debated by historians and scholars but this is not relevant, the outer war is simply the setting for us to examine, to fight and to win our inner war.

Let us make no mistake as we start our study that the battle that is referred to here is our own battle, each of us. It is the most important battle we will ever face, the only real battle. This battle is none less than the battle for our soul waged between the forces of highest Self (God) arrayed on one side of the battlefield, and the dark forces of ego self (Satan) on the other. We, each of us, have everything to gain or to lose as we fight this battle, and each of us today are torn between these two forces, in the center of the battlefield. On one side is eternal life and on the other is recurring death and suffering. Truly this is so.

The Mahabharata is the longest epic poem ever written, consisting of over 100,000 couplets and approximately 1.8 million words. It is roughly ten times the length of the great dramatic works of the Iliad and the Odyssey combined. It is said that anything that has ever happened or ever will happen within the world is included in the story of the Mahabharata. And within it is this gem of the Bhagavad Gita. In fact the Bhagavad Gita is the *raison d'être*, the reason for being, of the massive Mahabharata.

For our study we will be using english transliteration (in lieu of the Sanskrit characters) with english translation from the Holy Geeta version posted a few days ago.

Please note that the first 57 slokas set the stage for the remaining 644 (beginning with discourse #2:11), and that the 644 contain the essence of the teaching. As a result we will mostly use commentary on these first slokas directly from Swami Chinmayananda, and I won't have much input to add. He will help us to set the background. By all means please join in, ask questions and add your comments. We will move through these first 57 slokas quickly, over the next ten days or so, and then we will slow down our pace and take one to three only per day going forward.

And thus we begin, with the first three slokas. The dialogue all takes place in the center of the battlefield; the stage is set but the battle is yet to begin. The blind old king of Bharata starts the discourse with this one question, and from here we are taken in. The first discourse (chapter) is entitled "The Yoga of the Despondency of Arjuna":

#1-1

धृतराष्ट्र उवाच

धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे समवेता युयुत्सवः।

मामकाः पाण्डवाश्चैव किमकुर्वत सञ्जय॥1.1॥

Dhritaraashtra Uvaacha: Dharmakshetre kurukshetre samavetaa yuyutsavah;  
Maamakaah paandavaashchaiva kim akurvata sanjaya.

Dhritarashtra said: What did the sons of Pandu and also my people do when, desirous to fight, they assembled together on the holy plain of Kurukshetra, O Sanjaya?

#1-2

सञ्जय उवाच

दृष्ट्वा तु पाण्डवानीकं व्यूढं दुर्योधनस्तदा।

आचार्यमुपसङ्गम्य राजा वचनमब्रवीत्॥1.2॥

Sanjaya Uvaacha:

Drishtwaa tu paandavaaneekam vyudham duryodhanastadaa;

Aachaaryam upasamgamyaa raajaa vachanam abraveet.

Sanjaya said: Having seen the army of the Pandavas drawn up in battle array, King Duryodhana then approached his teacher (Drona) and spoke these words.

#1-3

पश्यैतां पाण्डुपुत्राणामाचार्य महर्षिं चमूम्।

व्यूढां द्रुपदपुत्रेण तव शिष्येण धीमता॥1.3॥

Pashyaitaam paanduputraanaam aachaarya mahateem chamoom; Vyoodhaam drupadaputrena tava shishyena dheemataa.

Behold, O Teacher! this mighty army of the sons of Pandu, arrayed by the son of Drupada, thy wise disciple.

In these first three slokas we have moved from the blind king named Dhritarashtra to the battlefield via the king's loyal servant and minister Sanjaya. Starting with the second sloka Sanjaya tells the story, in answer to the king's question.

From Swami Chinmayananda:

re: 1-1: "In the entire Geeta this is the only verse which the blind old king Dhritarashtra gives out. All the rest of the seven hundred stanzas are Sanjaya's report on what happened on the Kurukshetra battlefield just before the war.

"The blind old king is certainly conscious of the palpable injustices that he had done to his nephews, the Pandavas (Arjuna and his brothers plus their armies, representing the force of goodness and virtue). Dhritarashtra knew the relative strength of the two armies, and therefore, was fully confident of the larger strength of his son's (the leader of the Kauravas; Duryodhana and his brothers plus their armies, representing the forces of darkness and sloth). And yet, the viciousness of his past and the consciousness of the crimes perpetrated seem to be weighing heavily upon the heart of the blind king, and so he has his own doubts on the outcome of this war. He asks Sanjaya to explain to him, what is happening on the battlefield."

re: 1-2: "From this stanza onward, we have the report of Sanjaya upon what he saw and heard on the warfront at Kurukshetra. When Duryodhana saw the Pandava-forces arrayed for battle, though they were less in number than his own forces, the tyrant felt his self-confidence draining away. As a child would run to its parents in fright, so too,

Duryodhana, unsettled in his mind, runs to his teacher, Dronacharya (teacher of both Arjuna and Duryodhana). When our motives are impure and our cause unjust, however well equipped we may be, our minds should necessarily feel restless and agitated. This is the mental condition of all tyrants and lusty dictators."

re: 1-3: "It is indeed stupid of Duryodhana to point out to Drona the army formation of the Pandavas. Later on also, we shall find Duryodhana talking too much and that is a perfectly symptom indicating the inward fears of the great king over the final outcome of the unjust war."

Questions or comments? I have a question for you; as you reflect on these first three slokas what does it mean to you that the king is blind? What might his "blindness" signify?

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson #2

Here we continue with the introduction as Sanjaya describes the battlefield scene to the blind king. The commentary is once again from Swami Chinmayananda's "Holy Geeta". As discussed yesterday the first 57 slokas set the stage for the teaching to follow. As the scene is described we see that friends and family are arrayed on both sides of the battlefield, not unlike what we would have seen in the U.S. Civil War. Let us do our best to keep in mind, though, that this battlefield epic speaks to our inner battlefield and the friends and family to our own favorite ideas, and beliefs, our own attachments. The larger the forces the stronger the attachment spoken to, and indeed our attachments are massive; incredibly strong and they hold great sway over us.

Below are the next five slokas, from Discourse 1-4 through 1-8. The accompanying image depicts the battlefield before the battle, with the forces arrayed on both sides.:

#1-4:

अत्र शूरा महेष्वासा भीमार्जुनसमा युधि।

युयुधानो विराटश्च द्रुपदश्च महारथः॥1.4॥

Atra shoora maheshwaasaa bheemaarjunasamaa yudhi; Yuyudhaano viraatashcha drupadashcha mahaarathah.

Here are heroes, mighty archers, equal in battle to Bhima and Arjuna, Yuyudhana, Virata and Drupada, each commanding eleven-thousand archers.

#1-5:

धृष्टकेतुश्चेकितानः काशिराजश्च वीर्यवान्।

पुरुजित्कुन्तिभोजश्च शैब्यश्च नरपुङ्गवः॥1.5॥

Dhrishtaketush chekitanaah kaashiraajashcha veeryavaan; Purujit kuntibhojashcha shaibyashcha narapungavah.

Dhrishtaketu, Chekitana, and the valiant king of Kashi, Purujit and Kuntibhoja and Saibya, the best of men.

#1-6:

युधामन्युश्च विक्रान्त उत्तमौजाश्च वीर्यवान्।

सौभद्रो द्रौपदेयाश्च सर्व एव महारथाः॥1.6॥

Yudhaamanyushcha vikraanta uttamaujaashcha veeryavaan; Saubhadro draupadeyaashcha sarva eva mahaarathaah.

The strong Yudhamanyu and the brave Uttamaejas, the son of Subhadra and the sons of Draupadi, all of them, divisional commanders.

"In these three stanzas, we have a list of names of all those who were noted personalities in the Pandava army. Duryodhana, reviewing his enemies standing in formation, recognises very many noted men of war functioning as maharathas in the Pandava forces. A maharathi was in charge of a group of 11,000 archers, which formed a division in the ancient Hindu army."

Arjuna and Bhima were accepted men of war, noted for archery and strength. These enumerated heroes were, says Duryodhana, each as great as Arjuna and Bhima, the implication being that though the Pandava forces were less in number, their total effectiveness was much greater than that of the larger and better equipped army of the Kauravas."

#1-7:

अस्माकं तु विशिष्टा ये तान्निबोध द्विजोत्तम।

नायका मम सैन्यस्य संज्ञार्थं तान्ब्रवीमि ते॥1.7॥

Asmaakam tu vishishta ye taan nibodha dwijottama; Naayakaah mama sainyasya samjnaartham taan braveemi te.

Know also, O best among the twice-born, the names of those who are the most distinguished amongst ourselves, the leaders of my army; these I name to thee for thy information.

"Addressing his master as "the best among the twice-born," Duryodhana now repeats the names of the distinguished heroes in his own army. A weak man, to escape from his own mental fears, will whistle to himself in the dark. The guilty conscience of the tyrant king had undermined all his mental strength. The more he realised the combined strength of the great personalities arrayed in the opposite enemy camp, the more abjectly nervous he felt, in spite of the fact that his own army was also manned by highly competent heroes. In order to revive himself, he wanted to hear words of encouragement from his teachers and elders. But when Duryodhana met Drona, the acharya chose to remain silent and the helpless king had to find for himself new means of encouragement to revive his own drooping enthusiasm. Therefore, he started enumerating the great leaders in his own army.

When a person has thus completely lost his morale due to the heavy burden of his own crimes weighing on his conscience, it is but natural that he loses all sense of proportion in his words. At such moments of high tension an individual clearly exhibits his true mental culture. He addresses his own teacher as "the best among the twice- born."

A Brahmana is considered as "twice-born" because of his inner spiritual development. When born from his mother's womb man comes into the world only as the animal called



man. Thereafter, through study and contemplation he gains more and more discipline, and a cultured Hindu is called a Brahmana (Brahmin).

After all, Drona is a Brahmana by birth and as such he must have a greater share of softness of heart. Moreover, the enemy lines are fully manned by his own dear students. As a shrewd dictator, Duryodhana entertained shameless doubts about the loyalty of his own teacher.

This is but an instinctive fear which is natural with all men of foul motives and crooked dealings. When we are not ourselves pure, we will project our own weaknesses and impurities on others who are working around us as our subordinates."

#1-8:

भवान्भीष्मश्च कर्णश्च कृपश्च समितिञ्जयः।

अश्वत्थात्मा विकर्णश्च सौमदत्तिस्तथैव च॥1.8॥

Bhavaan bheeshmashcha karnashcha kripashcha samitinjayah; Ashwatthaamaa vikarnashcha saumadattis tathaiva cha.

Yourself and Bishma, and Karna and also Kripa, the victorious in war; Aswatthama, Vikarna and so also the son of Somadatta.

"Though Duryodhana, in his mental hysteria, got slightly upset at the subjective onslaught of his own brutal motives and past crimes, like the true dictator that he was, he regained his balance in no time. The moment he had spilt out in his insulting arrogance, the term "twice-born" in addressing his teacher, he realised that he had over-stepped the bounds of discretion. Perhaps the cold silence of the revered acharya spoke amply to Duryodhana."

That's it for today. Tomorrow the buildup continues.

### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson #3

Here we continue the buildup to war on the Kurukshetra. From #1-8 we are being introduced to all of the great ones on both sides of the battlefield. Clearly the stage is being set for a monstrous and terrible war. Today again let's share five slokas along with commentary by Swami Chinmayananda. Please do offer your comments and questions as you review today's study. Please take careful note of the delusional power of ego as you read this, we get a good example of this in the first of today's slokas. The image shown is of the scene described in #1-13:

#1-9

अन्ये च बहवः शूरा मदर्थे त्यक्तजीविताः।

नानाशस्त्रप्रहरणाः सर्वे युद्धविशारदाः॥1.9॥

Anye cha bahavah shoosraa madarthe tyaktajeevitaah; Naanaashastrapraharanaah sarve yuddhavishaaradaah.

And many other heroes also who are determined to give up their lives for my sake, armed with various weapons and missiles, all well-skilled in battle.

"The incorrigible vanity of the dictatorial tyrant is amply clear when he arrogates to himself the stupendous honour that such a vast array of heroes had come ready to lay down their lives for "MY SAKE." To all careful students of the Mahabharata, it cannot be very difficult to estimate how many of these great veterans would have thrown in their lot with Duryodhana, had it not been for the fact that Bhishma --- the grandsire --- was fighting in the ranks of the Kauravas."

#1-10

अपर्याप्तं तदस्माकं बलं भीष्माभिरक्षितम्।

पर्याप्तं त्विदमेतेषां बलं भीमाभिरक्षितम्॥1.10॥

Aparyaptam tad asmaakam balam bheeshmaabhirakshitam; Paryaptam twidam eteshaam balam bheemaabhirakshitam.

This army of ours defended by Bhishma is insufficient, whereas that army of theirs defended by Bhima is sufficient. Or, This army of ours protected by Bhishma is unlimited, whereas that army of theirs protected by Bhima is limited.

"In the art of warfare, then known among the ancient Hindus, each army had, no doubt, a commander-in-chief, but it also had a powerful man of valour, courage and intelligence, who functioned as the "defender." In the Kaurava forces, Bhishma officiated as the "defender," and in the Pandava forces Bhima held the office."

#1-11

अयनेषु च सर्वेषु यथाभागमवस्थिताः।

भीष्ममेवाभिरक्षन्तु भवन्तः सर्व एव हि॥1.11॥

Ayaneshu cha sarveshu yathaabhaagam avasthitaah; Bheeshmam evaabhirakshantu bhavantah sarva eva hi.

Therefore do you all, stationed in your respective positions in the several divisions of the army, protect Bhishma alone.

After thus expressing in a soliloquy, his own estimate of the relative strength and merit of the two forces, now arrayed, ready for a total war, the king in Duryodhana rises above his mental clouds of desperation to shoot forth his imperial orders to his army officers. He advises them that each commander must keep to his position and fight in disciplined order, and all of them should spare no pains to see that the revered Bhishma is well-protected. Perhaps, Duryodhana suspects that the lusty force that he had mobilised is an ill-assorted heterogeneous army constituted of the various tribal chieftains and kings of distant lands and that the strength of such an army could be assured, only when they hold on to a united strategy in all their various manoeuvres. Synchronisation of the different operations is the very backbone of an army's success, and in order to bring this about, as a true strategist, Duryodhana is instructing his various commanders working in their different wings to work out the single policy of protecting Bhishma.

#1-12

तस्य संजनयन्हर्षं कुरुवृद्धः पितामहः।

सिंहनादं विनद्योच्चैः शङ्खं दध्मौ प्रतापवान्॥1.12॥

Tasya sanjanayan harsham kuruvridhah pitaamahah; Simhanaadam vinadyocchaih shankham dadhmau prataapavaan.

His glorious grandsire (Bhishma) , the oldest of the Kauravas, in order to cheer Duryodhana, now sounded aloud a lion's roar and blew his conch.

"All the while that Duryodhana was busy making a fool of himself and in his excitement putting all the great officers of his army into an uncomfortable mood of desperate unhappiness, Bhishma was standing, not too far away, observing the pitiable confusions of the tyrant. The revered grandsire noticed, intelligently, in Dronacharya's silence, the outraged temper of a man of knowledge and action. He realised that the situation could be saved only if all those assembled were jerked out of their mental preoccupations. The more they were let alone with their revolting thoughts against Duryodhana, the more they would become ineffectual for the imminent battle. Understanding this psychology of the officers under his command, the great Marshall Bhishma took up his war- bugle (conch) and blew it, sending forth roaring waves of confidence into the hearts of the people manning the array .

"This action of Bhishma, though performed by him out of pity for Duryodhana's mental condition; amounted to an act of aggression almost corresponding to the 'first-bullet-shot' in modern warfare. With this lion-roar, the Mahabharata war was actually started, and for all historical purposes the Kauravas had thereby become the aggressors."

#1-13

ततः शङ्खाश्च भेर्यश्च पणवानकगोमुखाः।

सहसैवाभ्यहन्यन्त स शब्दस्तुमुलोऽभवत्॥१.१३॥

Tatah shankhaashcha bheryashcha panavaanakagomukhaah;  
Sahasaivaabhyahanyanta sa shabdistumulo'bhavat.

Then (following Bhishma) , conches and kettle-drums, tabors, drums and cow-horns blared forth quite suddenly and the sound was tremendous.

"All the commanders were no doubt in high tension, and as soon as they heard the marshall's bugle, individually, each one of them took up his instrument and sounded the battle-cry. Thus, conches and kettle-drums, tabors and trumpets, bugles and cow-horns, all burst forth into a challenging war-call, which Sanjaya, half-heartedly , describes as "tremendous." Later on, we shall find that when this challenge was replied to by the Pandavas, the sound was described by Sanjaya as "terrific," "resounding throughout heaven and earth, and rending the hearts of the Kauravas." Here is another instance to prove that Sanjaya was, evidently, a moral objector to the war-aim of Duryodhana. Therefore, we have in him a most sympathetic reporter of the message of the Lord at the battle-front, as given out in His Song Divine."

QUESTION: How would you feel on this battlefield? With the great conchs and drums of over a million warriors lined up on either side of the battlefield starting to blare and bang. And, as you imagine how you might feel, can you relate it to what makes you feel this same way in your battle of daily life?

Bhagavad Gita - Lesson #4

The buildup to the battle continues. Let us continue, with Swami Chinmayananda ji's beautiful commentary. The accompanying image is an ancient temple carving depicting the giant kettle drums that were being beaten in the preparation for the great war:

#1-14

ततः श्वेतैर्हयैर्युक्ते महति स्यन्दने स्थितौ।

माधवः पाण्डवश्चैव दिव्यौ शङ्खौ प्रदध्मतुः॥1.14॥

tataḥ śvētairhayairyuktē mahati syandanē sthitau.

mādhavaḥ pāṇḍavaścaiva divyau śaṅkhau pradadhmauḥ

Then, also Madhava and the son of Pandu, seated in their magnificent chariot yoked with white horses, blew their divine conches.

"The wealth of detail that has been so lavishly squandered in expressing a simple fact that, from the Pandava-side, Krishna and Arjuna answered the battle-cry, clearly shows where Sanjaya's sympathies lay. Here, the description --- "sitting in the magnificent chariot, harnessed with white horses, Madhava and Arjuna blew their conches divine" -- clearly echoes the hope lurking in the heart of Sanjaya that due to the apparent contrast in the two descriptions, perhaps, even at this moment Dhritarashtra may be persuaded to withdraw his sons from the warfront."

#1-15

पाञ्चजन्यं हृषीकेशो देवदत्तं धनंजयः।

पौण्ड्रं दध्मौ महाशङ्खं भीमकर्मा वृकोदरः॥1.15॥

pāñcājanyaṁ hr̥ṣīkēśo dēvadattaṁ dhanañjayaḥ.

paunḍraṁ dadhmau mahāśaṅkhaṁ bhīmakarmā vṛkōdaraḥ

Hrishikesha blew the Panchajanya and Dhananjaya (Arjuna) blew the Devadatta and Vrikodara (Bhima) , the doer of terrible deeds, blew the great conch, named Paundra.

"In his description of the Pandava array, Sanjaya is very particular to mention even the name of each warrior's special conch. Panchajanya was blown by Krishna.

"Hrishikesha is the name of the Lord and it has often been described as meaning the 'Lord of the Senses.' But this is according to an old derivation: Hrishika+ Isha = "Lord of the Senses." But the word "Hrishika" is an obscure one. Modern commentators prefer to explain it as Hrish+ kesha 'Having short hair.'"

#1-16

अनन्तविजयं राजा कुन्तीपुत्रो युधिष्ठिरः।

नकुलः सहदेवश्च सुघोषमणिपुष्पकौ॥1.16॥

anantavijayaṁ rājā kuntīputrō yudhiṣṭhiraḥ.

nakulaḥ sahadēvaśca sughōṣamanipuṣpakau

King Yudhishthira, the son of Kunti, blew the Anantavijaya; Nakula and Sahadeva blew the Sughoshha and the Manipushpaka.

#1-17

काश्यश्च परमेष्वासः शिखण्डी च महारथः।

धृष्टद्युम्नो विराटश्च सात्यकिश्चापराजितः॥1.17॥

kāśyaśca paramēṣvāsaḥ śikhāṇḍī ca mahārathaḥ.  
dhr̥ṣṭadyumnō virāṭaśca sātyakiścāparājitaḥ

The king of Kashi, an excellent archer, Shikhandi, the mighty commander of eleven thousand archers, Dhristadyumna and Virata and Satyaki, the unconquered;

#1-18

द्रुपदो द्रौपदेयाश्च सर्वशः पृथिवीपते।

सौभद्रश्च महाबाहुः शङ्खान्दध्मुः पृथक्पृथक्॥1.18॥

drupadō draupadēyāśca sarvaśaḥ pṛthivīpatē.  
saubhadraśca mahābāhuḥ śaṅkhāndadhmuḥ pṛthakpṛthak

Drupada and the sons of Draupadi, O Lord of the Earth, and the son of Subhadra, the mighty armed, blew their respective conches.

"In the above verses we have the enumeration of the great Maharathas, battalion-commanders, who, with enthusiasm, loudly blew their conches, again and again, in an ascending cadence. The arrow that ultimately felled Bhishma in the Mahabharata-war came from Shikhandi. The charioteer of Krishna, who was also a battalion- commander in the Pandava army, was called Satyaki."

"The report is being addressed to Dhritarashtra and it is indicated by Sanjaya's words, 'Oh Lord of the earth.'"

#1-19

स घोषो धार्तराष्ट्राणां हृदयानि व्यदारयत्।

नभश्च पृथिवीं चैव तुमुलो व्यनुनादयन्॥1.19॥

sa ghōṣō dhārtarāṣṭrāṇāṃ hṛdayāni vyadārayat.  
nabhaśca pṛthivīṃ caiva tumulō vyanunādayan

That tumultuous sound rent the hearts of (the people of) Dhritarashtra's party and made both heaven and earth reverberate.

"From the fourteenth stanza onwards Sanjaya gives us in all detail an exhaustive description of the Pandava forces, and he spares no pains to bring into the mind of Dhritarashtra a vivid understanding of the superiority of the Pandava forces. Perhaps, the minister hopes that his blind king will realise the disastrous end and, at least now, will send forth a command to stop the fratricidal war."

QUESTION: Can you find your way to identify with the blind king here? To imagine how you might feel in his shoes? Can you find in yourself the feeling of the earth and heavens shaking with the vibration of the drums, conchs and horns?

Bhagavad Gita - Lesson #5

As we resume our study we are still in the buildup to battle and it has now reached a fever pitch with horns rending the airwaves and drums shaking the earth. Millions of warriors are lined up on either side of the Kurukshetra with the two sides facing each other awaiting the orders from their respective commanders.

Sanjaya continues to describe the scene to his master the blind king and now we are introduced to Arjuna for the first time in the buildup. We pick up from discourse #1, sloka #20. The accompanying image shows Arjuna and Lord Krishna having reached the center of the Kurukshetra so that Arjuna might survey the unfolding scene. As discussed we will continue with Swami Chinmayananda ji's commentary through discourse #1; we are still setting the scene in preparation for Lord Krishna's teaching which will begin at #2-11

As we resume let's refresh our minds that this story is pointing to our own inner battle. To this point we have focused on the dark forces including the blind king and Duryodhana, the vengeful and greedy sense controlled ego-self. As we are introduced to Arjuna we may begin to see our selves more completely as Arjuna represents the healthy intellect; here we begin to see not just sense motivated action but reflection and consideration of the proper course of action. Not only do we hear from Arjuna for the first time since our study began, we also now will hear the first words from Lord Krishna:

#1-20

अथ व्यवस्थितान्दृष्ट्वा धार्तराष्ट्रान्कपिध्वजः।

प्रवृत्ते शस्त्रसम्पाते धनुरुद्यम्य पाण्डवः॥२०॥

Atha vyavasthitāndṛṣṭvā dhārtarāṣṭrāṅkapidhvajaḥ|  
Pravṛtte śāstrasampāte dhanurudyamya pāṇḍavaḥ

Then, seeing the people of Dhritarashtra's party standing arrayed and the discharge of weapons about to begin, Arjuna, the son of Pandu, whose ensign was a monkey, took up his bow and said these words to Krishna (Hrishikesha) , O Lord of the Earth!

"In these one and a half verses we have a description of the arrival of the hero of the Mahabharata war, Arjuna, on the battle-field. The exact time and nature of his entry are noted here. The shooting had not yet started, but it was imminent. It was the most tense moment; the crisis had risen to its highest pitch. It was at this moment that Arjuna, whose ensign was that of Hanuman, said the following words to Lord Krishna.

"In those ancient days of chivalrous warfare, each honoured hero had his own personal flag, carrying on it conspicuously, a well-recognised symbol. By the flag flying on the chariot, the enemy could recognise who was the occupant of the chariot. A hero was not generally short at by an ordinary soldier, but each fought with his equal on the battle-field. This system of carrying a symbol to recognize individuals in the battle-field is faithfully followed even in modern warfare. A high official's vehicle carries insignia of the officer's rank on its very number- plate; on the very uniform enough details are pinned on to recognize the wearer and identify him. Arjuna's ensign was that of a monkey.

"The stanza also gives us, in hasty strokes, the information that Arjuna was impatient to start the righteous war. He had raised his instrument of war, his bow, indicating his readiness to fight."

#1-21 & #1-22 (English translation is combined from both stanzas)

हृषीकेशं तदा वाक्यमिदमाह महीपते।

सेनयोरुभयोर्मध्ये रथं स्थापय मेऽच्युत॥२१॥

Hṛṣīkeśaṁ tadā vākyamidamāha mahīpate|

Senayorubhayormadhye rathaṁ sthāpaya me'acyuta

यावदेतान्निरीक्षेऽहं योद्धुकामानवस्थितान्।

कैर्मया सह योद्धव्यमस्मिन्नणसमुद्यमे॥२२॥

Yāvadetānnirīkṣe'haṁ yoddhukāmānavasthitān|

Kairmayā saha yoddhavyamasminraṇasamudyame

In the midst of the two armies, place my chariot, O Achyuta, that I may behold those who stand here desirous of fighting and, on the eve of this battle, let me know with whom I must fight.

"Here, we hear Arjuna's soldier-like command to his charioteer to drive and place the vehicle between the two armies so that he might see and recognise the various heroes whom he has to meet and fight in the great war. In expressing thus a wish to review the enemy lines the great hero is showing his daring and chivalry, his great courage and firm determination, his adventurous readiness and indomitable energy. Upto this point in the story, Arjuna, the invincible hero of the Mahabharata, was in his own true element unaffected by any mental hysteria."

#1-23

योत्स्यमानानवेक्षेऽहं य एतेऽत्र समागताः।

धार्तराष्ट्रस्य दुर्बुद्धेर्युद्धे प्रियचिकीर्षवः॥२३॥

Yotsyamānānavekṣe'haṁ ya ete'tra samāgatāḥ|

Dhārtarāṣṭrasya durbuddheryuddhe priyacikīrṣavaḥ

For I desire to observe those who are assembled here for the fight, wishing to please in battle, the evil-minded sons of Dhritarashtra.

"The verse only reinforces our impression of Arjuna gathered in the previous lines. He is giving the reason why he wants to review the enemy lines. As a man of action, he did not want to take any undue risk and so wanted to see for himself who were the low-minded,

power-mad, greed-ridden men who had joined the forces of the Kauravas, supporting the palpably tyrannical and evidently unjust cause of the unscrupulous Duryodhana.

"As we read the stanza, we can almost hear the great warrior's teeth grinding, as he spits out these hot words which express his mental estimate of his relentless cousins."

#1-24

एवमुक्तो हृषीकेशो गुडाकेशेन भारत।

सेनयोरुभयोर्मध्ये स्थापयित्वा रथोत्तमम्॥२४॥

Evamukto hṛṣīkeśo guḍākeśena bhārata|

Senayorubhayormadhye sthāpayitvā rathottamam



Sanjaya said: 24. Thus addressed by Gudakesha, O Bharata, Hrishikesha, having stationed the best of chariots between the two armies;

#1-25

भीष्मद्रोणप्रमुखतः सर्वेषां महीक्षिताम्।

उवाच पार्थ पश्यैतान्समवेतान्कुरुनिति॥२५॥

Bhīṣmadroṇapramukhataḥ sarveṣāṁ mahīkṣitām|

Uvāca pārtha paśyaitānsamavetānkurūniti

In front of Bhishma and Drona, and all the rulers of the earth, he said, 'O Partha, behold these Kurus gathered together. '

"At a point "facing Bhishma, Drona and all the rulers of the earth," the Divine Charioteer pulled up the reins and brought the royal chariot to a halt. As a dutiful driver, Krishna says to Arjuna, "Behold, O Partha! All the Kauravas gathered together." These are the only words that Krishna has spoken in the entire first chapter; and these represent the sparks that set fire to and brought down the egoistic edifice of false valuations which the great hero had built for himself as a splendid dwelling place for his personality. Hereafter, we shall find how Arjuna reacted to this great challenge and ultimately got his entire "within" wrecked and shattered.

"Partha means 'Son of Pritha' --- it is a name of Arjuna; 'Pritha' was another name of Kunti; the Sanskrit term Partha also carries a flavour of the term Parthiva meaning 'clay-made,' 'earth-formed.' The suggestive implication of this term is very striking inasmuch as it connotes that the Geeta is the Song of Truth sung by the Immortal to the mortal Arjuna, man's all-time representative."

QUESTION: Do you see the shift from the blind thoughts and actions of the king and his son Duryodhana to the consideration and contemplation of Arjuna? Can you think of an example where you have experienced this type of shift inside?

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson #6

As we continue in our study we see that Arjuna had asked Lord Krishna to take him to the center of the battlefield that he might survey the scene. He had chosen in that moment to step back and review the armies prior to battle, and yet the drama intensifies now as he begins to see his own friends and family on both sides of the line. This scene shocks him. Instead of reacting with dispassion his confidence (of having chosen the proper course of action) wanes and begins to give way to personal grief. We resume from Discourse #1, sloka #26. The accompanying image shows the grief of Arjuna as he surveys the scene, he has just dropped his great bow named "Gandiva".

Here, in Swami Chinmayananda's commentary, you will also begin to see his quite straightforward banter. He does not mince his words as he describes the psychological play unfolding:

#1-26 and #1-27

तत्रापश्यत्स्थितान्पार्थः पितृन्थ पितामहान्।

आचार्यान्मातुलान्भ्रातृन्पुत्रान्पौत्रान्सखींस्तथा॥१.२६॥



Tatrāpaśyatsthitānpārthaḥ pitṛnatha pitāmahān|  
Ācāryānmātulānbhrātṛṇputrānpautrānsakhīrṁstathā

Then Partha saw stationed there in both the armies, fathers, grandfathers, teachers, maternal uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons and friends too.

श्वशुरान्सुहृदश्चैव सेनयोरुभयोरपि।

तान्समीक्ष्य स कौन्तेयः सर्वान्बन्धूनवस्थितान्॥१.२७॥

Śvaśurānsuhr̥daścaiva senayorubhayorapi|  
Tānsamīkṣya sa kaunteyaḥ sarvānbandhūnavasthitān

(He saw) Fathers-in-law and friends also in both the armies. Then the son of Kunti, seeing all these kinsmen thus standing arrayed, spoke thus sorrowfully, filled with deep pity.

"Thus shown by Shri Krishna, Arjuna recognised in his enemy lines all his kith and kin, near and dear family members, brothers and cousins, teachers and grandsires, and almost all his acquaintances and friends. He recognized such intimate relations not only in the enemy lines, but even in his own army. This sight, perhaps, brought to his mind, for the first time, the full realisation of the tragedies of a fratricidal war. As a warrior and a man of action, he did not, perhaps till then, fully realize the extent of sacrifice that society would be called upon to make in order that his ambition might be fulfilled and Duryodhana's cruelties avenged. Whatever might have been the cause, the sight brought into his mind a flood of pity and compassion.

"Evidently, this was not an honest emotion. Had it been honest, had his pity and compassion been, Buddha-like, natural and instinctive, he would have, even long before the war, behaved quite differently. This emotion which now Sanjaya glorifies as "pity" in Arjuna, is a misnomer. In the human heart, there is always a great tendency to glorify one's own weaknesses with some convenient angelic name and divine pose. Thus, a rich man's vanity is misnamed as charity when he builds a temple in his own name with the secret aim of immortalising himself. Here also we find that the feeling of desperation that came in Arjuna's mind due to the complete shattering of his mental equilibrium has been misnamed and glorified as 'pity'.

"Arjuna had a long life of mental repressions which had created an infinite amount of dynamic energies seeking a field for expression. His mind got split up because of his egoistic evaluation of himself as the greatest hero of his time, and because of his anxious desire for a victorious end of the war. The preoccupation of his mind, dreaming intensively, about the ultimate end of the war brought about a complete divorce between the 'subjective' and the 'objective' aspects of his mind.

"Later on, in this chapter, we shall discover the various symptoms of this neurotic condition in him and his hysterical blabberings which are typical of such a mental patient. The endeavour in Chapter I of the Geeta is to give the complete "case-history" of a patient suffering from the typical "Arjuna-disease." The Bhagawad Geeta gives, as I said earlier, an extremely efficient "Krishna-cure" for this soul-killing "Arjuna-disease.""

#1-28 and #1-29

अर्जुन उवाच

कृपया परयाऽऽविष्टो विषीदन्निदमब्रवीत्।

दृष्ट्वेमं स्वजनं कृष्ण युयुत्सुं समुपस्थितम्॥1.28॥

Kṛpayā parayāviṣṭo viṣīdannidamabravīt|

Dr̥ṣṭvemaṁ svajanaṁ kṛṣṇa yuyutsum samupasthitam

Arjuna said: Seeing these my kinsmen, O Krishna, arrayed, eager to fight,

सीदन्ति मम गात्राणि मुखं च परिशुष्यति।

वेपथुश्च शरीरे मे रोमहर्षश्च जायते॥1.29॥

Sīdanti mama gātrāṇi mukhaṁ ca pariśuṣyati|

Vepathuśca śarīre me romaharṣaśca jāyate

My limbs fail and my mouth is parched, my body quivers and my hair stands on end.

"In these two stanzas, there is an exhaustive enumeration of the symptoms that the patient could then recognise in his own physical body as a result of his mental confusions. That which Sanjaya had glorified as 'pity', when coming out of Arjuna's own mouth, gains a more realistic expression. Arjuna says: "seeing my kinsmen gathered here anxiously determined to fight, my limbs shiver"..., etc.

"All these symptoms are described in the text-books of modern psychology as typical symptoms of the mental disease named 'anxiety-state-neurosis.'"

#1-30

गाण्डीवं संसते हस्तात्त्वक्चैव परिदह्यते।

न च शक्नोम्यवस्थातुं भ्रमतीव च मे मनः॥1.30॥

Gāṇḍīvaṁ sraṁsate hastāttvakcaiva paridahyate|

Na ca śaknomyavasthātuṁ bhramatīva ca me manaḥ

The Gandiva-bow slips from my hand, and my skin burns all over; I am also unable to stand and my mind is whirling round, as it were.

"Here Arjuna is adding some more details of the symptoms of his disease. Earlier we had a list of symptoms that manifested on the physical body. Now in this stanza, Arjuna tries to report recognised symptoms of the mal- adjustments at his mental level.

"Not only is his mind unsteady, agitated and chaotic, but it has lost all its morale. It has come down to the stupid level of accepting and recognising superstitious omens portending disastrous failures and imminent consequences.

"NOT ONLY DOES THE FOLLOWING STANZA VIVIDLY PICTURE TO US HIS MENTAL CONFUSIONS, BUT IT ALSO SHOWS HOW FAR HIS DISCRIMINATION HAS BEEN DRAINED OFF, AND HIS MORALE DESTROYED."

We will continue forward tomorrow to see the telling stanza to which Swamiji refers.

QUESTION: Can you feel compassion for Arjuna in the grief that is descending? Can you also see Swamiji's point about the selfishness that has taken him over in this scene?

Please advise your comments and questions. Thank you for your participation, blessings as we move forward in this wonderful study.

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson #7

Our blessed Arjuna continues his fall into self doubt and grief at the pending battle. We resume from Discourse #1, sloka #31 with Swami Chinmayananda ji's lucid psychological insight. Here also is one more image of Arjuna dropping his bow in his grief:

#1-31

निमित्तानि च पश्यामि विपरीतानि केशव।

न च श्रेयोऽनुपश्यामि हत्वा स्वजनमाहवे॥1.31॥

Nimittāni ca paśyāmi viparītāni keśava|

Na ca śreyo'nupaśyāmi hatvā svajanamāhave

And I see adverse omens, O Keshava. Nor do I see any good in killing my kinsmen in battle.

"In this state of mental confusion, when his emotions have been totally divorced from his intellect, the 'objective- mind,' without the guidance of its 'subjective-aspect,' runs wild and comes to some unintelligent conclusions. He says, 'I desire neither victory, nor empire, nor even pleasure.' It is a recognised fact that a patient of hysteria, when allowed to talk, will, in a negative way, express the very cause for the attack.

"Similarly, the very denials of Arjuna clearly indicate to all careful readers how and why he got into such a state of mental grief. He desired victory. He urgently wanted the kingdom. He anxiously expected to win pleasures for himself and his relations. But the challenging look of the mighty Kaurava forces and the great and eminent warriors standing ready to fight, shattered his hopes, blasted his ambitions, and undermined his self-confidence and he slowly developed the well-known "Arjuna- disease," the cure for which is the theme of the Geeta."

#1-32

न काङ्क्षे विजयं कृष्ण न च राज्यं सुखानि च।

किं नो राज्येन गोविन्द किं भोगैर्जीवितेन वा॥1.32॥

Na kāṅkṣe vijayaṁ kṛṣṇa na ca rājyaṁ sukhāni ca|

Kiṁ no rājyena govinda kiṁ bhogairjīvitena vā

For, I desire not victory, O Krishna, nor kingdom, nor pleasures. Of what avail is dominion to us, O Govinda? Of what avail are pleasures or even life itself?

Note that "Govinda", "Keshava" and "Krishna" are but various names for the Lord (here in the form of Krishna). In the Indian tradition everything is seen as an aspect of the one Lord and is personified and given a name; this applies even to divine qualities, such as wealth ("Durga") or knowledge ("Saraswati"). Each of the Avatars, or incarnations of the Lord (such as Krishna), are identified with at least 108 names.

It is a common and loving practice to refer to someone conversationally with different names, it shows respect and fondness. This is what we are observing here with the various names for the same. We will see the relationship between Arjuna and Lord Krishna will develop as we move forward in the Gita. At this point even though Arjuna

knows at some level that Krishna is the Lord of the universe he is completely identified with the body and therefore is relating to Krishna as a friend and ally instead of the omniscient and omnipotent Lord. We see this in his tone.

#1-33

येषामर्थे काङ्क्षितं नो राज्यं भोगाः सुखानि च।

त इमेऽवस्थिता युद्धे प्राणांस्त्यक्त्वा धनानि च॥1.33॥

Yeṣāmarthe kāṅkṣitaṁ no rājyaṁ bhogaḥ sukhāni ca|

Ta ime'vasthitā yuddhe prāṇāṁstyaktvā dhanāni ca

They for whose sake we desire kingdom, enjoyment and pleasures stand here in battle, having renounced life and wealth.

#1-34

आचार्याः पितरः पुत्रास्तथैव च पितामहाः।

मातुलाः श्वशुराः पौत्राः श्यालाः सम्बन्धिनस्तथा॥1.34॥

Ācāryāḥ pitarāḥ putrāstathaiva ca pitāmahāḥ|

Mātulāḥ śvaśurāḥ pautrāḥ śyālāḥ sambandhinastathā

Teachers, fathers, sons and also grandfathers, maternal uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law and other relatives.

"Arjuna continues his arguments to Krishna against the advisability of such a civil war between the two factions of the same royal family. A Dharma-hunting Arjuna is here mentally manufacturing a case for himself justifying his cowardly retreat from the post of duty where destiny has called upon him to act.

"He repeats what he had said earlier because Krishna, with his pregnant silence, is criticising Arjuna's attitude. The provocatively smiling lips of the Lord are whipping Arjuna into a sense of shame. He wants the moral support of his friend and charioteer to come to the conclusion that what he is feeling in his own mind is acceptable and just. But the endorsement and the intellectual sanction are not forthcoming from either the look of Krishna or the Lord's words."

#1-35

एतान्न हन्तुमिच्छामि घ्नतोऽपि मधुसूदन।

अपि त्रैलोक्यराज्यस्य हेतोः किं नु महीकृते॥1.35॥

Etānna hantumicchāmi ghnato'pi madhusūdana|

Api trailokyarājyasya hetoḥ kiṁ nu mahīkṛte

These I do not wish to kill, though they kill me, O Madhusudana, even for the sake of dominion over the three worlds; how much less for the sake of the earth.

"Feeling that he had not expressed his case strongly enough to Krishna to make him come to this conclusion, and, assuming that it was because of this that the Lord had not given his assent to it, Arjuna decided to declare with a mock spirit of renunciation, that he had so much large-heartedness in him that he would not kill his cousins, even if they were to kill him. The climax came when Arjuna, with quixotic exaggeration, declared that he

would not fight the war, even if he were to win all the three worlds of the universe, much less so for the mere Hastinapura-kingship."

Here Arjuna has made his best case for abandoning the fight. This, in spite of the fact that he had (prior to the armies assembling at the Kurukshetra) opportunities to give up this course. Arjuna is facing death, not just of himself but of all of "his"... family, friends, values.

QUESTION: What are you willing to die for? I recall a story about Peace Pilgrim on this subject that I will share tomorrow.

Questions or comments? Tomorrow we resume from #1-36 and see Arjuna begin to react to Lord Krishna's silence to this juncture.

### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson #8

We rejoin the Kurukshetra with our dearest Arjuna experiencing grief and pity about the pending battle with all of the friends and family (we can think of these as our dearest 'perceptions' and 'beliefs' as we reflect on the psychological battle). He is telling Krishna about his desire to abandon the fight but the Lord is not showing sympathy for this view. Here Arjuna begins to change his tone, he does not understand why Krishna is not supportive of his view.

In the accompanying image we see Arjuna as he changes his tone and begins to plead with the Lord for guidance... but not before laying out a new line of reasoning to attempt to sway Krishna first:

#1-36

निहत्य धार्तराष्ट्रान्नः का प्रीतिः स्याज्जनार्दन।

पापमेवाश्रयेदस्मान्हत्वैतानाततायिनः॥1.36॥

Nihatya dhārtarāṣṭrānnaḥ kā prītiḥ syājjanārdana|  
Pāpamevāśrayedasmānhatvaitānātātāyinaḥ

Killing these sons of Dhritarashtra, what pleasure can be ours, O Janardana? Sin alone will be our gain by killing these felons.

"In spite of all that Arjuna said so far, Krishna is as silent as a sphinx. Therefore, Arjuna gives up his melodramatic expression and assumes a softer, a more appealing tone and takes the attitude of explaining in vain, a serious matter to a dull-witted friend. The change of strategy becomes conspicuously ludicrous when we notice Krishna's continued silence!!

"In the first line of the stanza he explains to Krishna that no good can arise out of killing the sons of Dhritarashtra... still the wooden-smile of Krishna does not change and the Pandava hero, his intelligence shattered, tries to find a cause for Krishna's attitude. Immediately, he remembers that the Kaurava brothers were behaving towards the Pandavas as felons. 'Atatayinah' means felons, who deserve to be killed according to the Artha Shastra.

"Sin is only a mistake committed by a misunderstood individual ego against its own Divine Nature as the Eternal Soul. To act as the body or the mind or the intellect is not to act up

to the responsibilities of a man but it becomes an attempt to behave under the impulses of an animal. All those acts performed and motives entertained, which create grosser mental impressions and thereby build stronger walls between us and our cognition of the Real Divine Spark in ourselves are called sins.

"Arjuna's seemingly learned objection to killing enemies is a misinterpretation of our sacred texts (Shastra), and to have acted upon it would have been suicidal to our very culture. Therefore, Krishna refuses to show any sign either of appreciation or criticism of Arjuna's stand. The Lord understands that his friend is raving hysterically and the best policy is to allow a mental patient first of all to bring out everything in his mind and thus exhaust himself."

#1-37

तस्मान्नाहं वयं हन्तुं धार्तराष्ट्रान्स्वबान्धवान्।

स्वजनं हि कथं हत्वा सुखिनः स्याम माधव॥1.37॥

Tasmānnāhā vayaṁ hantuṁ dhārtarāṣṭrānsvabāndhavān|

Svajanaṁ hi kathaṁ hatvā sukhinaḥ syāma mādhaba

Therefore we shall not kill the sons of Dhritarashtra, our relatives; for how can we be happy by killing our own people, O Madhava?

"Here, Arjuna concludes his seemingly logical arguments which have got a false look of Hindu scriptural sanction. More than deliberate blasphemers of a scripture, the unconscious misinterpreters of a sacred text are the innocent criminals who bring about the wretched downfall of its philosophy. Purring with the satisfaction of a cat in the kitchen, Arjuna, in this verse, is licking up his arguments all round and is coming to the dangerous conclusion that he should not kill the aggressors, nor face their heartless challenge! Even then Krishna is silent.

"Arjun's discomfiture makes him really quite conspicuous in his ugliness. In the second line of the stanza, he makes a personal appeal to Krishna and almost begs of him to think for himself and endorse Partha's own lunatic conclusions.

"With the familiarity born out of his long-standing friendship, Arjuna addresses his charioteer with affection as Madhava, and asks him how one can come to any happiness after one has destroyed one's own kinsmen... Still, Krishna remains silent."

#1-38

यद्यप्येते न पश्यन्ति लोभोपहतचेतसः।

कुलक्षयकृतं दोषं मित्रद्रोहे च पातकम्॥1.38॥

Yadyapyete na paśyanti lobhopahatacetasah|

Kulakṣayakṛtaṁ doṣaṁ mitradrohe ca pātakam

Though these, with their intelligence clouded by greed, see no evil in the destruction of the families in the society, and no sin in their cruelty to friends; . . .

#1-39

कथं न ज्ञेयमस्माभिः पापादस्मान्निवर्तितुम्।

कुलक्षयकृतं दोषं प्रपश्यद्भिर्जनार्दन॥1.39॥



Katham na jñeyamasmbhīḥ pāpādasmbānnivartitum|  
Kulakṣayakṛtaṁ doṣaṁ prapaśyadbhirjanārdana

Why should not we, who clearly see evil in the destruction of the family-units, learn to turn away from this sin, O Janardana?

"No doubt, the Kauravas, grown blind in their greed for power and wealth, cannot see the destruction of the entire social structure by this war. Their ambition has so completely clouded their intelligence and sensibility that they fail to appreciate or understand the cruelty in annihilating their own friends.

"But Arjuna seems to retain his reasoning capacity and can clearly foresee the chaos in which society will get buried by fratricidal war. Now his argument amounts to this: if a friend of ours, in his drunkenness, behaves nastily, it would be worse than drunkenness in us, if we were to retaliate; for, we are expected to know that our friend, with his fumed-up intelligence, does not entertain enough discriminative awareness of what he is doing. At such moments, it would be our duty to forgive the mischief and overlook the impudence.

"Similarly, here, Arjuna argues: "If Duryodhana and his friends are behaving as blind aggressors, should the Pandavas not retire quietly and suffer the ignominy of a defeat, and consider it their dutiful offering at the altar of peace?" How far this philosophy is dangerous in itself will be seen as we read more and more the passages of the Geeta and come to appreciate the pith of its philosophy which is the very kernel of our Hindu way-of-living. "Active resistance to evil" is the central idea in the doctrine expounded by Krishna in the Geeta."

AND STILL Lord Krishna is silent; listening to Arjuna but not responsive in either word or deed. We will continue tomorrow with Arjuna's plea, and soon we will begin to hear from the Lord.

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson #9

"What is God's will for me, what am I to do with my life?" This is one of the most confusing issues for us in our worldly life, and today we begin a discussion on this topic. This will be a recurring theme in our study of the Song of God.

We are now only eight slokas away from completing Discourse #1, entitled "The Yoga of Arjuna's Grief". We will slow down a bit now to take in a few of the key preparatory points prior to Lord Krishna's teaching which begins with Discourse #2 in the 11th sloka.

Arjuna has experienced tremendous grief upon seeing friends, teachers and family gathered on both sides of the battlefield prepared to die for their particular beliefs, duties and alliances. He has come to recognize through the Lord's lack of response (and surely his negative "body language" as well) that he was off base with his first purely ego-centered argument to abandon the fight. As we have discussed to this point this story is given to us as allegory for the inner battle that each of us face, and if we look under the surface we can see the same grief in us. We feel so often trapped between our beliefs, the way that we think things are, and what the world is giving us as our experience. We know that we need to change; most of us really do know that we are not living in a way that is most beneficial for us (and others), and yet we feel both remorse and grief at the thought of dealing with our own devils.

This is Arjuna's issue to this point. Think about it. Here he is sitting with the Lord of the universe, as are we all. Can we grasp this for a moment? The Lord is inside us, and we each of us have some experience of this. And yet this great warrior has not yet asked the Lord a question. This is remarkable, isn't it? But isn't our experience the same? He is dealing with a vexing issue and he has the highest Light with him in his chariot, and he first favors his instincts (here expressing as the urge to lay down his arms and give up his truly righteous cause) over even asking for the answer from Krishna.

Now, having run into the proverbial brick wall, Arjuna still does not ask a question but instead takes to a new line of reasoning. To the western mind this new direction will seem arcane and it may even be a source of anger. In sloka #1-40 the concept of a "woman's duty" is raised, and in #41 we hear for the first time of "caste".

If we may, let us take a moment on this as well. We will revisit both of these later as we get into Lord Krishna's teaching and will take our discussion deeper then, but for now...

What is duty? What is caste? Well, our duty is to play the role we are given in this world drama to the absolute best of our ability, and our caste speaks to the role that we play. Certainly in the world today there is much confusion about our roles and there is terrible discrimination based purely upon outward differences. The latter has nothing to do with caste, but it will appear to. To put it quite simply each of us are gifted, and for each of us our gift is different. Some of us are given gifts that allow us to be a great banker, or a politician, a warrior or a baker. Some of us have gifts that allow us to be great artists or poets or homemakers or mothers or fathers, and some great masons or craftsmen or farmers or animal tenders, and some great at very simple and basic tasks. Each of us are gifted. The notion that one gift is of more value than another is a terrible misunderstanding, as is the notion that one is closer to God than another, etc. This could not be further from the truth. There is no higher or lower. Let us remember that happiness is our goal and that in spite of our thought to the contrary no worldly attainment can every finally make us happy.

Our caste speaks to our gift, it is just this. Our duty also relates to this; with each of us the answer to the question, "what is my duty?" is inside. Yes, it is hard to get at it, but the reason that it is hard is quite straightforward and simple: Firstly there is no longer outer clarity of duty (the ancient caste system is gone, what is called "caste system" today is an abomination). Secondly, and most importantly, we don't ask this important question inside, we don't listen, and we don't accept the answers that do come. Our mind says "I want to be a millionaire" but the universe gives us a broom and we think because of this we are a failure. Of course this is not so, for the millionaire is not about to find the Kingdom of God until they give up attachment to their wealth but the one with the broom certainly can.

A few days ago I shared this quote from the Srimad Bhagavatam, "If (the Lord) likes you, He'll give you everything; if He loves you He'll take everything away."

If we want to learn about duty and caste we can look at nature. Shared here are a few photos from the Ashram taken today. Can you imagine that the frog has a duty? and the tree? Is their duty any less or more important than any other? Certainly part of their duty is to help us to experience beauty and purity. Do they incessantly ask what their duty is or do they just do it? To the point within this entire universe every creature performs its duty flawlessly without ever asking. The sun arises at the appointed time and gives us its



warmth, the moon goes through its cycle every twenty eight days, the frog croaks every morning and evening and the bud breaks every spring. Throughout the entire universe there is only one creature that does not perform its duty willingly and that is man. We are the only lawbreaker.

So, here, we begin our exploration of the concepts of Dharma, Righteousness, performance of duty and Karma Yoga (selfless service) in our study. Below are the two slokas, and we have included a new source for commentary. Swami Venkateshananda is also a disciple of Swami Sivananda, he brings a wonderful perspective and a quote from the great Aldous Huxley.

#1-40

कुलक्षये प्रणश्यन्ति कुलधर्माः सनातनाः।

धर्मे नष्टे कुलं कृत्स्नमधर्मोऽभिभवत्युत॥1.40॥

Kulakṣaye praṇaśyanti kuladharmāḥ sanātanaḥ|  
Dharme naṣṭe kulam kṛtsnamadharma'bhibhavatyuta

In the destruction of a family, the immemorial religious rites of that family perish; on the destruction of spirituality, impiety overcomes the whole family.

First, Swami Chinmayananda's commentary; "Just as a story-teller comes to add new details each time he narrates the same old story, so too, Arjuna seems to draw new inspiration from his foolishness, and each time his creative intelligence puts forth fresh arguments in support of his wrong philosophy. As soon as he finishes a stanza, he gets, as it were, a new lease of arguments to prattle, and takes refuge behind their noise.

"He indicates here that, when individual families are destroyed, along with them the religious traditions of the society will also end, and soon an era of impiety will be ushered in.

"Cultural experiments were the pre-occupations of our fore-fathers and they knew that the culture and tradition of each family was a unit of the total culture and integrity of the whole nation. Hence the important of the family- Dharma so seriously brought forth by Arjuna as an argument against this civil war."

#1-41

अधर्माभिभवत्कृष्ण प्रदुष्यन्ति कुलस्त्रियः।

स्त्रीषु दुष्टासु वार्ष्णेय जायते वर्णसङ्करः॥1.41॥

Adharmābhibhavātkṛṣṇa praduṣyanti kulastriyaḥ|  
Strīṣu duṣṭāsu vārṣṇeya jāyate varṇasaṅkaraḥ

By the prevalence of impiety, O Krishna, the women of the family become corrupt; and women being corrupted, O descendent of the Vrishni-clan, there arises "intermingling of castes" (VARNA-SAMKARA) .

Swami Chinmayananda continues, "Continuing the argument in the previous verse, Partha declares the consequences that will follow when the true moral integrity of the families is destroyed. Slowly the morality in the society will wane and there will be an "admixture of castes."

"Caste is a word, which, in its perverted meaning, has recently come in for a lot of criticism from the educated; and they, no doubt, are all justified, if caste, in reality, meant what we understand it to be in our society today.

"But what we witness around us, in the name of caste, is the ugly decadence into which the Hindu way-of-living has fallen. Caste, in those days, was conceived of as an intelligent division of the available manpower in the community on the basis of intellectual and mental capacities of the individuals.

"Those who were intellectuals and had a passion for research and study were styled Brahmanas (Brahmins); those who had political ambitions for leadership and took upon themselves the risky art of maintaining peace and plenty and saving the country from internal and external aggressions, were called the Kshatriyas; those who served the community through agriculture and trade were the Vaishyas and, lastly, all those who did not fall in any of the above categories were styled as Shudras, whose duties in society were service and labour. Our modern social workers and officials, agricultural and industrial labourers all must fall under this noble category!

"In the largest scope of its implication, when we thus understand the caste-system, it is the same as today's professional groups. Therefore, when they talk so seriously about the inadvisability of "admixture of the castes," they only mean what we already know to be true in our own social pattern: an engineer in charge of a hospital and working in the operation-theatre as a doctor would be a social danger, as much as a doctor would be if he is appointed as an officer for planning, guiding and executing a hydro-electric scheme!

"When the general morality of society has decayed; the young men and women, blinded by uncontrolled passion, start mingling without restraint. And lust knows no logic and cares least for better evolution or better culture. There will be thereafter, unhealthy intermingling of incompatible cultural traits."

And now, Swami Venkateshananda weighs in on both of these slokas, "This is an argument of sterling value and unassailable logic, though not in this context. As Aldous Huxley points out in his 'Perennial Philosophy', the chaos in the world of today is partly attributable to the collapse of the caste system. No one seems to know what is each one's duty (which is one's function in society), and when an inner conflict arises, different theorists, leaders and philosophers pull him in different directions. The poor man himself goes to the hospital with 'tension' and nervous breakdown.

"When knowledgeable persons in a society are either killed in war or lured away to other countries or avocations, the 'spirit' of the customs, traditions and rites is lost, leaving the dead carcass of a ritual to which the masses cling. When the spirit is lost, piety or righteousness is lost. The custodians of piety (our womenfolk) become corrupt and there is confusion of castes. No one has a clear idea of his duty, and consequently there is chaos.

"Though all are equal – socially, politically, economically and in the eyes of God – this does not mean that inter-racial or inter-caste marriage is the only or even the best way in which to demonstrate this equality. The history of mankind is the story of such inter-racial fusion, though its primary result may be confusion of duties and neglect of the cultures of both the parties. However, it leads to a re-awakening of the spirit, a re-assessment of

cultural values and a new civilisation. But, this natural process of blending should not be forced prematurely."

All of this speaks to the great question, "who am I?", as in "am I this body?" or "am I the very life force which animates this body?". At some level we know it is the latter, the teachers point us very clearly to the latter, and yet we live our life here as if we are the former, completely caught up in the role that we play. How we answer this question makes all of the difference in the world, because it determines our perspective and how we see life, how we see the world. With the first perspective every aspect of the world is unfair and with the second we are in a school called the "world" learning something very important.

### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson #10

We continue now, in today's study Arjuna continues along the same line as in lesson #9, #1-40 and 41. It is highly recommended that you read the discussion on these two slokas prior to progressing with

today's. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/pilgrimgita/permalink/773844679382291/>

We resume with Swami Chinmayananda ji's insightful commentary. The image shows Arjuna nearing the height of his dejection and grief at the thought of engaging in the battle at hand.

#1-42

सङ्करो नरकायैव कुलघ्नानां कुलस्य च।

पतन्ति पितरो ह्येषां लुप्तपिण्डोदकक्रियाः॥1.42॥

Saṅkaro narakāyaiva kulaghñānāṃ kulasya ca|

Patanti pitaro hyeṣāṃ luptapiṇḍodakakriyāḥ

'Confusion of castes' leads the slayer of the family to hell; for their forefathers fall, deprived of the offerings of PINDA (rice- ball) and water (libations) .

"The argument is still continued and Arjuna points out the consequences of "caste-admixture." When confusion of the castes has taken place, both outside in the moral life of true discipline and in one's own inner temperament, then the family tradition gets flouted and ruined.

"In the context of our discourses, we must understand that to the dead it is bread-and-water to see that their survivors maintain and continue the cultural purity that they themselves had so laboriously cultivated and inculcated into the minds of their children. In case the society squanders away its culture, so laboriously built up as a result of the slow blossoming of the social values of life through generations of careful cultivation necessarily, we will be insulting the very labours of our ancestors. It is attractive and poetic, indeed, to conceive of the dead as watching over their survivors and observing their ways of living from the balcony of their heavenly abode! It would certainly be as painful as the pains of hunger and thirst to them if they were to find that their survivors were deliberately making a jungle of their laboriously laid gardens. Understood thus, the entire stanza appears to be very appropriate.

Each generation passes down the torch of its culture to the next generation, its children,

and it is for them to preserve, tend and nourish that torch and hand it over carefully to the succeeding generation, if not more, at least no less bright, than when they got it.

"In India, the sages discovered and initiated a culture that is spiritual, and this spiritual culture is maintained and worked out through religious practices, and therefore, culture and religion are, to the Hindu, one and the same. Very rarely we find any mention of the term culture, as such, in our ancient literature. More often we meet with the insistence on and the mention of our religious practices.

"In fact, the Hindu religion is a technique by which this spiritual culture can be maintained and worked out in the community. Therefore, we find in these stanzas, and in similar contexts, always, an enthusiastic emphasis upon the religious life, whether it be in the family or in the society. Dharma comprises those divine values-of-life by living which we manifest more and more the essential spiritual being in us. Family-Dharma (Kula-Dharma) is thus nothing but the rules of living, thinking, and acting in a united, well-planned family. By strictly following these rules we soon come to learn, in the prayer-rooms of our homes, how to live as better citizens of the Aryan-culture."

#1-43

दोषैरेतैः कुलघ्नानां वर्णसङ्करकारकैः।

उत्साद्यन्ते जातिधर्माः कुलधर्माश्च शाश्वताः॥1.43॥

Doṣairetaiḥ kulaghnānāṃ varṇasaṅkarakāraiḥ|

Utsādyante jātīdharmāḥ kuladharmāśca śāśvatāḥ

By these evil deeds of the 'destroyers of the family, ' which cause confusion of castes, the eternal religious rites of the caste and the family are destroyed.

"What was said in the discourse upon the last stanza will become amply clear by this statement of Arjuna. Here also he bemoans that, as a result of the civil war, the religious traditions of the family will all be lost and when he says so, as I have said earlier, if we understand religion as the "spiritual culture of India," --- the training for which was primarily given in the individual homes --- then the stanza becomes self-explanatory. We also know that, after a war there is a sudden cracking up of the existing cultural values in any society. Our modern world, panting and sighing under the burden of its own immoralities and deceits, is an example of how war brings about, not only disabled men with amputated limbs, but also deeper ulcers and uglier deformities in their mental make-up.

"In these words, we can detect in Arjuna almost the world's first conscientious objector to war! In these passages he offers a splendid series of pacifist arguments good for all times!!"

#1-44

उत्सन्नकुलधर्माणां मनुष्याणां जनार्दन।

नरकेऽनियतं वासो भवतीत्यनुशुश्रुम॥1.44॥

Utsannakuladharmāṇāṃ manuṣyāṇāṃ janārdana|

Narake niyataṃ vāso bhavatītyanuśuśrūma

We have heard, O Janardana, that it is inevitable for those men, in whose families the religious practices have been destroyed, to dwell in hell for an unknown period of time.

"Krishna still refuses to speak. Arjuna has come to a point where he can neither stop talking nor find any more arguments. Strangely compelling is the grace of the Lord's dignified silence. Here, in the stanza, Arjuna almost concludes his arguments and mentions the tradition which he had heard, that "men whose family-religion has broken down will go to hell."

"But, on the other hand, when we understand the statement in all its scientific implications, even the worst of us will feel the immediate urgency for revolutionising our point of view. We have already seen that the family Dharma means, in the context of our times, only the cultural purity in the family, which is the unit of the community. We also found that since their culture is essentially spiritual, to the Hindus "religion is culture."

"So, Arjuna implies that when the unity of home-life is shattered, and when purity of living and sanctity of thought are destroyed in the individual home-life, the generation that has caused such a shattering is ordering for itself and for others a melancholy era of hellish sorrows and sufferings."

Let's also add this beautiful insight from Swami Venkateshananda: "The hell referred to need not be elsewhere, but here itself! Every war leaves a long, tragic and horrendous trail of widows, orphans, 'illegitimate' children, social misfits and outcasts. All this happens even without war, in a rootless or uprooted community. When the motive is physical attraction or material consideration, marriage between people of different cultural backgrounds, intellectual equipment and spiritual values or even tastes and temperaments, sooner or later leads to unhappiness. If some of these families appear to be 'happy' it is only because they have no idea at all of real domestic harmony.

"Of course, this does not apply where the parties to the marriage belong to different cultural groups but their intellectual and spiritual equipment is similar or complementary, and they are therefore prepared to and capable of making the necessary adjustments.

"With regard to the social structure, Aldous Huxley says in his 'Perennial Philosophy': 'Contemporary history is the hideous record of what happens when political bosses, businessmen or class-conscious proletarians assume the Brahman's function of formulating a philosophy of life; when usurers dictate policy and debate the issues of war and peace; and when the warrior's caste duty is imposed on all and sundry, regardless of psycho-physical make-up and vocation.'

"Such a world in which this sort of chaos prevails is hell. Whereas in ancient times, even the events in a war were predictable, today our daily life even in peace-time is unpredictable. The result is continuous anxiety and tension."

#1-45

अहो बत महत्पापं कर्तुं व्यवसिता वयम्।

यद्राज्यसुखलोभेन हन्तुं स्वजनमुद्यताः॥1.45॥

Aho bata mahatpāpaṁ kartuṁ vyavasitā vayam|  
Yadrājyasukhalobhena hantuṁ svajanamudyatāḥ

Alas! We are involved in a great sin, in that we are prepared to kill our kinsmen, from greed for the pleasures of the kingdom.

"These words clearly show that instead of becoming a master of the situation, Arjuna is now a victim of it. He has not the virile confidence that he is the master of the circumstances and, therefore, with a creeping sense of growing inner cowardice, he feels almost helplessly persecuted.

"This unhealthy mental weakness drains off his heroism and he desperately tries to put a paper-crown upon his cowardice, to make it look divine and angelic, and to parade it as 'pity'. Thus, he deliberately misconstrues the very aim of the war and imputes a low motive to the righteous war simply because he wants to justify his pacifist idea, which does not instinctively gurgle out from his known strength, but which oozes out from his ulcerated mind."

#1-46

यदि मामप्रतीकारमशस्त्रं शस्त्रपाणयः।

धार्तराष्ट्रा रणे हन्युस्तन्मे क्षेमतरं भवेत्॥1.46॥

Yadi māmāpratīkāramaśastraṁ śāstrapāṇayaḥ|  
Dhārtarāṣṭrā raṇe hanyustanme kṣemataraṁ bhavet

If the sons of Dhritarashtra, weapons-in-hand, slay me in battle, unresisting and unarmed, that would be better for me.

"Here, Arjuna declares his FINAL opinion that, under the circumstances narrated during his long-drawn limping arguments, it is better for him to die in battle unresisting and unarmed, even if the Kauravas were to shoot him down, like a hunted deer, with a dozen arrows piercing his royal body!

"The word that Arjuna uses here is particularly to be noted; the texture of the word used is, in itself, a great commentary upon the thought in the mind of the one who has made the statement. Kshema is the material and physical victory, while Moksha is the spiritual Self- mastery. Though Arjuna's arguments were all labouring hard to paint the idea that to have fought that was was against the spiritual culture of the country (Moksha), he himself stated in his conclusions that not to fight this war would be a material blessing (Kshema) inasmuch as an escape from the battle-field now is to gain, perhaps, sure physical security!!

"In short, anxiety for the fruit-of-his-action (victory in battle) demoralised Arjuna and he got himself into an 'anxiety-state-neurosis.'"

AND STILL Lord Krishna is silent, but soon that will change. In Lesson #11 we will complete Discourse #1 and begin the second Discourse, we are now just 12 couplets away from the start of the Lord's teaching. This is a good opportunity to take our contemplation inward, once again visualizing this battle as the one that we experience inside us; identifying with Arjuna's fear and grief as our own fear and grief as we protect our own limited beliefs and view of this world.

I would like to repeat this beautiful quote from Swamiji here: "Strangely compelling is the grace of the Lord's dignified silence." We all experience this, for when our gaze is



completely turned outside (and thus away from the divine inside us) the Lord awaits us in dignified silence.

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson #11

Today we focus on the close of Discourse #1 as Arjuna has made his argument for stepping down from the battle. Sloka #47 is the climax of his grief and he throws aside his bow to emphasize his errant conclusion. We might imagine that this soliloquy has taken perhaps but thirty minutes and yet it sets the stage for the penultimate teaching as the Lord will soon talk with us about our nature and that of the world, guiding us on our all important journey of self discovery.

At the close of this Discourse Swami Chinmayananda ji shares beautiful insight into not just the first Discourse but on the Upanishads and the underpinning of this philosophy. I do hope that you read this, you will likely find it quite enlightening. It will likely be quite beneficial as we continue forward in our study.

Let's start our study today with an important lesson about our inner battle by Swami Venkateshananda, these are his concluding comments on the first Discourse entitled, "The Yoga of the Grief of Arjuna":

"If the motive of the war was 'greed for the pleasures of a kingdom' that war was undoubtedly unrighteous, but here the noble heart of Arjuna was merely reflecting the wrong attitude of the Kauravā! 'They are greedy and they are ready to fight; we are ready to fight and so we are also greedy' – is the simple equation in his mind. Kṛṣṇa will point out that his attitude, the divine will, was different and hence Arjuna had to fight.

"'Resist not evil' should never be misconstrued to mean 'encourage evil'. There is an orderly (democratic, if you like) way of dealing with evil which does not involve the disturbance of the mental equilibrium of anyone. 'Great sin' is not this action or that action, but according to Kṛṣṇa, kāma (desire) and krodha (hatred) are the fountains of the greatest sins. Selfish motive is the greatest sin. Lust, anger and greed disturb one's inner equilibrium and hence they are the 'gates to hell', according to the Bhagavad Gītā. They are 'of insatiable hunger', says Kṛṣṇa: they consume our peace of mind, our happiness, our vitality and the tranquillity of our inner being, which is one of the fundamental characteristics of yoga.

"Thus are we led to the threshold of this yoga."

#1-47

सञ्जय उवाच

एवमुक्त्वाऽर्जुनः संख्ये रथोपस्थ उपाविशत्।

विसृज्य सशरं चापं शोकसंविग्नमानसः॥1.47॥

Evamuktavārjunaḥ saṅkhye rathopastha upāviśat|

Visṛjya saśaraṁ cāpaṁ śokasaṁvignamānasaḥ

Sanjaya said: Having thus spoken in the midst of the battle- field, Arjuna sat down on the seat of the chariot, casting away his bow and arrow, with a mind distressed with sorrow.

Swami Chinmayananda's very detailed analysis of the 1st Discourse follows his commentary on #47:

"The concluding stanza of this chapter contains the words of Sanjaya in which he gave the running commentary of what he saw on the battle-field. Exhausted by his weary arguments, Arjuna, completely shattered within, sank back on the flag-staff in the open chariot, throwing down his kingly weapons.

"This is the scene at which we shall leave Arjuna in the First Chapter of the Geeta."

Thus, in the UPANISHADS of the glorious Bhagawad Geeta, in the Science of the Eternal, in the scripture of YOGA, in the dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, the first discourse ends entitled: THE YOGA OF THE ARJUNA-GRIEF

"In the scriptural text-books of ancient times the end of a chapter was indicated by some sign or symbol. In modern days, this is not necessary, inasmuch as, we have the passages in print before us and we can see that one section or chapter has ended and another has begun. Even here, the printers have to mark the end of one chapter and, by a separate title, indicate the beginning of the next.

"In olden days, it was much more difficult, since books were not printed, and each student got during his study a new edition of the scripture printed on the memory-slabs of his own mind. Since scripture-study was in those days from mouth to mouth, the students had to memorise whole text-books and chant them daily. In such a case it was necessary to have some word or words to inform both the reciter and the listeners as to the ending of a section and the fresh beginning of another. This was done by some conventional symbol.

"In the Upanishads, the accepted method was to recite the last Mantra or the concluding portion of the last Mantra of the chapter twice. In the Geeta, however, we have the repetition of a statement, which may be considered as an epilogue, in Sanskrit called a Sankalpa Vakya. The same Sankalpa is repeated at the end of each chapter, the difference being only that at the end of each chapter, the chapter-number is mentioned along with the special title of that chapter.

"The Geeta Sankalpa vakya (Epilogue) is a beautiful statement of pregnant words conveying a wealth of details regarding the very text-book. Sreemad-Bhagawad-Geeta has been considered here as an Upanishad-nay, each chapter in the Geeta is considered as an Upanishad; and among the eighteen Upanishads, together constituting the Divine Song, we here end the first of them entitled "THE YOGA OF ARJUNA'S DESPONDENCY." These chapters are called Upanishads because these are declarations concealing such deep significances that a hasty reader will miss their full import unless he does long and intense meditation over the wealth of suggestive meaning that lies concealed behind the simple-looking stanzas. As in the Upanishads, here also we need the help of a sympathetic teacher who can train us in the art of opening the seven hundred lockers in the treasure chamber of the Geeta.

"Upanishad is a word indicating a literature that is to be studied by sitting (shad), near (upa) a teacher, in a spirit of receptive meekness and surrender (ni). The contents of the scriptural text-books are, all over the world, always the same. They teach us that there is a changeless Reality behind the ever-changing phenomenal world of perceptions, feelings and understanding. This great ADVAITIC TRUTH as declared in the Hindu scriptural text-books is termed the Brahman and, therefore, the textbook that teaches us



the nature of Brahman and shows us the means of realising it is called Brahman-knowledge (Brahma-Vidya).

"Unlike Western philosophy, among the Aryans a theory is accepted as a philosophy only when the philosopher prescribes for us a practical technique by which all seekers can come to discover and experience for themselves the GOAL indicated in that philosophy. Thus, in all Hindu philosophies there are two distinct sections: one explaining the theory and the other describing the technique of practice. The portion that explains the technique of living the philosophy and coming to a close subjective experience is called Yoga Shastra.

"The word Yoga comes from the root Yuj = to join. Any conscious attempt on the part of an individual to lift his present available personality and attune it to a higher, perfect ideal, is called Yoga, and the science of Yoga is called Yoga Shastra. Since in this epilogue, the Geeta is called a Yoga Shastra, we must expect to discover in the SONG OF THE LORD, not only airy philosophical expositions of a Truth too subtle for the ordinary man to grasp, but also instructions by which every one of us can, from this present state of imperfection, hope to reach, step by step, the giddy heights of the Divine pinnacles, that stand eternally swathed in the transcendental glory of Absolute Perfection.

"The theme of philosophy and Yoga cannot be very attractive to the ordinary men of the world because it is so scientific and it deals with imperceptible ideologies. Mathematics cannot be thrilling reading except for a mathematician; and mathematics can very well afford to ignore those who have no taste for it. But religion tries to serve all and the anxiety of all prophets is to serve every one in all generations. Thus, in order to tame a difficult theme and to contain it within the ambit of a text-book of universal acceptance, the teachers of old had to discover methods by which the subjective ideologies could be given an appealing look of substantial objectivity. This was done by giving a detailed picture of the teacher, so that in our mental image he is so much familiarised that we feel his words also as something very familiar to us.

"In the tradition of the Hindu text-books, the great Rishis worked out the subtle ideas containing the crystallised truths into an easily digestible capsule called Dharma. In the Upanishads, we have a complete picture of a teacher and a taught, painted with hasty strokes, unfinished and rough. In the Geeta, on the other hand, it being a philosophical discourse embedded in the mythology of the nation, we find a finished picture, palpitating with life, against a scintillating situation, wherein the very same ancient truths have been re-asserted.

"Lord Krishna is now made to repeat the Upanishadic truths in the context of a great conflict to serve his life-long friend Arjuna, who is shown as seriously suffering from a total mental rupture. Therefore, we shall expect in the Geeta a much more sympathetic explanation and guidance than when the same truths came out from the inspired saints, who were not as much in contact with the weaknesses of ordinary mortals. This glory of the Geeta has been indicated here when the Sankalpa Vakya says that it is a conversation between the Lord and a mortal.

"This chapter is called by a self-contradicting title. It is named as the Yoga of ARJUNA'S GRIEF. If 'grief' could be Yoga, almost all of us, without a choice, are already Yogins. In the commentary of this chapter, I indicated that the Arjuna-condition of utter despair is the auspicious mental attitude wherein the Geeta-seeds are to be sown, and the flowers of

Krishna-perfection gathered. Be it in an individual or a society, in a community or a nation, religion and philosophy will be in demand only when the heart has come to experience the Arjuna-grief.

"To the extent that the world of today has felt its incompetence to face the battle of life, not daring to destroy their near and dear values of economic expansion and industrial lust, to that extent it is fit for listening to the message of the Geeta. Just as the act of cooking, by itself, is not fulfilled without the eating that follows, so also, in spite of the best that may be available in life, a sense of incompleteness is felt and a deep hunger to gain a better awareness and fuller existence in the world is experienced. The scriptural texts cannot in themselves help any one. Since this mental condition is so unavoidable before the actual Yoga is started, even the initial mental condition is called, by a wishful anticipation, as Yoga. For learning and living the Geeta, the Arjuna- condition is the initial Sadhana.

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson #12

The Lord speaks.

The Second Discourse is entitled, "Sankhya Yoga", or "The Yoga of Knowledge." Knowledge in this case is the ultimate knowledge, what we must know in order to be cured of our woeful condition of seemingly never ending suffering interrupted only by momentary pleasure. No, I am in no way pessimistic when I say this, for this is what each of us now know, to varying degrees, but don't want to admit. I am in fact being optimistic, or better yet realistic, because I share whenever the opportunity presents itself (now!) that happiness is inherent and that we hold the gate key to the kingdom of joy and bliss. Each of us do, without exception. The fairy tale ending (happily ever after) is not only possible, it is our destination.

When I worked in business I gave many presentations and I learned over time how to present well. Good business people know that the outline for a successful presentation is:

- Tell the client what you are going to tell them
- Tell them
- Tell them what you told them

Well, finally I discovered that this approach was simply a shadow copy of Lord Krishna's technique as employed in the teaching of the Bhagavad Gita. This is exactly how the Song of God is organized, and in Discourse number Two this is what we get. The Lord (within us, please let us not keep forgetting this!) here in the second Discourse tells us the sum total of what we need to know. The Lord understands, though, that we have a terrible and deeply ingrained habit of not listening nor understanding. Since this is so Lord Krishna then goes into detail about what we need to know and how to come to know it (Discourse #3-17), then finally tell us one more time leaving no doubt (if we are listening) in Discourse #18.

Are you ready? Please listen my dear brothers and sisters. Do your best to focus and pay rapt attention, for if you do so completely you will find the shell that you wear suddenly cracking, revealing a magnificent opening to the depths of you. It will be sudden and innocent enough, like a shift of perception, and from it you will begin to know your Self more deeply than you could have ever imagined. Liberation lay in this direction.

Please note that listening requires emptying what we are full of so that we have space for what we are to hear. This is our challenge, we are all so full (of our selves - our ideas, beliefs, etc etc). So, please strive to empty and listen. Now the Lord is prepared to speak to you, and this is going to be very personal. Perhaps you can visualize Her/Him in your very living room with a loving countenance and infinite patience... for the more personally you can relate to this teaching the better. No matter how many times you have read this work until we are "done" there is insight to be gained by these words.

#2-1

सञ्जय उवाच

तं तथा कृपयाऽविष्टमश्रुपूर्णकुलेक्षणम्।

विषीदन्तमिदं वाक्यमुवाच मधुसूदनः॥२.१॥

Sañjaya uvāca

Taṁ tathā kṛpayāviṣṭamaśrupūrṇākulekṣaṇam|

Viṣīdantamidam vākyaṁuvāca madhusūdanaḥ

- Sanjaya said: To him who was thus overcome with pity and despondency, with eyes full of tears and agitated, Madhusudana spoke these words. -

Swami Chinmayananda, "The second chapter opens with an announcement from Sanjaya which, with a few rightly chosen words, gives a complete picture of Arjuna's sad mental state of desperation. His mind had become overwhelmed with pity and sorrow. The very expression clearly indicates that Arjuna was not the master of the situation at that time, but on the contrary, the situation had Arjuna as its victim! To get ourselves over-ridden by life's circumstances is to ensure disastrous failures on all occasions. Only one who allows himself to be overpowered by circumstances, can be victimized by the outer happenings. Arjuna, in his present neurotic condition, has become a slave to the outer challenges.

"The estimate of Sanjaya not only describes to us the mental condition of Arjuna but also pointedly gives us a hint that the cracking of the inner personality of Arjuna has made deep fissures into the character of the great hero. The greatest archer of his time, Arjuna, has become totally impoverished.!

"To Arjuna, thus overwhelmed by an emotion of misplaced pity and tearless weeping, Madhusudana (slayer of the demon, Madhu), Lord Krishna, spoke the following words. Here, it is to be noted that modern psychology has also observed and recorded that a tearless weeping is the climax in the attack of hysteria."

#2-2

श्री भगवानुवाच

कुतस्त्वा कश्मलमिदं विषमे समुपस्थितम्।

अनार्यजुष्टमस्वर्ग्यमकीर्तिकरमर्जुन॥२.२॥

Śrībhagavānuvāca

Kutastvā kaśmalamidam viṣame samupasthitam|

Anāryajuṣṭamasvargyamakīrtikaramarjuna

- The Blessed Lord said: Whence is this perilous condition come upon thee, this dejection, un-Aryan-like, heaven-excluding, disgraceful, O Arjuna? -

"The Lord is surprised to see that a king, claiming to be an Aryan, is feeling so flabbergasted on the battlefield. The instinct of a true Aryan is to be balanced and equipoised in all conditions of life and to face situations diligently, compelling them to change their threatening attitude and make them favorable to himself. When life is courted properly, even the ugliest situation can be transformed into a charming smile of success. Everything depends upon the intelligent person's dexterity in steering himself upon the bumping roads of life. Thus, Lord Krishna characterises Arjuna's behaviour as un-Aryan. The Aryans are extremely sensitive to the higher calls of life, righteousness and nobility, both in thought and action.

"The Divine Charioteer is quite surprised at discovering such an attitude in his friend, whom he had known for years through thick and thin. The mood of dejection was, in fact, quite alien to the mental make-up and intellectual nature of Arjuna. Thus, we have here an expression of wonder and the Lord asks, 'Whence comes upon thee this dejection, etc...'"

#2-3

क्लैब्यं मा स्म गमः पार्थ नैतत्त्वय्युपपद्यते।

क्षुद्रं हृदयदौर्बल्यं त्यक्त्वोत्तिष्ठ परन्तप।।2.3।।

Klaibyaṁ mā sma gamaḥ pārtha naitattvayyupapadyate|

Kṣudraṁ hṛdayadaurbalyaṁ tyaktvottiṣṭha parantapa

- Yield not to impotence, O Partha! It does not befit thee, Cast off this mean weakness of heart! Stand up, O Parantapa (O scorcher of foes)! -

"In stinging reproachful words, Krishna is deliberately lashing at the anxiety-state-neurotic in Arjuna. Krishna, who was so far silent, is now bursting forth into an eloquence, in which every word is a chosen missile, a pounding hammer-stroke that can flatten any victim.

"So far Krishna was silent and the silence had a deep meaning. Arjuna, overwhelmed with compassion, had taken the decision not to fight and was all along mustering arguments in support of it. As a diplomat, Krishna knew that it would have been useless to contradict his friend earlier when he was inspired to argue eloquently in support of his own wrong estimate of things. But the tears in the eyes of Arjuna indicated that his inward confusion had reached a climax.

"In the tradition of religious devotion, it is very truly said and firmly believed all over the world, that the Lord, in His high seat, keeps mum and is almost deaf so long as we are arguing and asserting our maturity as intellectual beings. But when we come down to live and act as emotional beings, when tears of desperation trickle down the cheeks of true devotees, then, unasked, the LORD OF COMPASSION rushes forward to reach the lost souls and guides them out of their inward darkness to the resplendent LIGHT OF WISDOM. A soul, identifying with the intellect, can seek and discover itself; but, when it is identifying with the mind, it needs the help and guidance of the Lord.

"The touch of the Lord's grace, when it descends upon His devotees, is invariably felt by the seekers more as an avalanche than as a refreshing shower of Divine Mercy. Spiritual Grace must necessarily re-orientate the heart and burn away its negativities before the

Spirit can radiate its sway upon matter. True to this great principle observed everywhere and experienced by every true seeker, in the Geeta too, we find that, when the silent Lord, from the Charioteer's seat, started speaking, His words gleamed and landed like lightning on Arjuna to burn his wrong mental tendencies in the fire of shame.

"Soft words of sympathy could not have revived Arjuna's drooping mind to vigour. Thus Krishna rightly lashed his friend with these stinging arrows of ridicule, dipped in the acid of satire!! Krishna ends his "word-treatment" with an appeal to Arjuna to 'Get up and act.'"

As human beings we react to two different impulses. I often share that the Lord is Love alone, that there is no hatred nor un-forgiveness in God. Having said this, though, we humans variously need reassurance that comes in the form of a loving and sweet show of affection from the Lord (the smile or unsolicited pure kindness of a stranger, for example) one one hand and we also need to be shaken out of our complacency with a good strong kick in the rear on the other. Here Sri Krishna delivers just such a kick, and it is sorely needed.

Tomorrow we will continue with Arjuna's response to the Lord's first foray.

QUESTION: Are you surprised by the Lord's response when He finally speaks? Can you think of a time when you have experienced the same?

### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson #13

In Discourse #2 we have heard from Lord Krishna for the first time and he is quite forceful with dear Arjuna.

As a refresher Arjuna is facing a battle where there is good versus evil. Of course good is never 100% good and bad is never 100% bad in the world, and even inside each of us we each tend to function with mixed motives. The millionaire who strives to become a billionaire, even though he or she does not need the money and causes pain (in and out) in pursuit of it, still does some good by giving some money to charity or putting their children through school.

In this case, though, the story that has been penned for us shows a battle between dharma and adharma. A little explanation is required of this, and Swamiji will tell us more of this in his commentary. For our purposes now we can also say that "dharma" is to do one's duty for the good of all, or with unconditional love for all. In ancient times we are told of good kings that genuinely loved the people and used their gifts to care for them and to help them advance and grow; they would be said to be "dharmic". "Adharma" literally means "not dharma", and this refers to duty performed for purely selfish motives. An "adharmic" king is one who rules in order to take whatever he or she wants from the kingdom's subjects.

Externally this is what we are dealing with here; the situation is as close to being pure good versus pure evil as we might imagine.

From here though let's remember that this external battle stage, Kurukshetra, is symbolic of our inner battle between these same two forces inside us. There is both ego centered self and God centered self in us and in every moment we choose which one to follow. Of course our ego centered self gets ruffled when we speak of it as evil and always prefers



to label others as evil instead of itself, but there is no question that one of the forces in us is guiding us upward whilst the other is guiding us downward.

You have likely heard the native american story about this, let's share it:

"One evening an old Cherokee Indian told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people. He said, 'My son, the battle is between two 'wolves' inside us all. One is Evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.

"The other is good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith.'

"The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather: 'Which wolf wins?'

"The old Cherokee simply replied, 'The one you feed.'"

So, here, we see the strength of self-pity. Arjuna knows that on his side of the battlefield are the forces of light and on the other the forces of darkness, and yet in spite of this he has given in to his own darkness. And for this the Lord has called him out in no uncertain terms.

Having said this, it's not easy. We are so caught up in ourselves and in our mundane externally focused existence that we are not aware of this inner battle, not aware of our ability to either go up or down based upon our own thoughts, words and deeds, not aware of the power or nature of our thought patterns or their source, not aware of our ability to change them. What grace it is for us to begin to realize the power that we hold and to be given teachings that help to point us upward. Still it's not easy, but it is possible, and it (rising up in the ultimate goodness) is all that is finally profitable in this world. Thank you dear Lord.

Let's continue. FYI at Swami Ramaswarupananda Saraswati ji's suggestion we have added word for word translation for the slokas, we will continue this going forward. Swamiji has studied the Gita for 50+ years and will use this to help us with some of the subtle points of the teaching. Thank you blessed Swamiji.

#2-4

अर्जुन उवाच

कथं भीष्ममहं संख्ये द्रोणं च मधुसूदन।

इषुभिः प्रतियोत्स्यामि पूजार्हावरिसूदन॥2.4॥

Arjuna uvāca

Katham bhīṣmamahaṁ saṅkhye droṇaṁ ca madhusūdana|

Iṣubhiḥ pratiyotsyāmi pūjārhāvarisūdana

word for word: Arjuna (arjunaḥ) said (uvāca):

"Oh, destroyer (sūdana) of the demon Madhu (madhu), how (katham) will I fight (aham... pratiyotsyāmi) with arrows (iṣubhiḥ) in battle (saṅkhye) against Bhīṣma (bhīṣmam) and (ca) Droṇācārya (droṇam), (when) both of them deserve (arhau) to be worshipped (pūjā) (instead), oh destroyer (sūdana) of foes (ari)

- Arjuna said: How, O Madhusudana, shall I, in battle, fight with arrows against Bhishma and Drona, who are fit to be worshipped, O destroyer of enemies! -

Swami Chinmayananda, "The motive-hunting cowardice in Arjuna has come to pick up a great argument, seemingly quite convincing to the indiscriminating. On the other hand, to one who has not lost his balance and who knows perfectly the art of evaluating such a situation, this is no problem at all, and Arjuna's arguments are quite hollow. The war that is imminent is not between individuals due to any personal rivalry. Arjuna has no personality apart from the Pandava-forces, and the pair, Drona and Bhishma, are also not mere individual entities; in their identification, they are the Kaurava-forces. The two forces are arrayed to fight for certain principles. The Kauravas are fighting for their policy of Adharma. The Pandavas are fighting for the principles of Dharma as enunciated in the ancient lore of the Hindus.

"So glorious being the cause, when the two armies representing the will of the People have marshaled themselves, Arjuna, the hero, had no individual right to accept any personal honour or dishonour, or to insist on any respect or disrespect, in meeting the individuals who were champions of the wrong side. Without taking this total view-point of the situation, Arjuna made the mistake of arrogating to himself an individual ego and observed the problems through the glasses of his ego. He recognised himself to be the disciple of Drona and the grandson of Bhishma. The very same teacher and grandsire were also seeing Arjuna in the opposite camp, but they felt no compunction, because they had no such egoistic misconceptions. They drowned their individuality in the cause they were championing. In short, Arjuna's egoism was the cause for his terrible moral confusions and misconceptions.

"I have often discussed this portion with some of the best men of our country and I have found all of them justifying Arjuna's argument. That is to say, this is a very subtle point to be decided and, perhaps, Vyasa thought of solving this riddle for the society with the very principles of Hinduism for the guidance of future generations. The more we identify ourselves with the little 'I' in us, the more will be our problems and confusions in life. When we expand ourselves through our larger identifications --- with an army, a cause or a principle, or a nation or an age --- we shall find our moral confusions dwindling into almost nothingness. Perfect morality can be declared and lived only by him who has sought to live and discover his real identity with the Self which is ONE WITHOUT A SECOND, EVERYWHERE, IN ALL BEINGS AND FORMS. Later on, we shall find Krishna advising this TRUTH as a philosophical treatment for Arjuna's mental rehabilitation."

#2-5

गुरुनहत्वा हि महानुभावान्श्रेयो भोक्तुं भैक्ष्यमपीह लोके।

हत्वार्थकामांस्तु गुरुनिहैवभुञ्जीय भोगान् रुधिरप्रदिग्धान्॥2.5॥

Gurūnahatvā hi mahānubhāvāñchreyo bhoktum bhaikṣyamapīha loke|

Hatvārthakāmāñstu gurūnihaiva bhuñjīya bhogānrudhirapradigdhān

word for word: Not to kill (ahatvā) (these) high-minded (mahānubhāvān) guru-s (gurūn) (is) undoubtedly (hi) better (śreyas), even though (api) (one had to) ask alms (bhaikṣyam) in order to eat (bhoktum) here, in this world (iha loke). However (tu), (if I) kill (hatvā) (these) guru-s (gurūn) here (iha iva), (though) they are desirous (kāmañ) of wealth

(artha), the enjoyments (bhogān) I would enjoy (bhuñjīya) (as a consequence of that act) would be besmeared (pradigdhān) with blood (rudhira)

- Better indeed, in this world, is to eat even the bread of 'beggary' than to slay the most noble of teachers. But, if I kill them, even in this world, all my enjoyments of wealth and desires will be stained with blood. -

"Continuing his high sounding but futile arguments, due to his false estimate of himself and his problem, Arjuna poses here as a martyr of his own morality and ethical goodness.

"His gurus, meaning both Drona and Bhishma, are characterised here as Mahanubhava --- men who were the ideals of their age, symbolising the best in our culture, who, in their broad-mindedness and courage of conviction, had themselves offered many a sacrifice at the altars of the Sanatana Dharma, the Hindu science of perfect living. Such noble men, who formed the very touch-stones of our culture in that era, were not to be eliminated from life, merely for the fulfilment of an individual's appetite for power and position. Not only in their own age, but for millenarian, the world would be impoverished by the heartless squandering of such precious lives.

"Thus, Arjuna says that it would be nobler for himself and the Pandava-brothers to live upon the bread of beggary than to gain kingship after destroying all the glorious flowers in the garden of our culture. After annihilating them all, elders and teachers, even supposing the Pandavas actually got their kingdom back, Arjuna points out how his noble Aryan-heart would not be able to enjoy either the kingdom or its wealth; for everything would be smeared by the bitter memories of the precious blood that would have been spilt in the war.

"Once we misread a situation, sentiments cloud our understanding and then we too act in life as Arjuna did in his. This is clearly indicated here in the detailed narration of the incident by Vyasa."

#2-6

न चैतद्विद्मः कतरन्नो गरीयोयद्वा जयेम यदि वा नो जयेयुः।

यानेव हत्वा न जिजीविषामस्तेऽवस्थिताः प्रमुखे धार्तराष्ट्राः॥2.6॥

Na caitadvidmaḥ kataranno garīyo yadvā jayema yadi vā no jayeyuḥ|

Yāneva hatvā na jijīviṣāmaste'vasthitāḥ pramukhe dhārtarāṣṭrāḥ

word for word: Besides (ca), we do not (na) know (etad... vidmaḥ) which of these two things (katarat) is worse (garīyaḥ) for us (naḥ), whether (yad vā) to conquer (them) (jayema) or (yadi vā) be conquered by them (naḥ jayeyuḥ). (If we) kill (hatvā) them (yān), we would not desire to live (jijīviṣāmaḥ) indeed (eva). (Nevertheless,) those (te) sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra (dhārtarāṣṭrāḥ) are (now) stationed (sthitāḥ) in front (of us) (pramukhe)

- I can scarcely say which will be better, that we should conquer them or that they should conquer us. Even the sons of Dhritarashtra, after slaying whom we do not wish to live, stand facing us. -

"The two earlier stanzas from Arjuna, no doubt, indicate to us the state of perplexity and confusion in his 'objective-mind.' That the state of hysteria within has now developed to attack even his intellectual composure is indicated in this stanza. The stimuli coming from the array of the enemy-lines, as they touched his 'objective-mind,' created therein a



problem, to solve which, he needed the guidance of the rational capacities of his intellect -- the 'subjective-mind.' Split as he was within, his mental personality, divorced from his intellect, could not easily come to any definite decision. His egoistic self-evaluation and the ego-created intense anxieties for the fruits of the great war, stood, as it were, between his mind and intellect, separating them and creating between them, an almost unbridgeable gulf; hence, Arjuna's confusions here.

"The mind, generally functioning as an efficient "receiving and dispatching clerk", receives the information of the perceptions conveyed to it by the sense-organs, and after arranging these perceptions in order, conveys them to the intellect for its judgement. The intellect, with reference to its own stored-up memories of similar experiences in the past, comes to final decisions which are conveyed to the mind for execution; and the mind in its turn issues the necessary orders for the organs-of-action to act upon. All these are happening at every moment, all through our waking-state, in our intelligent existence in the midst of the objects of the world.

"Where these equipments are not functioning co-operatively, with perfect team spirit, the personality of the individual is shattered and he becomes inefficient in meeting life as a victorious mortal. The rehabilitation of that individual is the re-adjustment and re-education of his inner world and where his personality is once again tuned up and adjusted, he comes to exhibit better efficiency in life.

"Poor Arjuna, victimized not so much by the external world as by his own mental condition, is seen here as being incapable of judging whether he should conquer his enemy or, by an ignoble retreat, allow them to conquer him. In this stanza, Vyasa is indicating to us that the hysteria in Arjuna was not only mental, but also at the level of the intellect."

LET'S STOP HERE for the day, here is a good contemplation, especially ending with Swamiji's discussion about the functioning of our mind as a "receiving and dispatching clerk".

#### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson #14

We return after some time away from our study; please accept my apology for the lapse.

Behind us is the despondency of Arjuna and yet the great teaching from Lord Krishna is yet to begin. Here we see that Arjuna begins the process of surrender. The Lord has told him that he is in error in a forceful way and this has shocked Arjuna. We have discussed that we have all experienced this same, and indeed it is shocking with the world tells us, "NO, YOU ARE WRONG WITH YOUR THINKING". At first you will observe that Arjuna's surrender is in word only, as he begins this process he says that he will listen to the Lord but he holds to his mistaken ideas.

And yet, as halting as it might be, Arjuna submits here. For the first time he asks the Lord the most important question, "What do I do?" Have you noticed that through the entire first discourse and to this point of the second this great warrior Arjuna has not asked the Lord a question?

This is us, and this is a critically important point for us to realize. The Lord is in us! We have the power to ask questions inside of us and to hear the answer through the practice

of receptive silence, and yet we don't ask! We are so full of ourselves, of our own beliefs, that we are just sure that we know the truth and we don't ask. We posture and position, we debate and strive for advantage, we harm and even kill, all without asking the inner question. Or, typically, even the outer question. This is amazing, isn't it?

So now, he asks. Swami Venkateshananda says of this moment, "This is one of the greatest verses in the scripture. It is the spark that ignites the magazine of wisdom." In order to know wisdom, in order to know who we are, to know the nature of the world, to know why we cannot find the happiness we seek... we must ask. This is where learning starts, it cannot start until then.

Let's resume.

#2-7

कार्पण्यदोषोपहतस्वभावः पृच्छामि त्वां धर्मसम्मूढचेताः।

यच्छ्रेयः स्यान्निशितं ब्रूहि तन्मे शिष्यस्तेऽहं शाधि मां त्वां प्रपन्नम्॥७॥

Kāraṇyadoṣopahatasvabhāvaḥ pṛcchāmi tvāṁ dharmasammūḍhacetāḥ|

Yacchreyaḥ syānniścitaṁ brūhi tanme śiṣyaste'haṁ śādhi māṁ tvāṁ prapannam

With (my) nature (sva-bhāvaḥ) afflicted (upahata) by the fault (doṣa) (known as) poorness of spirit (kāraṇya), (and the) mind (cetāḥ) confused (sammūḍha) as to (my own) duty (dharma), I ask (pṛcchāmi) you (tvāṁ) (the following now:) Tell (brūhi) me (me) positively (niścitaṁ) what (yad... tad) would be (syāt) better (śreyaḥ). I (aham) (am) your (te) disciple (śiṣyaḥ). Teach (śādhi) me (mām), (please), as I have taken refuge (prapannam) in You (tvām).

My heart is overpowered by the taint of pity; my mind is confused as to duty. I ask Thee. Tell me decisively what is good for me. I am Thy disciple. Instruct me, who have taken refuge in Thee.

Swami Chinmayananda, "In this stanza, when Arjuna has completely realised the helpless impotency in himself to come to any decision, he surrenders totally to Krishna. He, in his own words, admits the psychological shattering felt and lived by him in his bosom. He has instinctively diagnosed, correctly, even the cause of it to be "an uncontrollable amount of over-whelming pity." Of course, Arjuna does not realise that it is his misplaced compassion; but, whatever it be, the patient is now under the mental stress of extreme confusion and bewilderment.

"Arjuna confesses that his intellect (Chetas) has gone behind a cloud of confusions regarding what Dharma and Adharma are at that moment for him. The problem --- whether to fight and conquer the enemies or not to fight and allow the enemies to conquer him --- which needed an urgent solution, could not be rationally judged with the depleted mental capacities of Arjuna. We have already explained Dharma and found that the Dharma of a thing 'is the law of its being.' A thing cannot remain itself without faithfully maintaining its own nature, and 'THAT NATURE, WHICH MAKES A THING WHAT IT IS' is called Dharma. Hinduism insists on the Manava Dharma, meaning, it insists that men should be true to their own essential nature, which is godly and divine, and, therefore, all efforts in life should be directed towards maintaining themselves in the dignity of the Soul and not plod on through life like helpless animals. Here Arjuna indicates that he is quite ready to follow all the instructions of the Lord and maintain perfect faith in the wisdom of

his Divine Charioteer. The Pandava must also be considered to have indicated that, if he, in his foolishness, were to raise doubts, even for the thousandth time, Krishna should have the large heartedness, compassion and kindness patiently to explain them again to his disciple. All through the Geeta we come across many occasions when Arjuna punctuates Krishna's message with his own doubts. Never does Krishna, even once, grow impatient with his disciple. On the other hand, each question, as it were, is seen to have added more enthusiasm and interest to the discourses on the battlefield."

For today this is it. This is the message of the day.

ASK AND IT SHALL BE ANSWERED. Asking, followed by really listening, changes everything. The accompanying image shows our blessed Arjuna finally on his knees asking the Lord for advice and direction.

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 15

In our last discussion Arjuna finally asked the Lord a question, and it is a great question, "Please tell me positively what would be better, I am your disciple." Let's continue from here, we are now but three slokas away from the start of Lord Krishna's answer to this great question.

#2-8

न हि प्रपश्यामि ममापनुद्याद्यच्छोकमुच्छोषणमिन्द्रियाणाम्।

अवाप्य भूमावसपत्नमृद्धं राज्यं सुराणामपि चाधिपत्यम्॥८॥

Na hi prapaśyāmi mamāpanudyādyacchokamucchoṣaṇamindriyāṇām|  
Avāpya bhūmāvasapatnamṛddhaṁ rājyaṁ surāṇāmapi cādhipatyam

Certainly (hi), I do not see (na... prapaśyāmi) (how) my (mama) sorrow (śokam), which (yad) is (like) a drying (ucchoṣaṇam) of the senses (indriyāṇām), may be removed (apanudyāt), (even) after obtaining (avāpya) a unrivalled (asapatnam) prosperous (ṛddham) kingdom (rājyam) on the earth (bhūmau) as well as (api ca) supremacy and sovereignty (ādhipatyam) of the gods (surāṇām)

I do not see that it would remove this sorrow that burns up my senses, even if I should attain prosperous and unrivalled dominion on earth, or even Lordship over the gods.

Swami Chinmayananda, "Arjuna is indicating here to Krishna the urgency for guidance but for which he would be left to suffer the voiceless agonies of an inward pain. The patient is unable to explain or even to indicate vaguely, the source from which the pain is rising in him.

"This mental sorrow in Arjuna is "blasting" even his sense organs! Under the heavy burden of his sorrows he finds it very difficult even to see or hear things properly. Even his Indriyas (sense-organs), are being blasted by the overheated sorrows within him.

"It is natural for any reasonable human being to feel an intellectual impatience to solve a problem of the mind and thereby make it quiet and peaceful. Poor Arjuna also has tried his best to bring some consolation to himself through his own intellectual discrimination. The sorrow that he felt was not for the acquisition and possession of any sensuous object in the outer world, because, as his own words indicate, he has already thought over them

and found that even an empire comprising the whole earth, flourishing under his kingship --- nay, a lordship over the gods even --- would not have wiped off his sense of sorrow.

"The urgency felt by Arjuna, as is evident from his own words, may be considered as amounting to his burning aspiration for liberating himself from the limitations of a mortal. All that he needed to make himself perfect was right discrimination (Viveka) which the 'LORD OF THE SENSES' (Hrishikesha) gives him throughout the DIVINE SONG."

#2-9

सञ्जय उवाच

एवमुक्त्वा हृषीकेशं गुडाकेशः परन्तपः।

न योत्स्य इति गोविन्दमुक्त्वा तूष्णीं बभूव ह॥९॥

Sañjaya uvāca

Evamuktva hr̥ṣīkeśaṁ guḍākeśaḥ parantapaḥ|

Na yotsya iti govindamuktva tūṣṇīm babhūva ha

Sañjaya (sañjayah) said (uvāca):

Having so expressed (evam uktvā) to the Lord (īśam) of the senses (hr̥ṣīka), the thick-haired one (guḍā-keśaḥ), (who is) a destroyer of enemies (parantapaḥ), became (babhūva ha)silent (tūṣṇīm) after he (finally) said (uktvā) to the Cowherd (govindam) "I will not (na) fight (yotsye iti)

Sanjaya said: Having spoken thus to Hrishikesha, Gudakesha, the destroyer of foes, said to Govinda: "I will not fight" ; and became silent.

"This stanza and the following, together constitute the running commentary of Sanjaya the faithful reporter of the Geeta. He says that, after surrendering himself to Krishna, seeking the Lord's guidance, Arjuna, the great CONQUEROR OF SLEEP and the SCORCHER OF HIS FOES, declared to Krishna, the Lord of the senses, that he would not fight, and became silent.

"No single individual alive at that period had the authority to call back the armies from the field of Kurukshetra except the blind old uncle of the Pandavas. He had the status and the weight of opinion necessary for ordering a truce even at a time when it looked as though the time had slipped through the fingers. Sanjaya hoped that Dhritarashtra would understand the futility of their fighting against Arjuna, who would certainly conquer the Kaurava forces, since the "Knotted-haired" warrior (Gudakesha) had surrendered himself to the Lord of the senses (Hrishikesha), the Winner of the World (Govinda). But, Dhritarashtra was born-blind, and had grown deaf to the words of warning uttered by the good, due to his infinite attachment to his children."

#2-10

तमुवाच हृषीकेशः प्रहसन्निव भारत।

सेनयोरुभयोर्मध्ये विषीदन्तमिदं वचः॥१०॥

Tamuvāca hr̥ṣīkeśaḥ prahasanniva bhārata|

Senayorubhayormadhye viṣīdantamidam vacaḥ

Oh descendant of Bharata (bhārata)<sup>1</sup>, the Lord (īśaḥ) of the senses (hr̥ṣṭka)<sup>2</sup>, smiling (prahasan) as it were (iva), said (uvāca) these (idam) words (vacam) to that (tam) dejected and desponded (Arjuna) (viṣṭāntam) in the middle (madhye) of both (ubhayoḥ) armies (senayoḥ)

To him who was despondent in the midst of the two armies, Hrishikesha, as if smiling, O Bharata, spoke these words.

"Thus standing between the two forces, the good and the bad, arrayed for a battle to death, Arjuna (the jiva, or individual soul) surrenders completely, to the Lord (the subtler discriminative intellect), his charioteer, who holds the five horses (the five senses) yoked to his chariot (body), under perfect control. When the stunned and confused ego --- Arjuna --- totally surrenders to Krishna, the Lord, with a smile, reassures the Jiva of its final victory, and declares the entire message of spiritual redemption, the Geeta. In this sense we analyse the picture painted in Sanjaya's words, borrowing our sanction from the Upanishads.

"Once we agree to read this Upanishad-sense in the picture painted here by the words of Sanjaya, we can discover in it an Eternal Truth. When the ego (Arjuna) in its dejection sits back in the body (chariot), throwing down all instruments of ego-centric activities (Gandiva), and when the sense-organs (the white-horses) are held back, well under control, by the pulled-reins (the mind), then the charioteer (the Pure Intellect) shall lend the ego a divine strength, and guide it to the ultimate victory over the forces of Adharma with the help of the dynamism of Dharma, even though the former may seem much stronger in force than the simple-looking dynamism in the latter."

REMARKABLE. Now Arjuna has come full circle and has set himself up to listen. This is a magical power that we each have inside of us. We all react, and for each of us our reaction is different. Beyond the reaction, though, lies our intellect. This is our power to analyze an experience, to ask questions, and to come to a new conclusion. And, beyond this, lies the Lord Himself; waiting for us to ask the right questions and to be silent in order to listen. The Lord is never further from us than our own heartbeat, and now we see ego (Arjuna) beginning the process of surrender.

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 16

If you are reading this I would like to thank you for your forbearance, please forgive me for the long delay since posting lesson 15. I do not know at what pace we will be able to move forward but let's continue forward and do the best that we can.

Today Lord Krishna breaks his long silence and speaks, and here in four lines, two each in slokas #11 and #12, the Lord states the highest philosophy in all of the faiths. If we could listen carefully and accept what He tells us completely there would be no need for any other slokas or any other books. Alas we are attached to our conditioned view of the world and must break our old habits so we need to hear and to do much more in order to understand and to have complete faith (the rest of the Gita and all other Holy teachings guide us with this).

#2-11

श्रीभगवानुवाच



अशोच्यानन्वशोचस्त्वं प्रज्ञावादांश्च भाषसे।

गतासूनगतासूंश्च नानुशोचन्ति पण्डिताः ॥११॥

Śrībhagavān uvāca

Aśocyānanvaśocastvaṁ prajñāvādāṁśca bhāṣase|

Gatāsūnagatāsūṁśca nānuśocanti paṇḍitāḥ

Venerable (śrī) Bhagavān (bhagavān)<sup>1</sup> said (uvāca):

"You (tvam) mourned (anvaśocaḥ) over what is not be lamented (aśocyān) and (ca) (now) speak (bhāṣase) words (vādān) of wisdom (prajñā). Learned men (paṇḍitāḥ) do not (na) mourn (anuśocanti) (either) over the quick (agatāsūn) or (ca) the dead (gatāsūn)"

The Blessed Lord said: You have grieved for those that should not be grieved for; yet, you speak words of wisdom. The wise grieve neither for the living nor for the dead.

On GRIEF. Let's talk about grief and about sin; for these two concepts are intricately linked. I understand, at first blush it does not sound so, for grief is such a completely human emotion; it is so natural for us. And yet here the Lord tells us directly, "The wise grieve neither for the living nor for the dead." This is his direct answer to dear Arjuna's long diatribe about the pending war and his instinctive and emotional response at the prospect of so many being killed. Lord Krishna's statement runs completely counter to how we view the world and the human being, even our concept of compassion, doesn't it?

To place it in context let's go to the next sloka and then discuss.

#2-12

नत्वेवाहं जातु नासं न त्वं नेमे जनाधिपाः।

न चैव न भविष्यामः सर्वे वयमतः परम् ॥१२॥

Natvevāhaṁ jātu nāsaṁ na tvaṁ neme janādhipāḥ|

Na caiva na bhaviṣyāmaḥ sarve vayamataḥ param

"However (tu), I (aham) never (na... jātu) ceased to exist (na āsam), certainly (eva), nor did (na) you (tvam) nor did (na) those (ime) kings (janādhipāḥ); nor will (na ca eva) all (sarve) of us (vayam) cease to exist (na bhaviṣyāmaḥ) henceforth (ataḥ param)"

It is not that at any time (in the past) , indeed, was I not, nor were you, nor these rulers of men. Nor, verily, shall we all ever cease to be hereafter.

Now the Lord has told us why the wise do not grieve. It is because the wise see the true nature of themselves and of all as eternal, as neither the body nor even the thoughts but eternal spirit or "Self". As in "I", the true "I" (not the illusion we see in the mirror).

We grieve so much. We grieve about jobs not offered us, about money or things lost, about relationships not granted or failed, about friends or family that we think have left us, about our impending death, and on and on. We grieve about our perceived mistakes and the perceived slights of others (this is "What if...?" grief). We grieve at the thought of not getting what we think will make us happy and we grieve at losing what we think was going to make us happy "if only". How many of us, though, grieve for union with God? To end our separation with God? For surrender? For the supreme wisdom, to see the way that Jesus, or Mohammad, or Krishna, etc see? This latter is the kind of grieving that is encouraged as we shall see later (just as it is told us in the Sermon on the Mount

"blessed are they who grieve"), but here we speak of the personal grief over the potential loss of "my" friends, "my" family and "me". This grief is based upon a terrible misunderstanding of the nature of "me" and of "the world".

In the abrahamic traditions there is the concept of "seven deadly sins" or "seven cardinal sins". These are called avarice, envy, wrath, sloth, gluttony, lust and hubris. What is sin? We can say that it is the wrong way of thinking or acting, that it leads us (and others that we commit sins against) towards suffering and away from happiness. Towards death and away from eternal life. Sin is not about an "other", it is about our own journey. What is a "deadly" sin? It is action that leads us further into the entrapment of craving and delusion (thus attachment to our instinctive self with its resulting suffering and cycle of birth and death) and away from our understanding of our own Self as pure, stainless and eternal. The teaching of "deadly" sins was never intended to say that we should be "put to death" for committing them, it is for us to each understand that by committing them we are enslaving ourselves in this cycle of suffering instead of the liberation that comes with complete understanding of our true nature (Self Realization).

Following this line of reason we can say that there are but three deadly sins and finally at the deepest level that there is only one.

Fear, anger and grief are the three deadly sins. They are rooted in ignorance (of our own true nature) and they cover up the truth of us (because they trap us in our emotions instead of allowing us to be fully present and aware in the current moment). They are veils, and they are all three great killers; they prevent us from fully living. They prevent us from rising up into universal Love and Compassion for all, for each are rooted in the persistent idea of separation.

And, finally, our misidentification of our Self is the single deadliest sin. As long as we take ourselves to be a limited being, to be this body, we of course are subject to "death". But, since we are not really this body and we continue to live, we are propelled into a new "birth". We will be discussing this more shortly, and if we consider this carefully and clearly we can see the point. We are limitless, we are spirit. We are not subject to either birth or death. Only the body is born and dies. So, until we are fully and completely resolved with this, until we know our true nature and are free of fear, anger and grief, we think that we die. So, we "die"... then we "wake up" (in spite of not having a physical body)... we continue to live... then we take another "birth" and continue the cycle. Once we are fully aligned and know our Self to be eternal then we do not "die" again.

Our journey, then, is often said to be "from death to eternal life". Being "born again in the spirit" is coming to the full realization of our essential unity with God and with all.

Personal grief is not our friend on this journey, it is a force to be overcome. The same is so for fear, and for anger. These three are to be transcended, not surrendered to.

Let's continue with the beautiful commentaries from Swami Chinmayananda for these penultimate slokas. I hope that you are able to take some time with these, for the teaching contained here (when fully integrated) is the cure to every single ailment, every single problem! It is the center of every wisdom teaching through time immemorial, it is the Universal Truth of us. Please do ask any questions or make comments.

Commentary on 2-11: "When we rightly diagnose Arjuna's dejection, it is not very difficult for us to realise that, though its immediate cause is the challenge of the war, his condition



of mental torture is only a symptom of a deeper disease. Just as a true doctor will try to eradicate a disease, not by curing the symptoms but by removing the CAUSE of the disease, so too here, Lord Krishna is trying to remove the very source of Arjuna's delusion.

"The ego rises when the PURE SELF is not recognised; this deep-seated ignorance in man not only veils his Divine Nature from himself, but also projects on the REALITY a positive misconception. The 'ego-centric-idea,' that he is conditioned by his own body, mind and intellect, is the true seed of Arjuna's delusory attachments with his own relations and the consequent deep compassion that has risen in his bosom to make him so impotent and helpless. Grief and dejection are the price that delusion demands from its victim. To rediscover ourselves to be really something higher than our own ego, is to end all the sorrows that have come to us, through our false identifications.

"Thus, the ETERNAL SPIRIT in man, asserting its false relationships with his body, comes to feel bound by a thousand relationships with the world of things and beings. The same PERFECT-PRINCIPLE-IN-LIFE, playing on the field of the mind, comes to experience the imperfections of the emotional world as its own. Again, the DIVINE-SPARK-OF-LIFE, assuming, as it often does, a false identity with the intellect, comes to sob and suffer for its hopes and desires, its ambitions and ideologies, which are the characteristic pre-occupations of the intellect.

"The SELF, thus getting reflected in the intellect, the body, and the senses, is the ego, which is the victim of the world of objects, feelings and ideas. To this ego, belong all the sad destinies of life as well as its fleeting thrills of acquisition and possession. The ego in Arjuna suffered neurosis, goaded by its own delusions and the consequent misapprehensions. Krishna, in his INFINITE WISDOM, knew that MIS-APPREHENSION OF REALITY can take place only because of a pitiable NON-APPREHENSION OF REALITY. Therefore, in order to cure the very source of Arjuna's delusion, Krishna is here teaching him the cream of knowledge, as declared in the immortal books of the Hindus, the Upanishads.

"A re-education of the mind through metaphysical and psychic methods is the last word in psycho-therapy, which the East gave to the world, many thousand years ago. Krishna starts his entire Geeta lesson with this attempt at the re-education of Arjuna.

"True to that traditional cultural concept of education, here, the Great Master, Krishna, starts his instructions to Arjuna with a direct discourse upon the ETERNAL REALITY. The inner equipments of both Bhishma and Drona allowed through them a glorious expression of the LIFE PRINCIPLE or the Soul in them, and these great men were incomparable due to this Divine shine that beamed out through them. In this clashing of weapons, to consider that the cultural soul of Bhishma will be wounded, or that the life of Drona, the master-archer and military genius, will be ended, is a delusory concept of an uninitiated intellect. By this statement Krishna has indicated to Arjuna a greater Self than the ego in every embodiment. At every level of our personality, we view Life and come to our own conclusions about things. Thus, we have a PHYSICAL ESTIMATE of the world from the body level, quite distinct from the EMOTIONAL PICTURE of life from the mental level, and also an INTELLECTUAL CONCEPT of life from the level of the intellect.

"Physically, what I see as a woman, is mentally my mother and intellectually, the same sacred feminine form is a bundle of cells, each having in its protoplasmic content, a

nucleus that presides over all its functions. The imperfections that I see in a physical object will fail to give me misery, if I successfully gild it with my emotional appreciation. Similarly, an object which is physically abhorrent and mentally shameful will still fail to provide me with any sorrow, if I can appreciate it from my intellectual level.

"So, that which gives me despondency and dejection at the physical, mental and intellectual levels can yield a thrilling inspiration if I re-view it from the spiritual level. Krishna is advising Arjuna to renounce his physical, emotional and intellectual estimates of his teacher and his grandsire, and those of the whole battle-field problem, and to re-evaluate the situation through his spiritual understanding.

"This great and transcendental Truth has been so suddenly expounded here that it has, on Arjuna, the stunning effect of a sudden unexpected blast. We shall, later on, understand how this subtle, psycho-physical shocktherapy did immeasurable good to the hysterical condition of Arjuna.

"WHY DO THEY DESERVE NO GRIEF? BECAUSE THEY ARE ETERNAL. HOW?" THE LORD SAYS:"

Commentary on 2-12: "Krishna here declares, in unequivocal terms, that the embodied Self in every one is set on a great pilgrimage in which It comes to identify itself with varied forms, temporarily to gain a limited but determined, set of experiences. He says that neither He Himself nor Arjuna nor the great kings of the age that have assembled in both the armies, are mere accidental happenings. They do not come from nowhere and, at their death, do not become mere non-existent nothingness. Correct philosophical thinking guides man's intellect to the apprehension of a continuity from the past --- through the present --- to the endless future. The Spirit remaining the same, It gets seemingly conditioned by different body-equipments and comes to live through its self-ordained environments. It is this conclusion of the Hindu philosophers that has given them the most satisfactory THEORY OF REINCARNATION. The most powerful opponents of this idea do not seem to have studiously followed their own scriptures. Christ Himself has, if not directly, at least indirectly, proclaimed this doctrine when He told His disciples: "John, the Baptist, was Elijah." Origen, the most learned of the Christian Fathers, has clearly declared: "Every man received a body for himself according to his deserts in former lives."

"There was no great thinker in the past who had not, nor any in the present who has not accepted, expressly or tacitly, these logical conclusions about the DOCTRINE OF REINCARNATION. Buddha constantly made references to his previous births. Virgil and Ovid regarded the doctrine as perfectly self-evident. Josephus observed that the belief in reincarnation was widely accepted among the Jews of his age. Solomon's BOOK OF WISDOM says: "To be born in sound body with sound limbs is a reward of the virtues of the past lives." And who does not remember the famous saying of the learned son of Islam who declared, "I died out of the stone and I became a plant; I died out of the plant and became an animal; I died out of the animal and became a man.

"Why then should I fear to die? When did I grow less by dying? I shall die out of man and shall become an angel!!" In later times, this most intelligent philosophical belief has been accepted as a doctrine by the German philosophers Goethe, Fichte, Schelling and Lessing. Among the recent philosophers, Hume, Spencer, Max Mueller, have all recognised this doctrine as incontrovertible. Among the poets of the West also, we find many burnished intellects soaring into the cloudless sky of imagination and within their

poetic flights they too have intuitively felt the sanction behind this immortal doctrine- Browning, Rossetti, Tennyson and Wordsworth, to mention but a few names.

"The REINCARNATION THEORY is not a mere dream of the philosophers, and the day is not far far off when, with the fast-developing science of Psychology, the West will come to rewrite its Scripture under the sheer weight of observed phenomena. An uncompromising intellectual quest for understanding life cannot satisfy itself if it is thwarted at every corner by "observed irregularities." We cannot, for long, ignore them all as mere 'chances.' The prodigy Mozart is a spectacular instance which cannot be explained away; to be logical we must accept the idea of the continuity of the embodied souls. This genius. wrote Sonatas at the age of four, played in public at the age of five, composed his first Opera at the age of seven! Without the REINCARNATION THEORY, we will have to label this wondrous incident as an accident and throw it into the dust-bin of chance and bury it there!! Examples are often noticed, but rarely recorded as evidences, to prove this great THEORY OF REINCARNATION. The modern world, as I said, has yet to discover this great and self-evident LAW OF LIFE. Therefore, to an uninitiated student, this theory may seem too staggering for quiet appreciation. When Krishna declared that none of them, including himself, Arjuna and the great kings, even after their deaths on the battle-field "shall cease to exist in future," Arjuna, a typical man-of-the-world could not grasp it as a self-evident fact. His questioning eyes made the Lord explain again the idea through an example in the following stanza.

#### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 17

Let's review Discourse 2, sloka 12 and today we also include 13. For this discussion we have been given the beautiful example of dear Sri Swami ArjunaKrishnaananda Ji, who left his body on May 25.

As the divine would have it this beautiful Swamiji was given his name due to his identification with Arjuna and this battle that we are each in the midst of; to identify with Spirit instead of our lower self. One day twenty years ago Swamiji arrived at the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Yoga center in San Francisco and he asked how he could be of service. "Can you cook?" "No, but I can learn". Swamiji came every day, he learned to be a great cook and he faithfully offered his love for staff and students in the form of pakora, chapatti, fried rice and many other delicacies. The Bhagavad Gita pictured here (next to Sri Krishna and Sri Radha pictured in the "Rasa Leela") was also one of his Karma Yoga projects; he prepared it from Swami Sivananda's translation and printed/distributed 10,000 copies.

And then, as is the case for each of us, he neared the end of this birth. The center picture shows him on the 24th with a mala in his right hand engaged in Japa Yoga meditation on the Lord's feet in the form of the Divine Mother. On the 25th, in the mid afternoon, he slipped free of the frame, still in meditation on the Lord.

#2-12

नत्वेवाहं जातु नासं न त्वं नेमे जनाधिपाः।

न चैव न भविष्यामः सर्वे वयमतः परम्॥१२॥

Natvevāhaṁ jātu nāsaṁ na tvaṁ neme janādhīpāḥ|  
Na caiva na bhaviṣyāmaḥ sarve vayamataḥ param

However (tu), I (aham) never (na... jātu) ceased to exist (na āsam), certainly (eva), nor did (na) you (tvam) nor did (na) those (ime) kings (janādhīpāḥ); nor will (na ca eva) all (sarve) of us (vayam) cease to exist (na bhaviṣyāmaḥ) henceforth (ataḥ param)

It is not that at any time (in the past) , indeed, was I not, nor were you, nor these rulers of men. Nor, verily, shall we all ever cease to be hereafter.

#2-13

देहिनोऽस्मिन्यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं जरा॥

तथा देहान्तरप्राप्तिर्धीरस्तत्र न मुह्यति॥१३॥

Dehino'sminyathā dehe kaumāraṁ yauvanaṁ jarā|  
Tathā dehāntaraprāptirdhīrastatra na muhyati

Just as (yathā) in this (asmin) body (dehe) (there is) childhood (kaumāraṁ), youth (yauvanaṁ) (and) old age (jarā) to an embodied soul (dehinaḥ), so (tathā) (there is) obtainment (prāptiḥ) of another (antara) body (deha) (to that soul after death). An intelligent person (dhīraḥ) is not (na) bewildered (muhyati) by that (tatra)

Just as in this body the embodied (soul) passes into childhood, youth and old age, so also does he pass into another body; the firm man does not grieve at it.

THERE ARE MANY WAYS to paraphrase this teaching, yet here it is crystal clear and direct. "Nor shall we ever cease to be hereafter."

There is "otherness" but there is no "other". Otherness springs forth from our own ignorance, and through our own practice alone it may be put to an end. There is no other. There is no end to you, to anyone or anything. God alone is, and we are separate only to the extent that we think we are separate. In essence you and God are the same being (Jesus; "I and the Father are one").

Our only challenge is that we each carry baggage, called ego and subconscious mind, that is shaped from our worldly experience, our memories, our judgement and our desires, and within this is a strong and persistent idea that we are separate. Truly this is the only place that separation and otherness exist. Science now tells us this also. Separation is in no way real, nothing ends (it just changes). With the end of the idea that we are separate all trace of separation vanishes without a trace.

As mysterious and astounding as this may sound, this is the core of every wisdom teaching. This is the example that the saints give us with their transformation from separation to union.

The sole purpose of this human life is to end this idea of separation, to unite with the Truth of us. There is no other purpose, there is no other experience that will satisfy us. None. The spiritual life is the only real life, it is the only reason for birth here. We are each on a pilgrimage for Peace and Love.

From Swami Chinmayananda ji's commentary on #2-12: "Sri Krishna here declares, in unequivocal terms, that the embodied Self in every one is set on a great pilgrimage in which It comes to identify itself with varied forms, temporarily to gain a limited but determined, set of experiences. He says that neither He Himself nor Arjuna nor the great

kings of the age that have assembled in both the armies, are mere accidental happenings. They do not come from nowhere and, at their death, do not become mere non-existent nothingness."

So then, how do we end this persistent idea and achieve our life's goal? This is the teaching of the Bhagavad Gita; we have but to follow it. Over the coming days and months we will continue this dialogue about the path to Yoga, or to union, or happiness, or satisfaction (however we choose to say the same). With the benefit of the example of Swamiji today we will jump ahead to Discourse #8 for a partial preview.

#8-5: And whosoever, leaving the body, goes forth remembering Me alone at the time of death, he attains My Being: there is no doubt about this.

#8-7: Therefore, at all times remember Me only and fight. With mind and intellect absorbed in Me, thou shalt doubtless come to Me alone.

Every experience in our physical life is an opportunity. We get it wrong when we think that the difficult experiences are to be avoided for in fact they cannot be. We can try to slip them but they always know where we are and find us anyway, like a tax collector that has inside information on our whereabouts at all times. This experience we call death is unavoidable for all of us, and it is in fact our greatest opportunity in life. On our death bed so many ideas will come, there will be so much pain (physical and emotional), so much regret. Life review happens for each of us either before or after the time that we leave this physical body. This is the time that we will want to take morphine and slip away without pain, but with this idea we miss the fact that there is no end. Swamiji took no morphine nor even an aspirin. Day after day there was great physical pain yet he practiced pratyahara and (like the tortoise) he separated himself from the pain and united with the Divine through repetition of the Lord's name. He became for us a living example of how we can use our "death" to come home in union with the Absolute reality.

As is tradition on this Saturday, June 4, at 9AM there will be a final puja for Swamiji at the Sivananda Ashram Yoga Farm in Grass Valley. All are invited. Let us take this opportunity to thank Swamiji for his beautiful service and for the example that he sets for us. Thank you for the opportunity to share this story and thank you Lord for the opportunity to know You. Mysteriously the Lord is both within us and all around us, and if we strive to find the Lord we will each find out what this means. We will find all that we have ever searched for. [#MayallknowPeace](#).

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 18

Hello dear friends, let us continue now. It is a gift to have this dialogue with you, I am so thankful for this grace. Please join us for this continuing study of the most practical of teachings. We resume with our discussion of Chapter 2, "Sankhya Yoga" - the Yoga of Wisdom, (also translated to "Discriminative Knowledge").

The Lord has just begun to teach in sloka 11. After the great warrior Arjuna was overcome by grief at the prospects for processing this war against Adharma (the demonic forces), being confused and seeing his foes as friends, family and mentors. Krishna has told him that he suffers from the greatest misunderstanding, that even though he speaks



words of wisdom they are rooted in his fundamental misunderstanding of what he is seeing. Krishna tells him (and us) that, "All is the eternal Self..."

We all suffer from this vision defect. Now he has begun the process of helping us to correct the defect. This great defect, seeing the shifting and changing physical forms as the truth of this world, is the source of all of our suffering. It is persistent yet nevertheless wrong vision, and in every age the Lord takes form to help us to clear our vision. No one else can do it for us, but we are guided and with our own practice, our own life, we may come to see properly.

#2-14

मात्रास्पर्शास्तु कौन्तेय शीतोष्णसुखदुःखदाः।

आगमापायिनोऽनित्यास्तांस्तितिक्षस्व भारत॥१४॥

Mātrāsparsāstu kaunteya śītoṣṇasukhaduḥkhadāḥ|  
Āgamāpāyino'nityāstāṁstitikṣasva bhārata

"Oh son of Kuntī (kaunteya), the material (mātrā) contacts (sparsāḥ) causing (dāḥ) pleasure (sukha) (and) pain (duḥkha) (as well as) cold (season) (śīta) (and) hot season (uṣṇa) are not permanent (anityāḥ) (as) they come (āgama) (and) go away (apāyinaḥ) indeed (tu). Endure them patiently (tān titikṣasva), oh descendant of Bharata (bhārata)"

The contacts of senses with objects, O son of Kunti, which cause heat and cold, pleasure and pain, have a beginning and an end; they are impermanent; endure them bravely, O descendant of Bharata.

Commentary from Swami Chinmayananda - "He who can understand that the objects of the world are in a state of flux, are constantly coming into existence and perishing --- he will not allow himself to be tossed about by the existence or non-existence of the finite things of the world. In the flood of time, things and incidents, circumstances and environments flow up to our present from the unknown FUTURE, to give us vivid experiences of varied intensity, and they, in their very nature, cannot remain permanently, but must, of necessity, pass on to become one with the entire PAST. Nothing can remain the same, even for a short period, in the world-of-objects where change alone is the changeless law.

Having understood this finite nature of the changeable objects-of-the-world, wherein everyone of them has a beginning and an end, on no occasion need a wise man despair the least, of things THAT ARE, or of things THAT ARE NOT. Heat and cold, success or failure, pain or joy --- none of them can be permanent.

Since every situation, of its own nature, must keep on changing, it would be foolish to get ourselves upset at every change noticed. It is wisdom to suffer them meekly with the comfort and consolation of the knowledge of their finite nature. It is the attitude of the wise to go through life, both in joy and sorrow, in success and failure, in pain and joy, with the constant awareness: "Even this will pass away.""

#2-15

यं हि न व्यथयन्त्येते पुरुषं पुरुषर्षभ।

समदुःखसुखं धीरं सोऽमृतत्वाय कल्पते॥१५॥

Yam hi na vyathayantyete puruṣaṁ puruṣarṣabha|  
Samaduḥkhasukhaṁ dhīraṁ so'mṛtatvāya kalpate

"Undoubtedly (hi), these (material contacts) (ete) do not (na) afflict (vyathayanti) an intelligent (dhīraṁ) person (puruṣaṁ) who (yam) is indifferent (sama) to pain (duḥkha) (and) pleasure (sukhaṁ), oh excellent (rṣabha) man (puruṣa). That (person) (saḥ) is qualified (kalpate) for (attaining to) Immortality (amṛtatvāya)"

That firm man whom, surely, these afflict not, O chief among men, to whom pleasure and pain are the same, is fit for realising the Immortality of the Self.

This is the teaching of Yoga. Still the mind and all that tosses it about, and within the quiet that remains it is possible to know and to reside within the great Self, the immortal Truth of all. Within this great silence is all that we seek; absolute existence, eternal wisdom, and bliss.

Commentary on both 14 and 15 from Swami Venkateshananda - "The self that ceases to identify itself with the body and through it with the outside world, is at peace within itself. He who imagines the self to be the body and the senses, undergoes the varied experiences of heat and cold, pain and pleasure, and so on. He does not enjoy tranquillity because these experiences are impermanent, fleeting and momentary. Two distinct stages are described in these two verses. The first is titikṣa or endurance. The second is sama or equanimity (balanced state of mind). The first involves psychological effort. The second is effortless and natural.

"If you are walking in a forest on a cold morning and a monkey jumps on you and tears your shirt so that the cold wind blows on your bare back, you endure the cold which you feel intensely. This is titikṣa. At the same time, the cold wind is also blowing on your face. You are not even aware of it. This is sama or equanimity, in which the external condition fails to affect you in the least. The spiritual aspirant strives to practise endurance. He is a hero who has reached the second stage and to whom pain and pleasure are alike.

"The more you are able to identify yourself with the immortal, all-pervading self, the less will you be affected by the pairs of opposites." —Swami Sivananda."

Tomorrow we will continue with a special guest, [Swami Ramaswarupananda Saraswati](#) in a video recorded when I recently had his holy company in India.

## xBhagavad Gita - Lesson 19

Today we have the pleasure of hearing from Sri Swami Ramaswarupananda Saraswati Maharaj, a loving seer from India that has grown up with the Bhagavad Gita. He has been both a student and teacher of the Gita for over fifty years and he is here to help us understand the seminal and central sloka 2-16. This sloka is the center of the perennial philosophy, the universal Teaching here espoused by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita.

Yesterday we continued with discussion of the nature of the Self. This Self is the Real, the unlimited "I" that observes the thoughts and the actions, through confusion identifying with them instead of the Self. Lord Krishna told us yesterday in #2-15 that it is possible to directly and completely realize this immortal Self, your own true nature. Not from a book, not from someone else, but direct understanding. This is a difficult intellectual concept, for we think the world to be a certain way based upon our own conditioning. The intellect



cannot go there, to know your own Self you will need to transcend even your intellect to know who you are. How? Preparations, Purifications, Relinquishment. MAKE THE INTELLECTUAL INSTRUMENT PURE AND SUBTLE AND IT IS POSSIBLE TO USE IT TO PEER INSIDE, to see the subject instead of only objects. This is the teaching of the Gita, and the Lord has also spoken of the "one who is fit for realizing the immortal Self". Now:

#2-16

नासतो विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः।

उभयोरपि दृष्टोऽन्तस्त्वनयोस्तत्त्वदर्शिभिः॥१६॥

Nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ|

Ubhayorapi dr̥ṣṭo'ntastvanayostattvadarśibhiḥ

"Of the not Self --viz. nonexistence-- (asataḥ) there is no (na... vidyate) continuance or continuity (bhāvaḥ). Of the Self --viz. existence-- (sataḥ) there is no (na... vidyate) discontinuance or discontinuity (abhāvaḥ). (This) was certainly (api... tu) seen (dr̥ṣṭaḥ) in (antar) them (anayoḥ) both (ubhayoḥ) by the Seers (darśibhiḥ) of Truth (tattva)"

The unreal has no being; there is no non-being of the Real;  
the truth about both these has been seen by the Knowers of the  
Truth (or the Seers of the Essence)

Additional commentary by Swami Venkateshananda - "The reality or God alone exists: that which always exists is God. That which is, is eternal and infinite. No one can bring into being that which is not! It is simple and does not need God to tell us! But God tells us because only he knows the totality; we cannot know the totality, ours is always a point of view. That which intuitively knows this knows the totality.

"Then, what is this world? It is like the appearance of 'a snake in the rope', of a second moon when one suffers from diplopia, of the illusion of a mirage, of ghosts in posts in the dark courtyard, and of a second pill on the palm (when the one that is there, is touched by the scissor-crossed index and middle fingers of the other hand). When did the snake die? When did the second moon set? When did the water of the mirage evaporate? Where did the ghosts go? Who took the second pill? They never existed; they were but illusory phenomena, non-existent but experienced! Life itself is a long dream. We are unable to realise the illusoriness of the external objects because the dream is still on. We resist the awakening influence – like the dreamer of a pleasant dream – and pull the blanket of ignorance over our faces.

"When it is said: "The world is unreal", it is not suggested that we are seeing the world where nothing exists. We only mean to say that there is wrong perception: something exists (the self or God) and we see it as something else (world). To the little boy sitting under the tree, its shadow appears to be a phantom born at midday, growing till sunset and dying then!

"The jīvanmukta (liberated being) is aware of both – viz., the reality and the fact that to the unenlightened the appearance is experienced as real. Hence, he is never deluded, even as we see the shadow come into being, grow and vanish, but we are not deceived by it. He is aware of the appearance (world) and its substratum (the self)."

The great Herman Hesse calls this sloka the essential teaching of every world religion. There is much to say about it, and countless of the great teachers have expounded upon this sloka. It is, though, short and concise. Direct. It speaks to you at your deepest level. Understanding will require contemplation and meditation upon it to touch this inner voice. Please do take some time today in reflective silence and do just this.

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 20

Continuing on with the Lord's wisdom about the real and the unreal.

What is real? That which exists in all conditions. This means that it exists regardless of time, space or causation. It cannot be created nor destroyed. It was, it is and it will be. It is everywhere. What is unreal? That which is not.

It is a simple definition. We keep looking for truth in this world, and yet none of the forms that we experience meet this test, so we think that there is no real, eternal. Here we are told that this is not the case. Just because we do not see it or sense it does not mean that it does not exist; we are told that we do not see it simply because our senses are defective.

Imagine sitting in the movie theatre. Once the movie has started do you see the screen? And yet is it possible for you to see the movie without it? It is the truth (relative in this case) of the movie, the REAL-ity of it. The light also. With no light, no movie. And yet, again, we do not see the light. We see the movie. This is the way that our mind works, looking out into the moving forms. We can only see what is shifting and changing with our eyes and our mind. The light is steady and stable, the action taking place within it, therefore we do not see the light. The light, however, is very much real (again in the movie theater, it is relatively real... it does not of course last forever). This is an example, a pointer, as we are being told here that there is real, unchanging, and that we don't see it because of our defect... because our look is being diverted to the drama.

Now the Lord continues to tell us of the nature of this REAL:

#2-17

अविनाशि तु तद्विद्धि येन सर्वमिदं ततम्।

विनाशमव्ययस्यास्य न कश्चित्कर्तुमर्हति॥१७॥

Avināśi tu tadvidddhi yena sarvamidam tatam|  
Vināśamavyayasyāsyā na kaścitkartumarhati

"However (tu), know (viddhi) that 'That' (tad) by which (yena) all (sarvam) this (idam) is shown or displayed (tatam) (is) imperishable (avināśi). Nobody (na kaścīd) is able (arhati) to cause (kartum) destruction (vināśam) of this (asya) which is imperishable (avyayasya)"

Commentary by Swami Venkateshananda: "Every being is pervaded by God, inside and outside. A block of ice submerged in water has not only water on all sides, but is itself water, though in solid form. That all-pervading God is indestructible, and living faith in the all-pervading reality gives us a wonderful sense of security.

"But identification of the self with the passing phantom gives rise to insecurity and grief. The servant may be healthier and stronger

than his master, but there is always a lurking sense of insecurity in him because he does not know when his dismissal will come.

"Reliance on 'solid' matter generates insecurity; whereas reliance on subtle and invisible God confers security on us. Matter changes; the spirit is unchanging. Life becomes meaningful and all activities are purposeful only on the basis of faith in the enduring reality.

"All scriptures proclaim the truth that God pervades all inside and outside; in short, God alone exists, naught else:

"Whatever exists in this universe is pervaded by God." – Īśāvāsyā upaniṣad.

"Lord Nārāyaṇa dwells, pervading everything within and without – all that is heard of and all that is seen in the entire universe." - Nārāyaṇa Suktam.

"All this is indeed Brahman or the absolute; there is no diversity here." – Upaniṣad.

"Realisation of this unity will free us from sorrow. 'Burn this forest of ignorance with the fire of conviction that 'I am one and pure consciousness'. Be free from sorrow. Be blissful.'" – Aṣṭavakra Gītā."

Swamiji closes his commentary with quotations from other important "Hindu" scriptures, but of course in reality this same point is the central tenant to all great teachings. Here, from the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus speaks to the nature of the Self ("I"): "I am the light that is over all things. I am all: from me all came forth, and to me all attained. Split a piece of wood; I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there."

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 21

The Lord continues on in describing the glorious Self, guiding us to distinguish it from the images of this world which are all impermanent and not as they appear to be. This Self is the real "you", unencumbered by the false. What is false? The body, the senses, the emotions, the thoughts... all of the "objects" are false. You may properly say, "I am", but when you add limiting words to this, such as "a man" "old", etc we have begun to describe limited objects (not the Self).

#2-18

अन्तवन्त इमे देहा नित्यस्योक्ताः शरीरिणः।

अनाशिनोऽप्रमेयस्य तस्माद्युध्यस्व भारता॥१८॥

Antavanta ime dehā nityasyuktāḥ śarīriṇaḥ|  
Anāśino'prameyasya tasmādyudhyasva bhārata

"These (ime) bodies (dehāḥ) belonging to the eternal (nityasya), imperishable (anāśinaḥ) (and) immensurable (aprameyasya) embodied (soul) (śarīriṇaḥ) are said (uktāḥ) to have an end or term --i.e. they are perishable-- (antavantaḥ). Therefore (tasmāt), fight (yudhyasva), oh descendant of Bharata (bhārata)!"

They have an end, it is said, these bodies of the embodied-Self. The Self is Eternal, Indestructible, Incomprehensible. Therefore, fight, O Bharata.

Let's resume with commentary from Swami Chinmayananda ji, "The physical forms, constituted of matter envelopments, are all perishable equipments for the indwelling-Self, which is the Eternal Factor, ever in Its nature, changeless, indestructible, and incomprehensible. By the term EVER CHANGELESS, the Supreme is indicated as Eternal because the non-eternals, by their nature, must be everchanging, change being the insignia of the finite. Here, by using the two terms: Eternal (Nityah) and Indestructible (Anashinah), the Lord is indicating that neither a total nor a partial destruction is possible in the Supreme.

"By qualifying the Eternal as UNKNOWABLE it is not, in any sense, intended to indicate that the Supreme is 'unknown.' Here, the term 'unknowable' is only meant to express that it is not knowable through the usual organs-of-perception. The sense-organs are the instruments through which the Consciousness beams out and in ITS awareness, objects get illumined.

"These instruments of cognition, whether they be sense-organs, or the mind or the intellect, are in themselves, inert and can have their knowledge of perception only when they are dynamised by the Consciousness, the Spark-of-Life. As such, these organs cannot make the Consciousness an object of their apprehension. Therefore, in terms of our most common source of knowledge --- direct perception --- the Shastra says here that the Supreme is 'unknowable,' It being self-determined (Swatah siddhah).

"THEREFORE, FIGHT, O DESCENDANT OF BHARATA -

-- This is, really, not a command to fight. A religion that is built upon the concept of extreme forgiveness and largehearted tolerance, as envisaged in the principle of "nonviolence," could not have raised a slogan of chaos or revolutionary blood-thirstiness in its very scripture. Such an interpretation is the unintentioned mischief of a commentator, who does not read the Geeta in the context of the Mahabharata.

"The words "Fight, O Son of India," means that it is a religious call to every Hindu to discard his defeatist mentality and face, whole-heartedly and sincerely, the situations, in every given field of his life, at every given moment of his existence. Active resistance to evil is the Krishna-creed in the Geeta."

It is the internal battle that we are perennially called to, not external battle. No external battle can result in peace, but winning the internal battle and overcoming our own forces of darkness inside naturally results in the happiness and peace which we seek.

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 22

Let's include a concept here, as we continue forward in this discussion of the Reality. This discussion about the "Self" can be so confusing. The idea of "self", as in "to be one's self" is something that we never talk about. Who are you? We take it for granted, don't we? How can you answer this question but with limited ideas? "I am a woman" "an engineer", "native american", etc... and yet upon close examination all of these ideas fall apart because in every case you are simply describing the role that you play, and/or your body. You choose the role, so how can the role be you?

You are "that which has chosen", you are not "what you have chosen".

This timeless teaching of the Gita, and of all of the great teachings and traditions, is not focused on the role that you play at all, other than using the role in order to find and reside in your Truth, the "chooser". It points to this truth, describes this truth (although it cannot be described in words the great teacher will still use description in order to inspire us to it) and illumines the pathways to it.

"Self" is a name used for this truth of you. Self? Yes, because it is you, unencumbered with the veil hiding truth from you. Typically it is capitalized as Self to distinguish it from the mundane view of self, as this or that limitation, this or that body, etc. So in this discussion the Lord is talking about you, describing your true nature.

#2-19

य एनं वेत्ति हन्तारं यश्चैनं मन्यते हतम्।

उभौ तौ न विजानीतो नायं हन्ति न हन्यते॥१९॥

Ya enaṁ veti hantāraṁ yaścainaṁ manyate hatam|

Ubhau tau na vijānīto nāyaṁ hanti na hanyate

"Both (ubhau tau) the one who (yaḥ) considers (veti) it (enam) as the killer (hantāraṁ) and (ca) the one who (yaḥ) thinks (manyate) it (enam) is killed (hatam) do not (na) have right knowledge (vijānītaḥ). This (embodied soul) (ayam) neither (na) kills (hanti) nor (na) is killed (hanyate)"

He who takes the Self to be the slayer and he who thinks He is slain, neither of these knows. He slays not, nor is He slain.

Commentary from Swami Chinmayananda, "The Self, being Immutable, It is neither slain nor can It be the slayer. Those who think that they have been slain when the body is slain and those who feel that they are the slayers, both of them know not the Real Nature of the Self and hence they but prattle meaningless assertions. That which is killed is the perishable body and the delusory arrogation, "I am slain" belongs to the ego-centre. The Self is that which is beyond the body and the ego, since the Pure Consciousness is the Illuminator of both, the body and the ego. In short, being Immutable, the Self can neither be the agent nor the object of the action-of-slaying.

"HOW IS THE SELF IMMUTABLE? THIS IS ANSWERED IN THE NEXT VERSE."

#2-20

न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचिन्नायं भूत्वा भविता वा न भूयः।

अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे॥२०॥

Na jāyate mriyate vā kadācinnāyaṁ bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ|

Ajo nityaḥ śāśvato'yaṁ purāṇo na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre

"It is never born (na jāyate... kadācid) or (vā) dies (mriyate). This (embodied soul) (ayam) has not come into being (na... bhūtvā) or (vā) will come into being (bhavitā), nor (na) is coming into being (right now) (bhūyaḥ). This (embodied soul) (ayam) (is) unborn (ajāḥ), eternal (nityaḥ), perpetual (śāśvataḥ), ancient (purāṇaḥ). (It is) not (na) killed (hanyate) when the body (śarīre) is killed (hanyamāne)"

He is not born, nor does He ever die; after having been, He again ceases not to be; Unborn, Eternal, Changeless and Ancient, He is not killed when the body is killed.

"This stanza labours to deny in the Self all the symptoms of mutability that are recognised and experienced by the body. The body is prone to different changes and these modifications are the sources of all sorrows in every embodiment. These six changes are common to all, and they may be enumerated as: birth, existence, growth, decay, disease and death. These changes are the common womb of all pains in a mortal's life. All these are denied in the Self, in this stanza, to prove the immutability of the Self.

"Unlike the physical body, the Self is not born, It being the Eternal Factor that exists at all times. Waves are born and they die away but the ocean is not born with the waves; nor does it die away when the waves disappear. Since there is no birth, there is no death; things that have a beginning alone can end; the rising waves alone can moan their dying conditions. Again, it is explained that like the birth of a child, who was not existing before and who has come to exist after the birth, the Atman is not something that has come to be born due to or because of the body.

"Thus, the Self is unborn and eternal --- birthless and deathless (Ajah, Nityah)."

### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 23

The Lord continues to explain the mysterious Self. Mysterious, why? Because it cannot be seen with our two eyes, or perceived with any of our senses, yet it is your own true nature. In a world of objects it is the sole Subject.

#2-21

वेदाविनाशिनं नित्यं य एनमजमव्ययम्।

कथं स पुरुषः पार्थ कं घातयति हन्ति कम्॥२१॥

Vedāvināśinam nityam ya enamajamavyayam|

Katham sa puruṣaḥ pārtha kaṁ ghātayati hanti kam

"Oh son of Pṛthā (pārtha), how (katham) (can) that (saḥ) person (puruṣaḥ) who (yaḥ) knows (veda) it (enam) as imperishable (avināśinam), eternal (nityam), unborn (ajam) (and) undecaying (avyayam) kill (hanti) anyone (kam) (or) cause anyone to be killed or slain (kam ghātayati)?"

Whosoever knows Him to be Indestructible, Eternal,  
Unborn, and Inexhaustible, how can that man slay, O Partha,  
or cause others to be slain?

Commentary by Swami Venkateshananda, "Daily, we are aware of three states of consciousness. In deep sleep, there is no diversity. In the dream state, one (the mind) creates an illusion of diversity in itself! In the waking state, there is an apparent diversity: apparent because it is based on primordial ignorance and it will not stand investigation. These three states are experienced by the single ego, but the laws governing them are different. You cannot prosecute a man for killing another in a dream! Nor can he ignore a wall because he did not see it in his sleep.

'The same argument applies to the different states of spiritual awakening, too. It is true that ultimately God alone exists and that he is eternal and immortal. But, in the state in which Arjuna found himself, he could not ask Kṛṣṇa the very pertinent question: "If all these heroes are essentially indestructible, why do you ask me to kill them?" He had not



transcended the gross state of experience of the physical world and had to play the game in accordance with the laws that governed that state.

"Here we have a strange paradox. The battle of life has to be fought in the world which we should investigate all the time and realise that it is the effect of our own ignorance. Failure to fight the battle of life in this spirit will sanction ignorance and seal the door through which we should rise into the higher states of consciousness.

"This is the extremely delicate art of living: to play our part in this world as though it were a reality and yet never to forget the ultimate reality which appears, through mistaken perception, as the world."

#### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 24

There is no birth and no death for you. There appears to be, and as long as we suffer under this appearance we are bound to it. When we see clearly we are no longer bound, and this is the point of the timeless philosophy here being shared by the Lord. When we make the teaching practical instead of philosophical, and this means putting it in to practice in our day to day life, we awaken to the immortal truth of us and are no longer subject to the illusion of birth and death. Does this seem a worthwhile endeavor?

Then by all means please read on and contemplate this timeless teaching that is given us through every great teacher.

#2-22

वासंस् जीर्णानि यथा विहाय नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि।

तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णान्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही॥२२॥

Vāsāṁsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya navāni gr̥hṇāti naro'parāṇi|

Tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇānyanyāni saṁyāti navāni dehī

"Just as (yathā) a man (naraḥ) puts on (gr̥hṇāti) other (aparāṇi) new (navāni) clothes (vāsāṁsi) after abandoning (vihāya) the old (ones) (jīrṇāni), so (tathā) the embodied (soul) (dehī) proceeds (saṁyāti) to other (anyāni) new (navāni) bodies (śarīrāṇi) after leaving (vihāya) the old (ones) (jīrṇāni)"

Just as a man casts off his worn out clothes and puts on new ones, so also the embodied-Self casts off its worn out bodies and enters others which are new.

Commentary by Swami Chinmayananda, "This is one of the oft-quoted famous stanzas in the Geeta which, by a very striking example, explains to us how the ego-centric entity in an individual readily leaves its associations with one set of equipments, and arrogates to itself another conducive envelopment for living a new set of its required experiences. The example that Vyasa uses is

so universal that from the Lord's own mouth it rings with a note of irresistible appeal.

"Just as an individual changes his clothes to suit the convenience of the occasion, so too the ego-centre discards one physical form and takes to another, which will be most suited for it to gain the next required type of experiences. No one will plan to go to his office in his night-gown, nor will he, in his stiff-collar, feel happy while playing tennis in the

evening. He changes his dress according to the field where he is intending to work for the time being. Similar is the why and wherefore of death and thereafter.

"This striking example, which comes within the comprehension of every one, is made use of by the Lord so that, not only Arjuna, but even those who are overhearing these eighteen discourses, even at this distant time, may come to understand the idea clearly.

"Changing of our clothes that have become worn out, cannot be a pain to anyone of us, especially when it is for the purpose of putting on a new set of clothes. Similarly, when a mind-intellect-equipment finds that its embodiment in a given form can no longer help it to earn, from its available environments, experiences that would facilitate its evolutionary pilgrimage, it feels that this particular form is worn out (Jeerna). This "worn out" condition of a body is to be decided neither by its age nor by its biological condition. Nor can anybody other than its wearer, the ego, decide it.

"Critics rise up in hosts, however, against the truth of this stanza and their main platform of arguments is built upon the observed facts of young people dying away in the bloom of their life. In the observers' opinion, the individual was young and his body was not worn out (Jeerna), but from the standpoint of the evolutionary necessity of the ego concerned, that body was already useless for it. A rich man feels like changing his house or vehicle almost every year, and he invariably finds ready purchasers. As far as the rich owner is concerned, the thing has become useless for him while for the purchaser it is "as good as new." Similarly, here nobody else can decide, whether a given body is worn out or not, except its "wearer."

"In short, the stanza emphasizes the doctrine of reincarnation which we have already explained in an earlier stanza. On the whole, it must have definitely conveyed to Arjuna the idea that death grins only at those who have no understanding, and that it has no pain for those who understand its implications and working. Just as changing the dress is no pain to the body, so too, when the dweller in the body leaves the envelopment there is no pain possible; again, undressing does not mean that thereafter we will ever live naked, so too, the embodied Self, ere long, discovers an appropriate equipment from which to function so as to earn for itself new sets of experiences.

"Evolution and change are all for the mind-and-intellect and not for the Self. The Self is perfect and changeless, and needs no evolution."

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 25

"No birth, no death". As long as we imagine it to be so it will be, but when we come into alignment with the highest light within us, when we see ourself as spirit, "birth and death" lose their hold upon us. Let's continue with the Lord's illumination of the nature of the Self (the embodied soul, your own true nature):

#2-23

नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः।

न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः॥२३॥

Nainaṁ chindanti śastrāṇi nainaṁ dahati pāvakaḥ |  
Na cainaṁ kledayantyāpo na śoṣayati mārutaḥ

"Weapons (śastrāṇi) do not (na) cut (chindanti) it (off or through) (enam); fire (pāvakaḥ) does not (na) burn (dahati) it (enam); waters (āpas) do not (na ca) wet (kledayanti) it (enam); (and) wind (mārutaḥ) does not (na) dry (it) up (śoṣayati)"

Weapons cleave It not, fire burns It not, water moistens It not, wind dries It not.

#2-24

अच्छेद्योऽयमदाह्योऽयमक्लेद्योऽशोष्य एव च ।

नित्यः सर्वगतः स्थाणुरचलोऽयं सनातनः ॥२४॥

Acchedyo'yamadāhyo'yamakledyo'śoṣya eva ca |  
Nityaḥ sarvagataḥ sthāṇuracalo'yaṁ sanātanaḥ

"This (embodied soul) (ayam... ayam) is impossible to be cut (acchedyaḥ) (and) cannot be burnt (adāhyaḥ), wetted (akledyaḥ) (or) dried up (aśoṣyaḥ) indeed (eva ca)! This (embodied soul) (ayam) is eternal (nityaḥ), omnipresent (sarvagataḥ), firm (sthāṇuḥ), immovable (acalaḥ) (and) perpetual (sanātanaḥ)"

This Self cannot be cut, nor burnt, nor moistened, nor dried up. It is eternal, all-pervading, stable immovable and ancient.

#2-25

अव्यक्तोऽयमचिन्त्योऽयमविकार्योऽयमुच्यते ।

तस्मादेवं विदित्वैनं नानुशोचितुमर्हसि ॥२५॥

Avyakto'yamacintyo'yamavikāryo'yamucyate |  
Tasmādevaṁ viditvainaṁ nānuśocitumarhasi

"It is said (ucyate) that this (soul) (ayam... ayam... ayam) (is) invisible and not manifest (avyaktaḥ), inconceivable (acintyaḥ), (and) invariable (avikāryaḥ). For that reason (tasmāt), by knowing (viditvā) so (evam), do not (na) regret about it, please (enam... anuśocitum arhasi)"

This (Self) is said to be Unmanifest, Unthinkable and Unchangeable. Therefore, knowing This to be such, you should not grieve.

Commentary on these three slokas from Swami Venkateshananda; "Expressions like 'I am injured. I am burnt' are defective. Even so, 'I am a bad man', etc. They betray a confusion of the Self (to which the 'I' points) and the body and mind which are subject to all these afflictions. Take the expression 'I am sick'. If it is true, then I cannot be made healthy! It is just like the expression 'This is paper' which cannot be made into a loaf of bread!

"Injury, burning, evil nature, sickness, and so on, are superimpositions on the Self which has nothing to do with these and hence is able to shake them off at will. Its essential nature as the immortal, eternal, all-pervading, stable and ancient Self asserts itself.

"Thus, even common expressions like 'I am a man', if pursued as an inward enquiry will lead us to their logical conclusion, the Self. 'I' is really not 'a man', for the 'I' is really distinct from the 'man-body'. The 'I' is beyond all these modifications. It is the subtle essence hidden in all bodies, one and immutable.

"That which is the subtle essence of all, in that all that exists has its being. That is the truth. That is the Self. That thou art, O Śvetaketu" – Chāndogya upaniṣad.

"It is foolish to pretend that all this is true. Our Master (Swami Sivananda) pointed out the danger of assumed knowledge. "Wicked people catch fish in the Gaṅga and kill them, rationalising their action with the lofty verse 'weapons do not cut the self.' Such perversion of truth will only make self-realisation more remote."

This last part of Swamiji's commentary, the quote attributed to Swami Sivananda, speaks to a point that is worth some consideration. We are here on this earth in an interesting time. It can seem that nothing is sacred or holy, so great is our confusion and so complex has our society and lifestyle become (happiness does not lie in the complex life, this is an absolute statement).

We tend to talk about spirituality but not live it, and this is key. We try to impose our beliefs upon others thinking that we can actually do this, and that in so doing we will be happier and so will the other person. This is a great naivety, of course. We can barely change our own self (though we can, through struggle and trial), let alone change someone else (impossible!).

These highest teachings are bandied about in this age but in no way understood or lived. "We are one!" is such a common phrase, but when we utter it we do so from a point of great confusion. Instead of coming to understand it, instead of treating all as we would treat our own self, we use the phrase to justify our own thoughts, words and actions. This is not the meaning of the teaching at all. "We are one" is not a catchphrase, not a badge, not an intellectual statement. It is a pointer to the deeper truth, which can only be learned through transcending and overcoming the ego-identified limited self.

We pretend that we understand, we pretend to be wise, we pretend that we have faith. Pretending is of no use, we must go beyond pretending. We must go beyond belief. Truth can be found, but in no way is belief the same as truth. Belief in a teacher and a teaching can be quite beneficial, but only if we follow it completely and reach what it points us to. Believing is of no external value, only doing is. No one else's beliefs matter, except to them. Serve, Love, Give, Purify, Meditate. Be good, do good, be kind, be compassionate. Adapt, adjust, accommodate. Bear insult, bear injury. Inquire, "who am I?". This is of use.

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 26

The Lord continues the teaching of the nature of the Self (the essential truth of each of us), but now takes up a different perspective to inspire Arjuna to action even if he cannot grasp or accept what is being explained. :

#2-26

अथ चैनं नित्यजातं नित्यं वा मन्यसे मृतम्।

तथापि त्वं महाबाहो नैनं शोचितुमर्हसि॥२६॥

Atha cainam nityajātam nityam vā manyase mṛtam|  
Tathāpi tvaṁ mahābāho nainaṁ śocitumarhasi

"Moreover (atha ca), (whether) you regard (manyase) it (enam) as constantly (nitya) being born (jātam) or (vā) constantly (nityam) dying (mṛtam), still (tathā api), oh big-armed one (tvam mahā-bāho), do not (na) regret about it, please (enam śocitum arhasi)"

But even if you think of Him as being constantly born and constantly dying, even then, O mighty-armed, you should not grieve.

#2-27

जातस्य हि ध्रुवो मृत्युर्ध्रुवं जन्म मृतस्य च।  
तस्मादपरिहार्येऽर्थे न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि॥२७॥

Jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyurdhruvaṁ janma mṛtasya ca|  
Tasmādaparihārye'rthe na tvaṁ śocitumarhasi

"Oh descendant of Bharata (bhārata), the beings (bhūtāni) are not manifest (avyakta) in the beginning (ādīni), (but they are) manifest (vyakta) in the middle (madhyāni). (Anyway, they are) not manifest (avyakta) in the end (nidhanāni eva) (again)! Then (tatra), what is the point (kā) of mourning (paridevanā)?"

Indeed, certain is death for the born, and certain is birth for the dead; therefore, over the inevitable, you should not grieve.

Commentary by Swami Venkateshananda, "Kṛṣṇa's expressions are very clever and guarded! He does not concede that the Self is born and it dies. But if you think so, even then there is no cause for grief.

"We should learn to accept the inevitable. As a famous prayer goes: 'God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.' Birth and death are inevitable; so why worry?"

"In the second verse, we see the cautious wording. Death is certain for that which is born and birth for the dead. But, where is it said that the Self is born or it dies? Birth and death belong to the illusion (conventional or traditional usage), not to the self, the substratum for the 'I'. I am not born nor do I die; birth and death belong to the confusion. At best, 'birth' and 'death' are conventional expressions like the 'rising' and 'setting' of the sun. For not even the 'body' dies finally. Birth and death are two apparent stages in a ceaseless change. They have social implications, but cease to be true when investigated into.

"When you drive along a tar road in the morning, you find a mirage. When the sun sets, the mirage disappears (dies). Oh, no, it is not dead; the next morning, when the sun rises, the mirage is born again!

"We can accept the inevitable with wisdom and courage only if we are firmly rooted in the truth or the permanent reality which is totally unaffected by these passing phenomena."

From the above, "Birth and death belong to the illusion..." Part of us takes our reality to be this passing phenomenon called a physical body, or deeper still the thought waves which mysteriously rise and fall. At the deepest level of us we do understand ourselves to be spirit, but the subconscious "fight or flight" aspect of us lives in an illusive world with

confused ideas as the our true nature. This confusion is the root of our internal (and from this all) battles, it is this confusion that we have taken birth in order to clear.

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 27

#2-28

अव्यक्तादीनि भूतानि व्यक्तमध्यानि भारता।

अव्यक्तनिधनान्येव तत्र का परिदेवना ॥२८॥

Avyaktādīni bhūtāni vyaktamadhyāni bhārata|

Avyaktanidhanānyeva tatra kā paridevanā

"Oh descendant of Bharata (bhārata)<sup>1</sup>, the beings (bhūtāni) are not manifest (avyakta) in the beginning (ādīni), (but they are) manifest (vyakta) in the middle (madhyāni). (Anyway, they are) not manifest (avyakta) in the end (nidhanāni eva) (again)! Then (tatra), what is the point (kā) of mourning (paridevanā)?"

Beings unmanifest in the beginning, and unmanifest again in their end seem to be manifest in the middle, O Bharata. What then is there to grieve about?

Time is a great enigma, so mysterious that none of us can explain it. Nor, indeed, can we explain why it is that we seem to exist only in a tiny slice of time. The Lord continues His teaching with the alternative view. He is telling us that if we cannot or choose not to grasp the concept of the eternal Self (the stated reality of all of us), then consider the normal perspective. From the view that this being (us) is purely physical, then why grieve? This apparent life is so short, these beings apparently come from nothing and go to nothing, so why grieve? Do the needful, take on this inner fight with full commitment, for there is no need for fear (with either view!).

Swami Venkateshanandaji's commentary, "This is a very important thought which can immediately liberate us from worry and grief. We clothe the moment with the mantle of eternity and worry over its magnitude. We forget that what happens now has had a cause in the unknown past and will in turn have an effect in the unknown future. In the darkness of total ignorance, we grope and break our bones.

"We cling to our 'possessions', forgetting that we were alive before they came to us. We fear their loss. We grieve over the loss. Ignorant of the laws of karma (cause and effect) we strive all the time to push unhappiness away and to acquire happiness. Pushing unhappiness away involves us in greater unhappiness. Feverish striving to acquire happiness is only misery!

"The Bhāgavatam reminds us of the mystery of life: 'You do not work for unhappiness and yet find yourself in it. Even so, happiness will be yours unsought-for.' They are the effects of adṛṣṭa (the unseen karma). Meditation upon this will rob us of all tensions, grief and delusion, and will snap all our attachments. 'The relationship as son, friend, teacher, father, mother, wife, brother or sister is formed through the body on account of attachment and delusion. Just as planks unite and separate in the river, just as pilgrims unite and separate in a public inn, so also fathers, mothers, sons and brothers unite and



separate in this world. He who thus understands the nature of the body and all human relationships based on it, will not grieve.' — Swami Sivananda.

"The enigma of a 'future' is tantalising. People are irresistibly drawn to others who profess the ability to 'read the future'. How strange! What is the use of this knowledge if 'what will be will be'; and how can one trust the prophesy if the future calamity can somehow be averted? One who knows 'what is' is not worried about what was or what will be."

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 28

The Lord continues to describe the Self, and yet as we see here He is describing That which is ineffable.

#2-29

आश्चर्यवत्पश्यति कश्चिदेनमाश्चर्यवद्वदति तथैव चान्यः।

आश्चर्यवच्चैनमन्यः शृणोति श्रुत्वाऽप्येनं वेद न चैव कश्चित्॥२९॥

Āścaryavatpaśyati kaścidenamāścaryavadvadati tathaiva cānyaḥ|  
Āścaryavaccainamanyaḥ śṛṇoti śrutvā'pyenaṁ veda na caiva kaścit

"Somebody (kaścid) considers (paśyati) it --i.e. the embodied soul-- (enam) as (vat) astonishing (āścarya). Likewise (tathā eva ca), another (person) (anyaḥ) talks (vadati) about it (enam) as (vat) astonishing (āścarya). Also (ca), another (person) (anyaḥ) hears (śṛṇoti) of it (enam) as (vat) astonishing (āścarya), and (ca eva) somebody (else) (kaścid), even (api) having heard (śrutvā) of it (enam), is not (na) conscious (veda) of it (enam)"

One sees This as a wonder; another speaks of This as a wonder; another hears of This as a wonder; yet, having heard none understands This at all!

Commentary by Swami Chinmayanandaji, "The Eternal Absolute is explained to us as Infinite, All-knowing and All-blissful (Sat-Chit-Ananda). Our experience of ourselves is that we are finite, ignorant and miserable. Thus, between the Reality, which is our Self, and what we experience ourselves to be, there seems to be as much difference as between heat and cold, light and darkness. Why is it that we are not able to recognise the Self, which is our Real Nature?

"In our ignorance, when we try to perceive the Truth, it seems to be a goal to be reached at some distant place, in a distant period of time. But in fact, if we are to believe the Lord's words, the Self being our essential nature, we are never far from It. A mortal is as far away from Immortality --- the sinner is as far removed from a Saint --- the imperfect is as far removed from Perfection --- as a dreamer is from the waker.

"Man awakened to the Self's Glory is God; God forgetful of His own glory is the deluded man! To the ego, the very existence of the subtler Self beyond the body, mind and intellect is an idea that cannot even be conceived of, and, when a mortal, through the techniques of self-perfection, comes to recognise himself to be the Self, he is struck with a wondrous ecstasy of that suprasensuous experience.

"The emotion of wonder, when it rises in the mind, has the capacity to black-out, for the time being, all cognitions, and the individual who has been struck with wonder, forgets

himself and becomes, for the moment, one with the very emotion. As an experiment, try to completely surprise somebody, and quietly watch his attitude. With mouth open and his unseeing eyes protruding out, every nerve in him stretched to the highest tension, the victim of wonderment stands fixed to the spot as a statue carved in moist, cold, flesh. The same is the thrilled hush of lived joy in the Temple of Experience, when the Self, all alone with the Self, comes to live as the Self. And, therefore, the great Rishis of old borrowed the term 'wonderment' to indicate to the student what exactly would be the condition of his personality layers at the moment when his ego drops off from the resplendent Infinite Form of the Self.

"True knowledge makes a man realise that he is "The Soul with a body," but now in his ignorance, he thinks that he is a "body with a soul." Those who LISTEN well are encouraged to REFLECT on what they have heard and to MEDITATE until they realise the Self. The unintelligent listeners also feel encouraged, by the very same statement expressing the rarity of this knowledge, to make repeated attempts at listening (shravana), continuous reflection (manana) and long contemplation (nididhyasana)."

These last tools provided by Swami Chinmayanandaji are key. Listening (to wisdom, Satsanga), Reflecting (upon the teachings and our own "miraculous" experiences) and Contemplation (of the nature of Truth) help us to reveal our true nature. A purified intellect is a sharp and precise tool; even though the Truth cannot be seen by our two eyes nor understood by the ego identified mind the pure intellect is required for direct perception of Truth.

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 29

The philosophy espoused by the Lord in this discourse is in fact the universal philosophy. Here the Lord reaches a crescendo in this core teaching of the true nature of our own Self.

#2-30

देही नित्यमवध्योऽयं देहे सर्वस्य भारत।

तस्मात्सर्वाणि भूतानि न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि॥३०॥

Dehī nityamavadhyo'yaṁ dehe sarvasya bhārata|  
Tasmātsarvāṇi bhūtāni na tvam śocitumarhasi

"Oh descendant of Bharata (bhārata)<sup>1</sup>, this (ayam) embodied (soul) (dehī) (residing) in the body (dehe) of all (sarvasya) cannot be killed ever (nityam avadhyah). For that very reason (tasmāt), do not (na) mourn (tvam śocitum arhasi) for all (sarvāṇi) beings (bhūtāni), (please)"

This, the Indweller in the body of everyone is ever indestructible, O Bharata; and, therefore, you should not grieve for any creature.

Commentary from Swami Venkateshananda, "This is the summing up of the philosophic argument. The body undergoes change: even the elements are not destroyed in the sense that they cease to be. Matter, too, in its ultimate analysis is indestructible, because,

as has been proved by science, 'mass is static or inert energy'. Life cannot be destroyed: energy itself is indestructible. Its apparent destruction is mere transmutation.

"Body and life are themselves tools in the hands of the soul which is of the nature of pure consciousness. Body is inert. Life is blind energy. It is the soul which is the conscious director within these two. There is no power greater than this, for this consciousness is all-pervading and therefore one without a second.

"“This Brahman, this creator, all these gods, these five great elements, all these small creatures, and others, the seeds of creation, the egg-born, the womb-born, the sweat-born, the sprout-born, horses, cows, men, elephants, whatever else breathes and moves or flies, or is immovable – all these are guided by consciousness and are supported by consciousness. The universe has consciousness for its guide.

Consciousness is the basis

or stay of all. Verily, consciousness is Brahman”, declares the Aitareya upaniṣad. That Brahman is the self of all.

"In the words of sage Yājñavalkya of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka upaniṣad: “When the Self alone is all this ...” how can it be destroyed? “It is incomprehensible, imperishable, unattached, free and not subject to pain or destruction.” Hence, this soul is not physical or psychological – not a concept or an entity totally independent of other entities. Though incomprehensible, it is ‘realisable’. It is realised to be one in all."

This statement, like the entire philosophical argument given by the Lord in Chapter 2, cannot be understood fully by the intellect. Its purpose is to help destroy our belief in the independent reality of what we see. We are told here time and again that what we see is not independently real. Not that it is not real, for even with the mirage what we are seeing is real. It is not a lake though, not palm trees, it is desert. In the theater when we watch a movie we are fooled into the illusion of a reality of the movie, but it is the light, and play of light upon the background screen, that we are watching. In this case again there is naught but reality but what we see with our two eyes is a movie playing out on the screen of reality. Consciousness itself is the light behind the play and the Self itself the director and the actor.

Although intellect cannot fully understand in the suspension of thought it is possible to understand. By transcending thought understanding can be known. This is what is happening here. The Lord is telling us something of the nature of the Reality that we may enter the state of wonder, and in our "disbelief" we may find the truth within. We do not stop here, though, at this crescendo. The Lord continues to teach through so many techniques, and provides us with techniques, with a way to live, that we may discover this great Truth of us.

### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 30

Having completed His initial statement of the highest philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita (Thou art the Self, there is no birth and no death for you) the Lord now takes a pragmatic approach to urge Arjuna towards his duty. Let us not lose our way and think that it is the external battle being discussed, for the Lord (inside us) is constantly urging us urging us onward in our inner battle in countless subtle and gross ways.

In the following stanzas the Lord takes up a discourse about Dharma, and the need for us to engage fully in our Dharma, whatever it is. Dharma will be defined more fully as we continue forward, for now we may say that it is our duty, but not just that. For us to do our duty for the good of all is Dharma, but for us to do it for our own personal benefit, our own fame or glory, or money, at the expense of society, is said to be "Adharma", or "against Dharma." Again this speaks to our inner battle, as the ego self is all about doing for name, fame, money, passion, etc...

#2-31

स्वधर्ममपि चावेक्ष्य न विकम्पितुमर्हसि।

धर्म्याद्धि युद्धाच्छ्रेयोऽन्यत्क्षत्रियस्य न विद्यते॥३१॥

Svadharmamapi cāvekṣya na vikampitumarhasi|

Dharmyāddhi yuddhācchreyo'nyatkṣatriyasya na vidyate

"Besides (api ca), by taking into consideration (avekṣya) your own (sva) duty (dharmam), do not (na) tremble greatly (vikampitum arhasi), (please). Undoubtedly (hi), for a kṣatriya (kṣatriyasya) there is (vidyate) nothing else (anyat... na) better (śreyaḥ) than fighting (yuddhāt) legitimately (dharmyāt)"

Further, looking at thine own duty thou oughtest not to waver, for there is nothing higher for a KSHATRIYA than a righteous war.

#2-32

यदृच्छया चोपपन्नं स्वर्गद्वारमपावृतम्।

सुखिनः क्षत्रियाः पार्थ लभन्ते युद्धमीदृशम्॥३२॥

Yadṛccchayā copapannaṁ svargadvāramapāvṛtam|

Sukhinaḥ kṣatriyāḥ pārtha labhante yuddhamīdṛśam

"Oh son of Prthā (pārtha), happy (sukhināḥ) (are) the kṣatriya-s (kṣatriyāḥ) (who) obtain (labhante) such (īdṛśam) a war (yuddham) (as this one), which occurred (upapannam) spontaneously (yad-ṛccchayā ca), (because it is) an open (apāvṛtam) gate (dvāram) to heaven (svarga)"

Happy indeed are the KSHATRIYAS, O Partha, who are called to fight in such a battle, that comes of itself as an open door to heaven.

#2-33

अथ चेत्त्वमिमं धर्म्यं सङ्ग्रामं न करिष्यसि।

ततः स्वधर्मं कीर्तिं च हित्वा पापमवाप्स्यसि॥३३॥

Atha cettvamimaṁ dharmyaṁ saṅgrāmaṁ na kariṣyasi|

Tataḥ svadharmam kīrtim ca hitvā pāpamavāpsyasi

"Furthermore (atha), if (cet) you (tvam) are not (na) going to carry out (kariṣyasi) this (imam) legitimate (dharmyam) war (saṅgrāmam), then (tatas), having abandoned (hitvā) your own (sva) duty (dharmam) and (ca) renown (kīrtim), you will incur (avāpsyasi) sin (pāpam)"

But, if you will not fight this righteous war, then, having abandoned your own duty and fame, you shall incur sin.

Commentary from Swami Venkateshananda, "Society cannot be conducted nor can man live on transcendental knowledge alone! A synthesis of high ideals and practical common sense is essential, this is achieved in our smṛtī or dharma śāstrā which are codes of morality and which, therefore, recognise the existence (relative and fleeting) of phenomena.

"As we shall see, the Bhagavad Gītā emphasises one's adherence to one's own dharma at all costs.

"'Righteous war' was fought only in the days prior to the discovery of the aeroplane and gun-powder. Now, no war – hot, cold or lukewarm – is righteous because there is no battlefield and there is indiscriminate destruction of all everywhere, without any restraint by proper rules of conduct. Innocent children are killed. Non combatants and people who have no idea what the war is about are killed. In the present context, all wars should be banished – hot war with guns and bombs, cold war in the field of propaganda and commerce, and lukewarm war over a conference table.

"Though the philosophy of the indestructibility of the self could be applied to both commandments 'fight' and 'do not fight', it is the dharma śāstra or secular duty that gives it the right direction."

### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 31

Having reached a crescendo with the ultimate philosophy, the Lord continues discussion of Dharma - our Duty - and the importance of seeing it through in accordance with the highest principle we can find to serve.

#3-34

अकीर्तिं चापि भूतानि कथयिष्यन्ति तेऽव्ययाम्।

सम्भावितस्य चाकीर्तिर्मरणादतिरिच्यते॥३४॥

Akīrtiṁ cāpi bhūtāni kathayiṣyanti te'vyayām|

Sambhāvitasya cākīrtimaraṇādatiricyate

"Also (ca api), the living beings (bhūtāni) will talk (kathayiṣyanti) about your (te) unchangeable (avyayam) ill fame (akīrtim). And (ca) for a respectable person (sambhāvitasya), ill fame (akīrtiḥ) is more important (atiricyate) than death (maraṇāt)"

People too, will recount your everlasting dishonour; and to one who has been honoured, dishonour is more than death.

#3-35

भयाद्राणादुपरतं मंस्यन्ते त्वां महारथाः।

येषां च त्वं बहुमतो भूत्वा यास्यसि लाघवम्॥३५॥

Bhayādraṇāduparataṁ maṁsyante tvāṁ mahārathāḥ|

Yeṣāṁ ca tvāṁ bahumato bhūtvā yāsyasi lāghavam

"The great (mahā) warriors (rathāḥ) will think (maṁsyante) you (tvām) have withdrawn (uparatam) from battle (raṇāt) for fear (bhayāt). And (ca) you (tvam), who have been (bhūtvā) had in high esteem (bahumataḥ) by them (yeṣām), will be considered as insignificant (yāsyasi lāghavam)"

The great battalion commanders will think that you have withdrawn from the battle through fear; and you will be looked down upon by them who had thought much of you and your heroism in the past.

#3-36

अवाच्यवादांश्च बहून्वदिष्यन्ति तवाहिताः।

निन्दन्तस्तव सामर्थ्यं ततो दुःखतरं नु किम्॥३६॥

Avācyaavadāṁśca bahūnvadiṣyanti tavāhitāḥ|

Nindantastava sāmāthyam tato duḥkhataram nu kim

"And (ca) your (tava) enemies (ahitāḥ) will speak (vadiṣyanti) plenty (bahūn) of slanderous (avācya) words (vādān) while reviling (nindantaḥ) your ability and capacity (sāmāthyam)... (and) what (nu kim) (might be) a greater pain (duḥkhataram) than that (tatas)?"

And many unspeakable words will your enemies speak cavilling about your powers. What can be more painful than this?

Let's stay with commentary from Swami Venkateshanandaji on this discussion of Dharma, "A wise man does not seek honour, knowing that its loss is worse than death.

"When Kṛṣṇa insists on equanimity in honour and dishonour (XII:19), why does he say here that dishonour is worse than death to a kṣatriya? We should not confuse the two. They belong to two different aspects of our life. Discipline has two aspects - self discipline and social discipline. A wise man does not sacrifice one for the other. For instance, if a taxi-driver speaks disrespectfully to a judge on the seashore, the latter puts up with this personal effrontery as a matter of self-discipline. But the same judge should charge even a minister with contempt of court if the latter said anything derogatory of the judge in his official capacity.

"Social discipline, on the other hand, should not lead you to take upon yourself the burden of reforming society and maintaining what you consider to be law and order in the whole world. Then you might lose sight of self-discipline. An undisciplined man cannot promote social discipline, either.

"This is an extremely delicate manoeuvre, more difficult than tight-rope walking!"

This discussion of Dharma is not so clear cut, because all of us experience mixed motives. As we discussed yesterday there is not such clear righteousness in the world today as in times long past. Today no external battle is righteous, the motives of every battle whether of words or deeds is mixed up with egoic notions. The goals are not pure, for there is selfish motive on every side in this world play today. Only the internal battle can be clear, though not easy. There is within each of us the force for good and the force for pleasure... the latter when followed leads us to suffering and the former to understanding and union with our Divine Self.



This much we can say about Dharma today. First, our duty coincides with our gifts, the role that we have been prepared for and are well equipped to play. Joseph Campbell calls it, "Follow your bliss". Our Dharmic path is inside us, not so deeply buried. It is what we love to do, what we feel that we must do, performed with devotion and love equally for all. The attached image speaks to this important aspect of Dharma. Of course what we do is important, but it is not nearly so important as how we do and why we do.

### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 32

We continue with the Lord speaking to Dharma but in sloka #38 below there is a key transition made. Here, without mentioning it by name, the Lord speaks of Yoga, or equanimity of mind. Please do take some time with this verse and the commentary and contemplate it, now we are being given guidance as to how to enter the state of Yoga, or union with the highest Self. We want happiness, the happiness we seek is in our own Self. Here we are being told that finding what we seek is all about our INNER ATTITUDE, not an external achievement. Please read on.

#3-37

हतो वा प्राप्स्यसि स्वर्गं जित्वा वा भोक्ष्यसे महीम्।  
तस्मादुत्तिष्ठ कौन्तेय युद्धाय कृतनिश्चयः॥३७॥

Hato vā prāpsyasi svargam jitvā vā bhokṣyase mahīm|  
Tasmāduत्तिष्ठ kaunteya yuddhāya kṛtaniścayaḥ

"Either (vā) (you are) killed (hataḥ) (and) will go (prāpsyasi) to heaven (svargam) or (vā), having been victorious (jitvā), you will enjoy (bhokṣyase) the earth (mahīm). Therefore (tasmāt), stand up (uttiṣṭha), oh son of Kuntī (kaunteya), resolved (kṛtaniścayaḥ) on fighting (yuddhāya)"

Slain, you will obtain heaven; victorious you will enjoy the earth; therefore, stand up, O son of Kunti, determined to fight.

#3-38

सुखदुःखे समे कृत्वा लाभालाभौ जयाजयौ।  
ततो युद्धाय युज्यस्व नैवं पापमवाप्स्यसि॥३८॥

Sukhaduḥkhe same kṛtvā lābhālābhau jayājayau|  
Tato yuddhāya yujyasva naivaṁ pāpamavāpsyasi

"For that reason (tatas), by considering (kṛtvā) equally (same) pleasure and pain (sukha-duḥkhe), gain and loss (lābha-alābhau), victory and defeat (jaya-ajayau), get ready (yujyasva) for battle (yuddhāya). Thus (evam), you will not incur (na... avāpsyasi) sin (pāpam)"

Having made --- pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat --- the same, engage in battle for the sake of battle; thus you shall not incur sin.

The lengthy and quite precise commentary from Swami Chinmayananda, "From this stanza onwards we have a slight hint about the technique of Karma Yoga as explained in the Geeta. In the introduction we have stated that the second chapter is almost a

summary of the whole Geeta; later on, we shall see how the Path of Devotion also is, in brief, indicated in this very chapter.

"In this stanza we have Krishna's first direct statement on the technique of Self-Perfection and, as such, a very careful study of it will be extremely fruitful to all students of the Geeta.

"The three pairs of opposites mentioned here are distinct experiences at the three levels of our mortal existence. PAIN AND PLEASURE are the "intellectual" awareness of experiences unfavourable and favourable; GAIN AND LOSS conceptions indicate the "mental" zone where we feel the joys of meeting and the sorrows of parting; and CONQUEST AND DEFEAT indicate the "physical" fields wherein at the level of the body, we ourselves win or let others win. The advice that Krishna gives is that one must learn to keep oneself in equilibrium in all these different vicissitudes at the respective levels of existence.

"If one were to enter the sea for a bath, one must know the art of sea-bathing or else the incessant waves will play rough on the person, and may even sweep him off his feet and drag him to a watery grave. But he who knows the art of saving himself --- by ducking beneath the mighty waves, or by riding over the lesser ones --- he alone can enjoy a sea-bath. To hope all the waves to end, or to expect the waves not to trouble one while one is in the sea is to

order the sea to be something other than itself for one's convenience! This is exactly what a foolish man does in life. He expects life to be without waves --- but life is ever full of waves. Pain and pleasure, gain and loss, conquest and defeat must arise in the waters of life or else it is complete stagnation --- it is almost death.

"If life be thus a tossing stormy sea at all times, and it should be so, then we, who have entered life, must know the art of living it, unaffected either by the rising crests, or by the sinking hollows in it. To identify ourselves with any of them is to be tossed about on the surface, and not to stand astride like a light-house, which has its foundations built on the bed-rock of the very sea. Here Krishna advises Arjuna, while inviting him to fight, that he should enter the contest and keep himself unaffected by the usual dissipating mental tendencies that come to everyone, while in activity. This equanimity of the mind alone can bring out the beam of inspiration, and give to one's achievements the glow of a real success.

"It is very well-known that in all activities, inspired work gathers to itself a texture of divine perfection which cannot be imitated or oft-repeated. Be he a poet, or an artist, a doctor or a speaker, irrespective of his profession, whenever an individual is at his best, his masterpiece is always accepted by all as a 'work of inspiration.' When we thus work with the thrilled ecstasy of an unknown mood

called 'inspiration,' the ideas, thoughts and activity that come out of us have a ringing beauty of their own, which cannot be otherwise mechanically repeated by us. Thus, Da Vinci could not repeat for a second time and copy on another piece of canvas the enigmatic smile of his Mona Lisa; Keats' pen could no more re-capture for a second time the song of the Nightingale in its flight; Beethoven could never again beat out of his faithful piano a second Moonlight Sonata; Lord Krishna himself, after the war, when requested by Arjuna to repeat the Geeta, admitted his inability to do so!!

"To the Western mind and understanding, 'inspiration' is an accidental and mysterious happening over which the mortal has no control at all, while to the eastern Rishis, inspired living is the real godly destiny of man, when he lives in perfect unison with the Self within him. A balanced life, wherein we live as unaffected witnesses of even our own mind and intellect, is the realm of selfforgetfulness, where, instead of becoming inefficient, our profession gathers the scintillating glow of a new dawn. This extra aura in any achievement is that which raises an ordinary success to an 'inspired achievement. '

"The Yogis of ancient Hindu-lore discovered a technique, whereby the mind and intellect could be consciously brought to a steadiness and poise, and this technique is called Yoga. The Hindus of the Vedic period knew it, practised it, lived it; and with their incomparable achievements, they provided, for their country, the golden era of the Hindus.

"The philosophy of a country like India, in the Vedic period, must necessarily be Theistic, but it has its applications in all walks of life. If it fails in its all-round application, it cannot be a philosophy. A theory of life which has no universal application, can at best, be appreciated as the noble opinion of an individual, which may have its own limited application, but it can never be accepted as a philosophy.

"In the entire scheme of Bhagawan's arguments so far, he has provided Arjuna with all the necessary reasons which a healthy intellect should discover for itself, before it comes to a reliable and dependable judgement upon the outer happenings. A mere spiritual consideration should not be the last word in the evaluation of all material situations. Every challenge should be estimated from the spiritual stand-point, as well as from the intellectual stand-point of reason, from the emotional level of ethics and morality, and from the physical level of tradition and custom. If all these considerations, without any contradiction, indicate a solitary truth, then that is surely the Divine Path that one should, at all costs, pursue.

"Arjuna came to the delusory mis-calculation of the situation because he evaluated the war only from the level of his sentiments. The opposing forces were teeming with his own relations and to kill and exterminate them was indeed against the ethical point-of-view. But, this emotionalism overpowered him, and at this moment of his total inward chaos, he completely lost sight of the other considerations that would have helped him to regain his balance. He surrendered, as a mind should, to Krishna, the inner discriminative capacity. Therefore, the Lord, having undertaken to guide Arjuna, provides him with all the available data gathered from different points of view. Throughout the Geeta, Krishna plays the part of the "discriminative intellect" in an individual, a true charioteer in the Upanishad-sense of the term.

"After thus placing all the possible points of view upon the problem --- the spiritual, the intellectual, the ethical and the traditional for Arjuna's consideration --- Krishna concludes in the earlier stanza that Arjuna must fight. In this stanza Krishna tries to explain how he should conduct himself in this undertaking. It has been said that he should fight the war with perfect detachment from all anxieties which generally come to an individual, when he identifies himself with the non-Self

(Anatma) --- at the level of his intellect with the concept of pain and pleasure, at the level of his mind with the fears of gain and loss and at his body-level with the restlessness of conquest and defeat.

"Equanimity in all such mental challenges is a factor that ensures true success in life. We have explained earlier how the human mind is to be kept open, while working in its given field of life, so that, while living in the midst of life's battle, it can exhaust the vasanas that are already in it. This purgation --- catharsis of the Soul --- is the compelling purpose for which every living creature has arrived on the platform of manifested life. Viewed thus, each individual living creature --- plant, animal or man --- is but a bundle of vasanas.

"The equanimity in the face of all situations, advised here, is the secret method of keeping the mind ever open for its outflow. When it gets clouded by the ego-sense and the egoistic desires, then the out-flow is choked, and new tendencies start flooding in. The ego is born when an individual starts getting upset at all these pairs-of opposites (Dwandwas) such as joy and sorrow, etc. The attempt to keep equanimous is successful, only if action is detached from the ego. Thus, mental purification --- vasana-catharsis --- is the benign result of real living and right action: and this is Yoga. This is explained, in the next chapter of the Geeta, in all detail as Karma Yoga.

"The philosophical theory of truth was described in the very opening of the Lord's message, and, in order to drive home those conclusions into the practical-mind of a man-of- action, Arjuna, Lord Krishna gave arguments from the stand-point of the common man. Ultimately, he concluded that Arjuna must fight and explained in what attitude he should fight. Practical religion consists in living the philosophy one has understood."

### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 33

Now we have transitioned from the Lord telling us the Truth of this world (all is the Self, the Divine alone, there is no birth nor death... these things we see are but an appearance in the Divine play) to teaching us of Yoga, the method for us to directly perceive this Truth and to resolve our own self into It, thus uniting with the Divine Being.

Intellectual knowledge is not real knowing you see. Only through experience can we know, and in this case we are experiencing in a limited way and we need help to transcend our limited vision and know the experience of the unlimited Truth. Words are never enough. If you wish to know what honey tastes like no one can adequately describe it that you may know it yourself. So too the ineffable Truth.

#2-39

एषा तेऽभिहिता साङ्ख्ये बुद्धिर्योगे त्विमां शृणु।

बुद्ध्या युक्तो यया पार्थ कर्मबन्धं प्रहास्यसि॥३९॥

Eṣā te'bhihitā sāṅkhye buddhiryoge tvimāṁ śṛṇu|

Buddhyā yukto yayā pārtha karmabandhaṁ prahāsyasi

"This (eṣā) (type of) intelligence (buddhiḥ) (which has been) explained (abhihitā) to you (by Me) (te) (is also described) in the Sāṅkhya system (sāṅkhye). But (tu), listen (śṛṇu) to this (kind of intelligence) (imām) (that is described) in the Yoga system (yoge). (If

possessed (yuktaḥ) of that (yayā) intelligence (buddhyā), oh son of Prthā (pārtha), you will abandon (prahāsyasi) bondage (bandham) of karma or action (karma)"

This, which has been taught to thee, is wisdom concerning SANKHYA. Now listen to the wisdom concerning YOGA having known which, O Partha, you shall cast off the bonds-of-action.

#2-40

नेहाभिक्रमनाशोऽस्ति प्रत्यवायो न विद्यते।

स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात्॥४०॥

Nehābhikramanāśo'sti pratyavāyo na vidyate|  
Svalpamapyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt

"Here, (i.e. in the intelligence described in Yoga) (iha), there is neither (na... asti) unsuccessful effort (abhikrama-nāśaḥ) nor (na vidyate) decrease or diminution (pratyavāyaḥ). Even (api) a very little quantity (su-alpam) of this (asya) dharma (dharmasya) protects (you) (trāyate) from a great (mahataḥ) danger (bhayāt)"

In this there is no loss of effort, nor is there any harm (production of contrary results) . Even a little of this knowledge, even a little practice of the YOGA, protects one from the great fear.

Commentary from Swami Venkateshanandaji, "There is a vital synthesis here. It is between action and knowledge. Philosophy carried in the brain is an intellectual burden. Life or action not guided by philosophy (in the sense of wisdom) or an altruistic outlook (which implies an unceasing investigation into truth) is blind.

"As Socrates said: "The unexamined life is not worth living." We should learn to 'be good' and 'do good'. The welfare of society depends upon our good actions – so we should 'do good'. Society does not bother even if our motive is bad and attitude commonplace. But our own good and our salvation depend upon our inner motives and attitude. Therefore, we should be good. Knowledge and action must be integrated. Learning and life must blend. The word 'yoga' introduced here has a variety of meanings, as we shall see in due course.

"Yoga means 'union' or 'integration'. Roughly: 'integration of man and the transcendent being' is sāṅkhya or inward knowledge, and 'integration of man and the immanent Godhead, the universe' is buddhi yoga.

"When we take this path of yoga, we are on the right road to salvation. Every step takes us nearer the goal and thus there is no loss of effort at all here. The knowledge and confidence that we are on the right path itself frees us from all fear. The very movement of investigation saves us from sorrow and hence fear. Fear arises only in the darkness known as ignorance."

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 34

Now we come to the concept of Yoga (union with the divine Self), and the comparison with bhoga (union with the sense objects). This comparison is key; one way lay peace and happiness, the other way we find suffering. This is the essence of the teaching of Yoga; all Yogic practices are rooted in this understanding.



#2-41

व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिरेकेह कुरुनन्दन।

बहुशाखा ह्यनन्ताश्च बुद्धयोऽव्यवसायिनाम्॥४१॥

Vyavasāyātmikā buddhirekeha kurunandana|

Bahusākhā hyanantāśca buddhayo'vyavasāyinām

"Intelligence (buddhiḥ) whose essence (ātmikā) (is) strenuous effort and settled determination (vyavasāya) is only one (ekā) here --i.e. in Yoga-- (iha), oh son of Kuru (kuru-nandana)1! Intelligences (buddhayaḥ) of people lacking strenuous effort and settled determination --viz. negligent people-- (avyavasāyinām) (are) certainly (hi) many-branched (bahu-sākhāḥ) and (ca) endless (anantāḥ)"

Here, O Joy of the Kurus, Kurunandana, there is but a single-pointed determination; many-branched and endless are the thoughts of the irresolute.

From Swami Chnimayananda, "In Karma Yoga, which the Lord is now explaining, even the highest achievement of Self-realisation is possible because, there, the man works with one resolute determination, with a single-pointed mind. Those who perform actions, labouring under endless desires for results, get their inner personality disintegrated, and with a shattered, thousand pronged mind, they are not able, consistently, to apply themselves to any line of action; therefore, their endeavours invariably end in disastrous failure.

"In this stanza lies the secret of spiritual success --- briefly hinted at in hasty words herein. With a single-pointed mind, if an individual can entertain any single resolute determination and act consistently towards its success, achievement must certainly result. But invariably, man, victimised by his ego, entertains hundreds of desires, often mutually contradictory, and therefore, comes to play upon these fields with an impoverished and exhausted mental strength. This is, psychologically, what we call "self-cancellation of thoughts." When this comes to plague the mental zone, it exhausts all the potentialities of man and loots away all his chances of success."

Also here is sage commentary from Swami Venkateshananda that adds valuable perspective, "Having taken this path, one must not waver or stray into the by-lanes. 'Vyavasāya' is a word commonly used to mean 'agriculture' too. If a man wants to cultivate a piece of land, he should apply himself with one-pointedness to his task. If he tills the soil and then changes his mind, or if he sows the seed and neglects the farm on account of other interests, he will not reap a rich harvest.

"'Yoga' is self-culture and is governed by the same laws as agriculture. Here they are in brief:

1. We burn the bush. We remove the evil qualities in our nature.
2. We plough the ground. We resort to several yoga practices in order to prepare the ground. We 'turn' the soil, bringing the hidden part to light: the dark, hidden evils must be brought to light and thus removed.
3. We sow the seed. We resort to the guru who sows the spiritual seed in the form of a mantra and also of spiritual knowledge.
4. We water the field. We vitalise the mantra by faithful repetition and by meditation on its significance, and the instructions of the guru by augmenting our faith in and devotion to



him.

5. As the young sprouts come up, we carefully guard them against weeds, animals and thieves. As we progress on the path of yoga, we guard our faith and devotion against evil activities and evil company, by ever-alert watchfulness.

"Such one-pointed attention ultimately yields us the rich harvest of spiritual experiences and self-realisation. Such one-pointedness is brahmacarya."

In this last guidance Swamiji speaks to us of the necessity of staying on our "spiritual path" and also provides beautiful guidance regarding the steps to purify the intellect and fully realize the Truth of us.

### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 35

The continues to draw comparison between bhoga and Yoga (see lesson 34). These slokas cut deep, for we hold on to the idea that we know what we do not know. Ego is imaginary but strong and crafty. The ego voice inside us keeps telling us that it knows the way, that happiness will come with the next acquisition. Even when we no longer believe our own ego-mind we do not admit this as this admission is seen inside as an invalidation of us. And we strive so hard to be valid, to hold up our own beliefs to the world as the best possible beliefs ("if the world believed as I do all would be happy"). Realizing and admitting that we do not know (but that there are those few who do, the ones who have found the secret to the happiness that we forever seek) is the Great Opportunity for us, for into this opening wisdom can flow.

#2-42

यामिमां पुष्पितां वाचं प्रवदन्त्यविपश्चितः।

वेदवादरताः पार्थ नान्यदस्तीति वादिनः॥४२॥

Yāmimāṁ puṣpitāṁ vācaṁ pravadantyavipaścitaḥ|

Vedavādaratāḥ pārtha nānyadastīti vādinaḥ

"Oh son of Prthā (pārtha), unwise people (avipaścitaḥ) taking delight (ratāḥ) in Vedic discussions (veda-vāda) speak (pravadanti) here these (yām imām) flowery (puṣpitam) words (vācam): "there is nothing else (na anyat asti iti)". This is what such speakers (iti vādinaḥ) (express)"

Flowery speech is uttered by the unwise, taking pleasure in the eulogising words of VEDAS, O Partha, saying, "There is nothing else.

#2-43

कामात्मानः स्वर्गपरा जन्मकर्मफलप्रदाम्।

क्रियाविशेषबहुलां भोगैश्वर्यगतिं प्रति॥४३॥

Kāmātmānaḥ svargaparā janmakarmaphalapradām|

Kriyāviśeṣabahulāṁ bhogaiśvarya-gatiṁ prati

"(These unwise people who) indulge their desires (kāma-ātmānaḥ) (and) whose main goal (parāḥ) is (attaining) heaven (svarga) tread the path (gatim prati) (leading to) pleasures (bhoga) (and) power (aiśvarya). (This kind of path consists of) plenty of (bahulām) special (viśeṣa) (religious) activities and ceremonies (kriyā) giving (pradām)

karmic --i.e. related to 'karma' or action-- (karma) rewards (phala) (such as) a (good) birth (janma)"

Full of desires, having heaven as their goal, they utter flowery words, which promise new birth as the reward of their actions, and prescribe various specific actions for the attainment of pleasure and Lordship.

#2-44

भोगैश्वर्यप्रसक्तानां तयापहृतचेतसाम्।

व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिः समाधौ न विधीयते॥४४॥

Bhogaiśvaryaprasaktānām tayāpahṛtacetasām|

Vyavasāyātmikā buddhiḥ samādhau na vidhīyate

"For the ones who are attached (prasaktānām) to pleasures (bhoga) (and) power (aiśvarya), (and) whose minds (cetasām) have been taken away or stolen (apahṛta), (as it were), by that (path) --viz. by the ignorant course of action described in the previous stanza-- (tayā), an intelligence (buddhiḥ) whose essence (ātmikā) (is) strenuous effort and settled determination (vyavasāya) is not (na) produced (vidhīyate) in Samādhi or Perfect Concentration (samādhau)"

For, those who cling to joy and Lordship, whose minds are drawn away by such teaching, are neither determinate and resolute nor are they fit for steady meditation and SAMADHI.

Commentary by Swami Venkateshanandaji, "'Veda' means 'knowledge'. The vedā prescribe certain actions calculated to lead us to heaven. In modern parlance, even 'science' can be included here. Does not science promise to bring heaven on to earth? All these may be noble professions. But an element of our personality which neither science nor ritualistic religion is able to keep in check, destroys what they build. That is desire which is the cause of sorrow. We do not want to bring heaven to earth nor do we want to go to a heaven from here. We should liberate ourselves from sorrow inherent in birth and death.

"Kṛṣṇa has given a clear psychological picture of our life here. We are all goaded in our activity only by these two: lust for pleasure and lust for power. Everyone wants to become Īśvara or God (as the word aiśvaryaprasakta in verse forty-four implies), even with powers to create (e.g., the scientist who wants to create the living cell), to protect (every father feels he is protecting the family) and to destroy. Though it is not openly admitted for fear of blasphemy, such desire is there in our hearts. Man has intelligence and also free-will. If the former is overwhelmed by desire, he is left with mere free-will goaded by base instincts. When lust usurps the throne and dethrones wisdom, free-will follows. Yoga is beyond the reach of such a one."

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 36

Now we enter a discussion about the theory which underlies all Yoga practice.

Each of us are apparently two. We say apparently because one of the "two" is unreal, of the nature of confusion. "I am" is always true, and yet we have these ideas, "I am black, red or white", "I am a woman or a man", "I am an engineer, a student..." etc. All of these

are confused ideas of "me". As we have been told so far "I am" is eternal soul, apparently entering these bodies but ultimately unaffected by the play of action in the world.

How can we know this? With inner study and outer practice, peeling away all that is attachment to the unreal and therefore coming to the Self alone, our reality.

Each of us experience two voices inside. One is of the Highest Light, the God-centered voice inside, and the other is the lowest, the ego-centered voice. How can we know this? Look at your thoughts. I share the example of the experience each of us have when coming upon a piece of trash while we walk. We all experience the divine voice manifesting in us as the idea "pick it up". This voice is pure and is rooted in "do good", our true nature. Then the conflicting voice comes, "some bad person left it, why should I pick it up?", or "I might get a disease from it", or "I might be terribly inconvenienced having to carry this for a long way", etc. This is the drama voice, the ego idea of who "I am"... the body! This is a great confusion, for you are not the body, you have never been this body. You have one, but you are not it.

So, every moment, with every decision that we are to make, there are these two directly opposed voices. This is the battleground then, our very soul. What do we choose? Well, the highest light leads us to happiness and the lowest to more suffering. This is our life lesson.

Yoga, all of Yoga practice, is about turning up the Divine voice and turning down the ego centered voice, until finally we can take control of our life from the ego and find the real life, free of anger, stress, fear, greed, etc. This is the real Yoga. Understanding the gunas, the three attributes (we can consider them to be energetic) underlying all of manifest nature (including our thoughts) is essential to understanding how to life ourselves out of the mire of the mundane life into union with the loving Divine inside us. This is happiness, what we seek, and it is your own true nature. Uncover it and it is yours.

So, let us continue now, as the Lord teaches us about Yoga...

#4-45

त्रैगुण्यविषया वेदा निस्त्रैगुण्यो भवार्जुन।

निर्द्वन्द्वो नित्यसत्त्वस्थो निर्योगक्षेम आत्मवान्॥४५॥

Traiguṇyaviṣayā vedā nistraiguṇyo bhavārjuna|  
Nirdvandvo nityasattvastho niryogakṣema ātmavān

"The Veda-s (vedāḥ) deal with the subject matter (viṣayāḥ) of the three qualities (of Prakṛti) (traiguṇya). Oh Arjuna (arjuna), become (bhava) one who is destitute of (those) three qualities (nis-traiguṇyaḥ), who is indifferent to the pairs of opposites (nir-dvandvaḥ), who always (nitya) abides (sthaḥ) in purity (sattva), who is free from care or anxiety about acquisition or possession (nir-yoga-kṣemaḥ) (and) who is fully conscious of his Self (ātmavān)"

The VEDAS deal with the three attributes; be you above these three attributes (GUNAS) , O Arjuna, free yourself from the pairs-of-opposites, and ever remain in the SATTWA (goodness) , freed from all thoughts of acquisition and preservation, and be established in the Self.

#4-46

यावानर्थ उदपाने सर्वतः सम्प्लुतोदके।

तावान्सर्वेषु वेदेषु ब्राह्मणस्य विजानतः ॥४६॥

Yāvānārtha udapāne sarvataḥ samplutodake|

Tāvānsarveṣu vedeṣu brāhmaṇasya vijānataḥ

"For a sage (vijānataḥ) who knows Brahma (brāhmaṇasya), all (sarveṣu) Veda-s (vedeṣu) (are of) as much use as (yāvān artha... tāvān) (is that of) a well (udapāne) (in a place) flooded with water (sampluta-udake) from all sides (sarvatas)"

To the BRAHMANA who has known the Self, all the VEDAS are of so much use, as is a reservoir of water in a place where there is flood everywhere.

Commentary from Swami Venkateshananda, "These two are tricky verses! The vedā (the ancient scriptures and the modern scientific scriptures, too!) deal with the created universe. We should go beyond them, i.e., the three qualities of nature (inertia <Tamas>, dynamism <Rajas> and goodness <Sattva>). But, Kṛṣṇa wants us 'ever to remain in the quality of goodness'! That is: be above even that, but now, of your own choice and not out of compulsion, be good. Do not treat goodness as a passport to heaven or as a testimonial needed for a good living, or even as a sound policy, but as something you wish to be and to do, because evil is foolish and dangerous.

"The second verse has a double-meaning! The universe and the scriptures dealing with it are of no use to the sage of self-realisation.

"Or: Do we not find that in a place flooded by water, we cannot use it for drinking? A reservoir is still useful, and has its limited use. Even so, the sage of self-realisation would still use the vedā and modern science in their own limited spheres of utility, realising that self-realisation is infinitely superior to these. He is carefree for he has no desires. He is not anxious to acquire anything in particular nor to preserve what he has. Where is the good in clinging to passing shadows? He holds, without a sense of possession! If you abandon all care concerning yogakṣema (acquisition and preservation – material welfare), and if you are totally devoted to God, he takes care of you! (cf IX:22)."

### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 37

And now blessed friends we come to the concept of surrender. We keep saying, "I give up" when things do not go our way, but honestly we always give up the wrong thing. "I'll not try anymore" we say, and then perhaps we pout and go on a holiday. Or we turn away from whatever it is that we wanted, only to bury the desire so that it will remain with us until dealt with.

Truth be told all of our frustration with our "life" has to do with results which are not in alignment with our expectations and desires. Anger and rage comes from this, as does disappointment, even fear is rooted here. "I might not get what I want" we think, as if it will be a terrible result if we do not. And yet do we really know what we need? What huge egos we have, always we walk around with the embedded "I" idea... that we know what will lead us towards the happiness we seek! Has it worked yet? Have we yet found the forever bliss that we seek?

The Lord tells us here very clearly about our role in this world. We have the right to do, in fact we must do. Results? These are the domain of the universal Divine. And as long as we refuse to gratefully accept whatever is given to us after we try our best to perform our duty how can we be happy? How can we learn the way to Peace if we are unwilling to fully accept our gifts from the wondrous and ineffable Lord? And who are we not to do when there is so much opportunity to be of service within this beautiful world?:

#2-47

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन।

मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि॥४७॥

Karmaṇyevādhikāraṣte mā phaleṣu kadācana|

Mā karmaphalaheturbhūrmā te saṅgo'stvakarmaṇi

"Your (te) right (adhikārah) (is) for action (karmaṇi) alone (eva), (but) never (mā... kadācana) for (its) fruits (phaleṣu). Do not (mā) become (bhūh) the cause (hetuḥ) of the fruit (phala) of an action (karma), (and let) attachment (saṅgaḥ) to inaction (akarmaṇi) not be (mā... astu) yours (te) (either)!"

Translation, "Thy right is to work only, but never to its fruits; let not the fruit-of-action be thy motive, nor let thy attachment be to inaction."

A beautiful commentary by Swami Venkateshananda, "This is the central teaching of the Bhagavad Gītā. Its many shades are dealt with in several other verses, but here it is good to stress a factor often ignored.

"'Thy right is to work only' implies that we have a right to work and to do, a right which we should exercise. This sentence is often read with the emphasis on 'only', but every word deserves emphasis and every emphasis will reveal a new interpretation! Karma will create the necessary circumstances around us and bestow on us the rewards of our own past actions. But, in those circumstances and with those rewards, we yet enjoy the freedom to work and to do what we care to. We are not asked to surrender this right, but to exercise it and thus not to 'let thy attachment be to inaction'.

'Not to the fruits thereof' implies that there is someone else in charge of the reward – God. ('Reward' is euphemism for a 'future event'.) Leave it to him. This is not slavementality or fatalism. It is joyous participation in his plan. Joyous participation brushes aside ideas like: 'Is God a capricious being who will visit us with pain though we do everything selflessly?' The joy of doing what we can and should is itself the greatest and immediate reward. On the contrary, it is the man of hope who always suffers, even from the fear of the hope not being capable of realisation!

"'I do not long even for the fruits of dharma is my nature. He who wants to milk the cow of dharma for his own pleasure, does not get it!'—Yudhiṣṭhira, in the Mahābhārata."

What a joy it is to serve without having to expect a particular result, without the judgement that one result is good and another bad, that somehow we have failed. If we genuinely do our best in the moment how is it that we might have failed? It is impossible. What a relief to live in alignment with this truth!

Yesterday's discussion about performing action without expectation of a particular result, and acceptance of whatever result comes, will commonly seem so perplexing. It is a perspective that we do not often see or hear about. So, the natural question would be, "If we are not to perform work in expectation of a specific fruit, then how are we to perform it?"

Now the Lord addresses this wonderful question, and for the first time gives us a beautifully precise definition of the word "Yoga":

#2-48

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय।

सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते॥४८॥

Yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgaṁ tyaktvā dhanañjaya|  
Siddhyasiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvaṁ yoga ucyate

"Established (sthaḥ) in Yoga (yoga), do (kuru) actions (karmāṇi) by abandoning (tyaktvā) attachment (saṅgaṁ) (and) remaining equable (samaḥ bhūtvā) in (the middle of) success and failure (siddhi-asiddhyoḥ), oh winner of wealth (dhanañjaya)1. (Such an) equanimity (samatvam) is known as (ucyate) Yoga (yogaḥ)"

Translation, "Perform action, O Dhananjaya, abandoning attachment, being steadfast in YOGA, and balanced in success and failure. Evenness of mind is called YOGA."

Commentary from Swami Chinmayananda, "From this stanza onwards we have an exhaustive discussion of the technique of Karma Yoga as conceived by Krishna in his Doctrine of Action and expounded in Vyasa's Geeta. A complete technique of how one can live the life of a truly inspired worker is explained here, and, to any careful student, who understands all the implications of the terms, it must be clear that a complete effacement of the ego and its vanities is to be achieved to succeed in this Path; and this is gained by practising the equipoise mentioned in the previous stanzas.

"In this stanza, for the first time, the term Yoga has been used in the sense of the "evenness of mind" through work, and before it concludes, we also get an exhaustive definition of the term Yoga as used in the stanza.

"'Evenness of mind,' the tranquillity of mental composure, in facing all pairs-of-opposites is defined here as Yoga. Defined thus, the term Yoga, indicates a special condition of the mind in which it comes to a neutral equilibrium in all the ebb and flow of life's tides. The instructions in the stanza advise us that desireless action can be performed only when one gets completely established in Yoga; here the terms precisely paint what Vyasa's definition means.

"Not only is it sufficient that a true worker should act in the world, established in equipoise and equanimity, but he should, amidst the changes of the world, also reinforce this poise, through a renunciation of his "attachment" (Sanga) to the immediate fruits of his actions.

"We shall try to enquire into the "attachment," mentioned here, which a seeker should renounce, so that he may become more efficient in performing inspired activities. To all sincere students, who have so far followed the Lord's words, it should be clear that "attachment" here means all factors against which Krishna has already warned us in the earlier stanzas and insisted that we must renounce them all --- viz., wrong imaginations,



false expectations, day-dreams about the fruits of actions, anxieties for the results, and fears for future calamities that have not yet appeared to threaten our lives. When it is put thus as a list of mistakes to be avoided, any true Karma Yogin, striving upon the Path of Yoga, will find it impossible to practise it. But when we analyse this further with our understanding of the Upanishads, we can easily solve the riddle.

"All the above nerve-racking mistakes belong to the delusory ego-centre. When we analyse closely the stuff of which the ego is made we can easily find that it is a bundle of 'MEMORIES OF THE PAST AND HOPES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR THE FUTURE.' The dead moments, that are no more, constitute the past. The future is unborn, and does not yet belong to us. To live in the ego, therefore, is to live either in the burial grounds of dead moments, or in the womb of time where the unborn future now rests. In all these pre-occupations, we lose the immediate moments given to us to act, to strive, to earn, and to achieve. It is this unintelligent squandering of the wealth of present chances, through our broodings and imaginations, that is hinted at here by the genius of Vyasa when he says, "Act, established in equanimity, abandoning attachment."

"Thus, in complete self-forgetfulness, to get intoxicated with the activities undertaken in the present, is to live vitally, fully and entirely with all the best that is in us. To dissolve ourselves thus --- our past, our future, our hopes, our fears --- into the fiery contents of the PRESENT is to work in inspiration. And inspired work ever promises the greatest returns.

"An artist, who is at work, forgetting himself in the very ecstasy of his work, is an example. One need not, for that matter, be a great artist even. One who is working interestedly with all his mind and intellect on any piece of work will not be aware, immediately, of any chance intruder. It will take time for the artist to come down from the realms of his joyous mood to the crystallisation of the ego in him to recognise the intruder, understand his enquiry and give him an intelligent answer. In all inspired activity, the worker forgets himself in the work that he is doing.

"In all such activities, when the worker has gained almost a self-forgetfulness, he will not care for the success or failure of his activity because, to worry for the results is to worry for the future, and to live in the future is not to live in the present. Inspiration is the joyous content of thrilled ecstasy of each immediate moment. It is said that this content of a moment in itself is "the entire Infinite Bliss."

"Established thus in equanimity, renouncing all egocentric- attachments, forgetting to worry over the results of success or failure in the activities, act on," --- says, in effect, Krishna to Arjuna; and he adds that the great Yoga is to work thus with equipoise in all situations."

### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 39

We think that this world is all about results, and yet no result has ever brought a single person enduring happiness!

Please consider this, the statement is completely true. Does this mean that happiness does not exist? Not at all, it means what it says. No result has ever brought lasting happiness. It is rather HOW and WHY the effort is made that brings what one longs for, not the result. Now the Lord speaks His wisdom about this observation. This following can

seem obtuse, circular, but it is not. I pray that you will take some time to contemplate this one, for it is critically important in our quest.

#2-49

दूरेण ह्यवरं कर्म बुद्धियोगाद्धनञ्जय।

बुद्धौ शरणमन्विच्छ कृपणाः फलहेतवः॥४९॥

Dūreṇa hyavarāṁ karma buddhiyogāddhanañjaya|  
Buddhau śaraṇamanviccha kṛpaṇāḥ phalaHetavaḥ

"Undoubtedly (hi), action (karma) (is) by far (dūreṇa) inferior (avaram) to Yoga (yogāt) of intelligence (buddhi), oh winner of wealth (dhanañjaya)1. (Therefore,) seek (anviccha) refuge (śaraṇam) in buddhi or intelligence (buddhau). Miserable and pitiable (kṛpaṇāḥ) (are those who) have fruits or results (phala) for their motive (hetavaḥ) (to perform actions)"

Translation, "Far lower than the YOGA -of-wisdom is action, O Dhananjaya. Seek thou refuge in wisdom; wretched are they whose motive is the 'fruit.'"

#2-50

बुद्धियुक्तो जहातीह उभे सुकृतदुष्कृते।

तस्माद्योगाय युज्यस्व योगः कर्मसु कौशलम्॥५०॥

Buddhiyukto jahātiha ubhe sukr̥taduṣkr̥te|  
Tasmādyogāya yujyasva yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam

"The one who is devoted (yuktah) to buddhi or intelligence (buddhi) abandons (jahāti) here (iha) both (ubhe) good and bad deeds (sukṛta-duṣkr̥te). For that reason (tasmāt), make ready (yujyasva) for Yoga (yogāya), (since) Yoga (yogaḥ) (is) skillfulness (kauśalam) regarding actions (karmasu)"

Translation, "Endowed with the Wisdom of evenness-of-mind, one casts off in this life both good deeds and evil deeds; therefore, devote yourself to YOGA, Skill in action is YOGA."

Commentary from Swami Chinmayananda, "One who has an evenness of temper accomplished by his perfect withdrawal from the realm of sentiments and emotions, and who is established in his resolute intellect, gets himself transported from the arena of both the good and the bad, merit and de-merit. The conception of good and bad is essentially of the mind, and the reactions of merit and de-merit are left on the mental composition in the form of Vasanas or samskaras. He, who is not identifying with the stormy sea of the mind, will not be thrown up or sunk down by the huge waves of Vasanas. This idea is explained here by the term Buddhi yuktaḥ: one whose actions are all guided by his clear vision of his higher and divine Goal.

"The Geeta, throughout this section, is sincerely calling upon man not to live on the outskirts of his personality, which are constituted of the worlds of sense-objects, the physical body and the mind, but to enter into the realm of the intellect, and from there to assert his innate wisdom. Man is the supreme creature in the kingdom of the living, because of the rational capacities of his discriminative intellect. As long as man does not utilise this special equipment in him, so long he cannot claim his heritage as man.

"Arjuna was asked by Krishna not to be a vain and hysterical person, but to be a he-man and, therefore, ever a master of all his external situations. The great hero, Arjuna, became so frail and weak because he started living in delusory identification with the sense of his own physical security and with his various emotional attachments.

"He who lives constantly asserting his full evolutionary status as man, becomes free from the chains and bondages of all his past impressions (vasanas), which he must have gathered in his pilgrimage through his different embodiments.

""Therefore, apply yourself," advises Krishna, "to the devotion of action, Yoga." In this context, again, Vyasa is giving a definition of Yoga, as he means it here. Earlier, he had already explained that "Evenness of mind is Yoga." Now he re-writes the same definition more comprehensively and says, "Yoga is dexterity in action."

"In a science-book, if the very same term is defined differently in every chapter, it would bring about confusion in its understanding. How is it then that in the Science of Religion, we find different definitions of the same term? This riddle solves itself as soon as we carefully attempt an intimate understanding of the definition. The earlier definition is being incorporated in the latter one, because, otherwise, "evenness of mind is Yoga" may be misunderstood as a mere 'evenness of mind' producing inaction and slothfulness. In this definition such a misunderstanding is completely removed, and thus Karma Yoga, as indicated in the all-comprehensive meaning implied herein, indicates the art of working with perfect mental equilibrium in all the different conditions indicated by the term "pairs-of-opposites" (Dwandwas).

"After dissecting this stanza thus, we come to understand what exactly is the Lord's intention. When Yoga, "the art of working without desire," is pursued, the Karma Yogin becomes detached from all the existing vasanas in himself, both good and bad. The vasana-pressure in the individual causes restlessness within. The inner-equipment that has become peaceful and serene is called the pure Antah- Karana, which is an unavoidable prerequisite for consistent, discriminative self-application in meditation. Thus all actions, when properly pursued, become means for the ultimate end of realising the Self through meditation, with a pure mind."

#### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 40

Continuing along with the teaching of yesterday's discussion about our craving for results. We are being told that this craving is exactly what prevents us from having the only result we really want... Happiness! Yesterdays and this sloka today are worth some persistent contemplation; I pray that you will take this away and take some time with these beautiful commentaries. Let's continue.

#2-51

कर्मजं बुद्धियुक्ता हि फलं त्यक्त्वा मनीषिणः।

जन्मबन्धविनिर्मुक्ताः पदं गच्छन्त्यनामयम्॥५१॥

Karmajam buddhiyuktā hi phalam tyaktvā manīṣiṇaḥ|  
Janmabandhaviniirmuktāḥ padam gacchantyanāmayam

"The wise (manīṣinah) who are certainly devoted (yuktāḥ hi) to buddhi or intelligence (buddhi), by abandoning (tyaktvā) the fruit or result (phalam) produced (jam) from the actions (karma), are completely free (vinirmuktāḥ) from bondage (bandha) of birth (janma) (and) move on (gacchanti) to a condition (padam) devoid of disease (anāmayam)"

Translation, "The wise, possessed of knowledge, having abandoned the fruits of their actions, freed from the fetters of birth, go to the State which is beyond all evil."

Commentary from Swami Venkateshananda, "In this and the last few verses has been compressed food for years of contemplation. Yoga is balanced state of mind; yoga is skill in action; yoga is renunciation of the fruits of action; yoga is uniting the buddhi (intellect) with God. A one-sided approach lands a pseudoyogi (one focused only on mystical practices but not the Yamas and Niyamas nor selfless service, devotion etc) in a ditch. To justify his failure in the daily battle of life, he invents a fictitious line of demarcation between mundane life and divine life! Kṛṣṇa's promise is not of a distant paradise to be reached through vales of tears, but freedom from grief here and now.

"The yogi must be discriminative and wise. He must be calm and clever. He must be desireless and dexterous. He must be selfless and sensible. He must be a practical idealist! He must be a blend of the best of both the worlds! For it is the omniscient, omnipotent God whose will works through him; and even as every cell in our body shares the life of the whole body, the little finite man lives in tune with the infinite, happy and blissful here, now and forever.

"The fetters were forged by ignorance. Buddhi yoga (again he is saying 'uniting the intellect with God') loosens them. The free yogi soars into the region of eternal light. Evil, pain, grief, delusion and all the negative fancies of his world-dreaming life disappear. To the enlightened, there is no evil; to even the smallest candle there is no darkness. The enlightened one is totally free from evil in himself; and he does not see evil in others – the 'others' are his own self! He is no longer bound by birth, even if he, to fulfil the Lord's mission, is reborn here. He is never tainted by sin nor is he harassed by rain; they do not exist for him. He is a step higher than the yogi mentioned under verse sixteen."

A beautiful and enlightened commentary by Swamiji, please do read it again, perhaps a few times, and let it soak in.

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 41

We continue the discussion about the intellect, and the Yoga of bringing our intellect to the Divine Truth. We can identify four functions of the mind; 1) ego, or the self-aggregating principle (the idea that "I" am incomplete and need to add something to me), 2) instinct, or the storehouse of memories of all of our experiences in extraordinary detail including our judgments of them (are there pleasurable or painful along with degrees of either), 3) intellect, or the power of discrimination and reasoning and 4) superconsciousness, or the pure intuitive Self.

Instinct pulls us towards the objects with the mistaken idea that living life in pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain will somehow result in happiness. This is our fatal error, for this can never be so. Intellect allows us to determine this, to observe both the lower nature (self) and highest nature (Self) inside us, and it can then lead us to surrender to the Self. This is of course not easy but it is the goal of our life, for we never give up on our

pursuit of happiness and this is the only way to find it as it is the province of our Divine Self, or God, alone. Moving forward, the Lord is telling us how -

#2-52

यदा ते मोहकलिलं बुद्धिर्व्यतितरिष्यति।

तदा गन्तासि निर्वेदं श्रोतव्यस्य श्रुतस्य च॥५२॥

Yadā te mohakalilam buddhirvyatitariṣyati|

Tadā gantāsi nirvedam śrotavyasya śrutasya ca

"When (yadā) your (te) intelligence (buddhiḥ) will pass completely across (vyatitariṣyati) the thicket (kalilam) of delusion (moha), then (tadā) you will get to a state of indifference (gantāsi nirvedam) to what must be heard (śrotavyasya) and (ca) what has been heard (śrutasya)"

Translation, "When your intellect crosses beyond the mire of delusion, then you shall attain to indifference as to what has been heard and what is yet to be heard."

#2-53

श्रुतिविप्रतिपन्ना ते यदा स्थास्यति निश्चला।

समाधावचला बुद्धिस्तदा योगमवाप्स्यसि॥५३॥

Śrutivipratipannā te yadā sthāsyati niścalā|

Samādhāvachalā buddhistadā yogamavāpsyasi

"When (yadā) your (te) intelligence (buddhiḥ), which is (currently) perplexed and confounded (vipratipannā) by what is heard in the Veda-s (śruti), will remain (sthāsyati) fixed (niścalā) (and) immovable (acalā) in Samādhi or Perfect Concentration (samādhau), then (tadā) you will attain (avāpsyasi) Yoga or Union (yogam)"

Translated, "When your intellect, though perplexed by what you have heard, shall stand immovable and steady in the Self, then you shall attain Self-realisation."

Please reflect on this beautiful and concise commentary by Swami Venkateshananda describing the way to Yoga, or union, "The mind is filled with wrong thought-forms – the traditions, dogmas, preconceived ideas, prejudices – all from the dead past. We have dead, crystallised and fossilised ideas of good and evil. We want to do what is regarded as good, at least to win the favour of society! Completely unselfish, desireless or egoless spontaneous action is, therefore, meaningless to us!

"This delusion will not disappear when we utter a magic formula. We hear the truth from the great ones, and then hear it again and again. (Reading is a form of hearing through the eyes!) As truth slowly sinks in, delusion gets shaken.

"But what is heard does not produce yoga any more than removing the bandage from your eyes creates the sun in the sky! As the Zen Buddhists, in particular, believe: truth shines as a flash of lightning of its own accord, not in response to any action on our part. When the mind is 'shocked' by the understanding that all the thoughts entertained so far were false and others which may arise now and later are equally false, it is perplexed and becomes still. That stillness is samādhi. That is yoga. There is no more need to hear.

"The young girl buys a number of books on obstetrics. She has read a few. A few are still on the shelf. In the meantime, she has a baby. She knows now. There is no need to read those books!"

Indeed.

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 42

Now after this great teaching from the Lord about the state of Yoga being reached through placing the intellect at the feet of the Lord Arjuna asks THE question, a question that all of us that consciously consider the spiritual path ask. "Will I still have a life if I follow your teaching?" Let's continue our study here.

#2-54

अर्जुन उवाच

स्थितप्रज्ञस्य का भाषा समाधिस्थस्य केशव।

स्थितधीः किं प्रभाषेत किमासीत् ब्रजेत किम्॥५४॥

Arjuna uvāca

Sthitaprajñasya kā bhāṣā samādhisthasya keśava|

Sthitadhīḥ kiṁ prabhāṣeta kimāsīt vrajeta kim

Arjuna (arjunah) said (uvāca):

"Oh, long-haired One (keśava)<sup>1</sup>, what (kā) (is) the description (bhāṣā) of one who is established in wisdom (sthita-prajñasya), viz. of one who (constantly) remains (sthasya) in Samādhī or Perfect Concentration (samādhī)? How (kim) (does such a) steady-minded one (sthita-dhīḥ) speak (prabhāṣeta)? How (kim) (does) he sit (āsīta)? How (kim) (does) he move (vrajeta)?"

Translation, "Arjuna said: 54. What, O Keshava, is the description of him who has steady Wisdom and who is merged in the Superconscious state? How does one of steady Wisdom speak, how does he sit, how does he walk?"

Now an important commentary by Swami Chinmayananda, "In the last two stanzas the discussion naturally turned towards the Ultimate Goal which a Karma Yogin reaches when he has, with evenness-of-mind, perfected the "technique of work."

"The idea seems to be quite appealing and the theory, indeed, logical. There is a ring of conviction in it, when the theory comes from the mouth of Lord Krishna. Arjuna has such a mental constitution that Karma Yoga appeals to him the most. The grief-stricken hero of the first chapter has forgotten his hysteria and has now come to take an active interest in the discussion. As a practical man, he is afraid as to whether, after gaining this great Goal of Life through Buddhi yoga, he will be able to live so vigorously in the world outside.

Looking from the Vedic usage of the term, one is apt to misunderstand that the perfected Yogin, who has come to rediscover the Self, lives exclusively in a world of his own. The description of the Upanishads can give a novice the notion that a Perfected Sage is ill-fitted to live in the world. Arjuna, as a child of the age of hatred and diplomacy, was curious to know fully the condition of the Perfected Master before he actually accepted the theory and tried to live it. His anxiety to know the entire Truth is clearly shown here in his



very questions upon such non-essentials as, 'How does he speak,' 'how will he sit,' 'how will he walk,' etc.

"These questions must be considered quite appropriate and dramatic, when they come from one who had been, till then, a patient of hysteria. Again, the first-half of the stanza demands a description of a Man-of-Steady-Wisdom while in Samadhi, that is, with regard to his inner life, and the second half is asking for a description of how such a Master will act in the world outside.

"Arjuna is asking a forked question: (a) a description of the state of mind in a man-of-realisation merged in Self experience and, (b) an explanation as to how that experience will influence his actions in the outer world, when he emerges from that Transcendental experience. In this stanza and the following section, "Man-of-Steady-Wisdom" (Sthita-Prajna), means one who has, through direct realisation, come to experience and live his Godly Self."

Thank you dear brothers and sisters for your contemplation of this question and the commentary. We will shortly move on to the Lord's beautiful answer.

### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 43

And now the Lord answers THE question.

#2-55

श्रीभगवानुवाच

प्रजहाति यदा कामान्सर्वान्पार्थ मनोगतान्।

आत्मन्येवात्मना तुष्टः स्थितप्रज्ञस्तदोच्यते॥५५॥

Śrībhagavān uvāca

Prajahāti yadā kāmānsarvānpārtha manogatān|

Ātmanyevātmanā tuṣṭaḥ sthitaprajñastadocyate

Venerable (śrī) Bhagavān (bhagavān) said (uvāca):

"Oh son of Prthā (pārtha), when (yadā) (someone) abandons (prajahāti) all (sarvān) desires (kāmān) residing (gatān) in (his) mind (manas), (and) remains satisfied (tuṣṭaḥ) in the Self (ātmani) alone (eva) by means of the Self (ātmanā), then (tadā) he is said to be (ucyate) a sthitaprajña or one who is established in wisdom (sthita-prajñaḥ)"

Translation, "The Blessed Lord said: When a man completely casts off, O Partha, all the desires of the mind, and is satisfied in the Self by the Self, then is he said to be one of steady Wisdom."

Commentary by Swami Venkateshananda, "To the modern man, thoroughly prejudiced by the psychologist's emphatic declarations that an action invariably springs from a desire (almost always selfish) and a personal motive, the Gītā-ideal is incomprehensible. The biologist, in his study of the behaviour of an individual cell, often forgets that it is governed by the over-all life of the whole organism. It is the life and activity of the total organism that motivate the life and activity of the single cell. Man is part of a whole. Cosmic consciousness expresses itself in cosmic life. Man himself is a cell in the body of God. When personal and selfish desires pull him in a direction away from that of the divine will,

he experiences pain. If he lives in tune with the divine will, he is free from pain and he enjoys a sense of fulfilment, since he consciously desires the divine will and is thus saved from frustration which would be inevitable if he desired the contrary.

"Desirelessness or indifference to the result of action should not make us callous. Often people cover up their inefficiency with 'See, I am not bothered about the outcome'. If you did not do it well, then you deserve nothing but failure! Only if you did your best, and did your duty well, and then remained unconcerned about the result, have you understood the spirit of the Gītā. Surely one should learn to distinguish between 'natural desires or urges' like hunger, and 'desires of the mind' like craving for chocolate. When the 'desires of the mind' are cast off and the mind is relieved of selfish motives and desires, we joyously participate in the divine will, and, therefore, in supreme bliss or cosmic consciousness."

It is also worth noting here that the "steady Wisdom" is what is observed without in one that has arrived at union, or peace. Amazingly the noisy mind that is ruled by ego knows not wisdom and cannot speak it, but when the mind is quiet wisdom is the source for one's voice and actions. This simply and directly speaks to your true nature. You are neither body nor thought, you are essence Divine. When one brings the mind to equanimity, detached from any outcome or judgement, the eternal Wisdom takes the controls for the body-mind instrument.

#### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 44

The Lord continues with the answer of THE question, it was of two parts. Arjuna had asked the Lord to tell him about the sage of steady wisdom, the one who resides in Yoga, he wants to know both how he behaves and what is the inner experience. Now the Lord speaks of the inner state. Please see Lesson 42 for a reminder of the question.

#2-56

दुःखेष्वनुद्विग्नमनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः।  
वीतरागभयक्रोधः स्थितधीर्मुनिरुच्यते॥५६॥

Duḥkheṣvanudvignamanāḥ sukheṣu vigataspr̥haḥ|  
Vītarāgabhayakrodhaḥ sthitadhīr munirucyate

"He is said to be (ucyate) a sage (muniḥ) or steady-minded one (sthita-dhīḥ) who is devoid (vīta) from attachment (rāga), fear (bhaya), wrath (krodhaḥ), who is without any desire (vigata-spr̥haḥ) in the middle of pleasures (sukheṣu) (and) whose mind (manāḥ) remains free from anxiety and fright (anudvigna) in the midst of sorrows (duḥkheṣu)"

Translation, "He whose mind is not shaken by adversity, and who in prosperity does not hanker after pleasures, who is free from attachment, fear and anger, is called a Sage-of-Steady-Wisdom."

Commentary by Swami Venkateshananda, "This is a vital teaching of the Gītā, repeated by the Lord over and over for emphasis and clearer understanding. The yogi should greet pleasure and pain, prosperity and adversity and such pairs of inseparable (or complementary) opposites with unshakable equanimity. Obviously, he, too, becomes their target in due time, and he, too, is human enough to know what is what!

"He should also be free from 'attachment, fear and anger'. Rāga is inordinate liking. Bhaya is fear. Krodha is anger. These three are relative and depend entirely on our mental attitude or conditioning. The 'object' does not demand attachment, evoke fear or rouse us to anger. But our attitude generates these emotions.

"Our attitude is the product of the sum-total of our tendencies or the past impressions left in our mind by our own past actions and experiences. All people are not afraid of rats nor does everyone feel attracted by sweetmeats! The tendencies are different. However, these tendencies can be altered, slowly but steadily and surely. That is the purpose of yoga. We do not readily see the hidden springs of these tendencies in the subconscious. We are aware only of their peripheral manifestation in the consciousmind. When, through meditation, we quieten the conscious mind, the subconscious sources will be revealed.

"First sublimate these emotions. Be attached to God and a holy life, fear sinfulness, and be 'angry' with the veil of ignorance that hides the self. When thus the sensual tendencies are crushed, even these sublimated emotions will be merged in their own goal, which is God-realisation. We shall then shine as sthitaprajñā, sages of steady wisdom."

#### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 45

We continue with the answer to our question, "Please tell us how to recognize an enlightened one?" (or "what will it be like when I am enlightened?"). The Lord continues with the inner view.

#2-57

यः सर्वत्रानभिस्नेहस्तत्तत्प्राप्य शुभाशुभम्।

नाभिनन्दति न द्वेष्टि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥५७॥

Yaḥ sarvatrānabhisnehastattatprāpya śubhāśubham|

Nābhinandati na dveṣṭi tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā

"Wisdom (prajñā) is firmly established (pratiṣṭhitā) in the one (tasya) who (yaḥ) remains dispassionate --lit. without affection-- (anabhisnehaḥ) everywhere (sarvatra), (and who,) having obtained (prāpya) this (tad) which is pleasant (śubha) (and) that (tad) which is unpleasant (aśubham), neither (na) rejoices at (abhinandati) nor (na) shows hatred at (dveṣṭi), (respectively)"

Translation, "He who is everywhere without attachment, on meeting with anything good or bad, who neither rejoices nor hates, his Wisdom is fixed."

Commentary by Swami Chinmayananda, "An inspired artist, trying to express his idea on the canvas in the language of colour, will off and on stand back from his easel, and will again, with growing tenderness and love, approach the product of his art, to place a few more strokes with his brush; here Krishna, inspired by his own theme, is again and again choosing right words to add more light and shade to the picture-of-the-Perfect, the one which he was painting upon the heart-slab of his listener --- Arjuna.

"He who, without attachment, squarely meets life with all equanimity and poise, is one who is "established in Wisdom." Here also we have to understand the entire stanza as a whole, or else, there will be the danger of misinterpreting its true meaning. Mere detachment from the things of life is NOT the sign of perfection, nor of true discriminative

understanding. But many unintelligent enthusiasts actually desert their duties in life and run away, hoping that, since they have developed perfect detachment from the sensuous world, they will gain their "goal" in the quietude of the jungle. Arjuna himself had earlier stated that he would renounce the call of duty and the field of activity. By thus retiring into quietude, the Pandava-hero hoped to reach Perfection and Peace. To dissuade Arjuna from taking this calamitous step, Krishna started his discourse with a serious note in the second chapter.

"Detachment from suicidal affections and unintelligent tenderness cannot by itself take man to the higher realms of Divinity. Detachment from the world outside must equally be accompanied by a growing balance in ourselves to face all challenges in life --- 'auspicious' (Shubha) and 'inauspicious' (Ashubha) --- in perfect equipoise without either any uncontrolled rejoicing at the Shubha, or any aversion for the Ashubha experiences.

"A mere detachment in itself is not the way of perfect life, inasmuch as it is only a negative existence of constantly escaping from life. To live in ATTACHMENT is to live in slavery to the things of the world. But the Perfect One is he, who, with divine freedom, lives in the world, dexterously meeting both joys and sorrows which life may provide for him. In winter, to be out in the sun and lie basking in its rays is to enjoy its warmth and at the same time to suffer its glare. To complain of the glare is to bring sorrow into the very enjoyment of the warmth. One who is intelligent will either try to ignore the glare and enjoy the warmth fully, or shade off the glare and bask in the enjoyable warmth.

"Similarly, life, by its very nature, is a mixture of both good and bad, and to live ever adjusting ourselves --- avoiding the bad and striving to linger in the experience of the good --- is to live unintelligently. The Perfect-One experiences the best and the worst in life with equal detachment because he is ever established in THE TRUE AND THE ETERNAL, which is the very Self.

"In his question, Arjuna had enquired of Krishna, how a Perfect Master would speak. This stanza may be considered as an answer to it. Since the Perfect man-of-Wisdom neither feels any aversion to the sorrows nor rejoices in the joys of life, he neither compliments anything in the world, nor does he condemn anything. To him everything is wonderful. He sees things AS THEY ARE, uncoloured by his mental moods. Such a Perfect One is beyond all the known principles of behaviourism of Western psychology."

It should be clear here that the "wisdom" which is spoken of by the Lord is the Lord's own wisdom, the universal perspective and understanding of Self and world, of their relationship. This is not an intellectual knowing, it is intuitive, the Self knowing of the Self. What is discussed then is a transcending of common knowledge of "right" and "wrong".

#### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 46

The Lord continues this beautiful discourse, in answer to the GREAT QUESTION (see lesson 42), now guiding us into a deeper understanding of practices. Practices are, after all, how we live our life. To observe practices, for example the practice of Pranayama, or Mantra repetition, or the practice of Kindness, is to live life consciously, intentionally, and fully.

#2-58

यदा संहरते चायं कूर्मोऽङ्गानीव सर्वशः।

इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेभ्यस्तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता॥५८॥

Yadā saṁharate cāyaṁ kūrmo'ṅgānīva sarvaśaḥ|

Indriyāṇīndriyārthebhyastasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā

"And (ca) when (yadā) this (very person) (ayaṁ) withdraws (saṁharate) completely (sarvaśas) (his) senses (indriyāṇi) from the objects (arthebhyaḥ) of the senses (indriya), just as (iva) a tortoise (kūrmah) (withdraws or contracts its) limbs (aṅgāni), (then) his (tasya) wisdom (prajñā) is firmly established (pratiṣṭhitā)"

Translation, "When, like the tortoise which withdraws its limbs from all sides, he withdraws his senses from the sense-objects then his Wisdom becomes steady."

Commentary by Swami Venkateshanandaji, "This is a vital yoga practice which should be applied to our daily life. The tortoise is a slow-moving animal which is therefore most vulnerable to enemy attack. Yet God's wisdom has provided it with natural protective armour."

"Our spiritual progress or evolution is also very slow. All our life, all the way to spiritual perfection, we are extremely vulnerable to adverse influences. Unless we provide ourselves with a spiritual armour, we shall not reach the goal!"

"Our Master used to stress our spiritual need to have a background of thought which is our spiritual shell into which we can withdraw our limbs (the senses and the mind) whenever they are threatened by temptation or 'sneha'. (This word 'sneha' which usually means friendship or attachment, also means glue!) Before we get stuck in the world, we should withdraw our free 'limbs' into this 'shell,' into this background of thought."

"The best way to build this shell is thus: have a mantra (a name of God) and a mental image of God. Repeat this mantra constantly and also visualise the image of God as much as you can. This must be done specially and intensely in the morning and at bedtime. The meditation-current must be generated then; the armour must be 'built inside' then. Even without any provocation, we should withdraw the mind into that shell whenever the mind is not actually occupied in essential activity so that the mind is never idle and is therefore not vulnerable. Especially when we are subject to temptation, we should immediately and intensely repeat the mantra and contemplate on God so that the mind is protected by the spiritual armour – the background of thought."

This practice, Mantra repetition (japa) is indeed a great spiritual practice and spiritual shield! If there is one practice that one consciously on "spiritual path" should take seriously it is this. This practice is an all-the-time practice, and it focuses the mind on the highest Light within in a way that very few do.

Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 47

Let's continue with the Lord's answer to this perfect question.

#2-59

विषया विनिवर्तन्ते निराहारस्य देहिनाः।

रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते॥५९॥

Viṣayā vinivartante nirāhārasya dehinaḥ|

Rasavarjaṁ raso'pyasya paraṁ dr̥ṣṭvā nivartate

"The objects (of the senses) (viṣayāḥ) turn back (vinivartante) from the embodied one (dehinaḥ) who is abstinent --lit. who abstains from food-- (nirāhārasya), with the exception of (varjam) (their --i.e. of the objects--) taste (rasa). (However,) even (api) the taste (rasaḥ) of this (food known as 'objects') (asya) departs (nivartate) after having seen (dr̥ṣṭvā) the highest (Reality) (param)"

Translation, "The objects of the senses turn away from the abstinent man leaving the longing (behind); but his longing also leaves him on seeing the Supreme."

Commentary from Swami Chinmayananda, "Without Pratyahara (or Uparati), we can observe cases wherein an individual comes to maintain sense withdrawal from the sense-objects due to some physical incapacity or due to some special mental mood of temporary sorrow or misery. In all those cases, though the sense-organs come to feel an aversion for the respective objects, their inclination for these objects merely remains dormant for the time being. Similarly, Arjuna doubts that, even in a Yogin, the capacity to withdraw from the temptations of the sense-world, may be temporary and that, under favourable or sufficiently tempting circumstances, they may again raise their hoods to hiss and to poison. His doubt is answered here.

"If you observe the flight of the objects of sensuousness from the shops to their customers, you can understand this point very clearly. They always reach only those who are courting them and are panting to possess them. The wine-cellars get emptied when the bottle "walkout" to replenish the side-boards of the drinkers! Ploughs made by the smithy are not purchased by artists and poets, doctors and advocates, but they must necessarily reach the homes of the farmers. Similarly, all sense-objects ultimately reach those who are courting them with burning desires. From one who is completely abstinent, sense-objects must necessarily get repelled.

"But even though the sense-objects may, temporarily, seem to turn away from him who is abstinent, the deep taste for them, ingrained in his mind, is very difficult to erase completely. Here Krishna, in his Supreme Wisdom, assures the seeker that these mental impressions of sensuous lives, lived in the past by the ego, from the beginning of creation to date, will all be totally erased, or at least made ineffective --- as roasted seeds --- when the seeker transcends the ego and comes to experience the Self.

"This is not very difficult to understand, since we know that the objects of sorrow and occasions of tragedy in one plane-of-consciousness are not available in another. The kingship that I enjoy in my dream, does not add even a jot to my dignity when I wake up to realise my insignificant existence; so too, my meagre existence in the waking-state will not debar me from the full kingly glory in my dreamkingdom!!

"Similarly, the ego, existing now through the waking, dream and deep-sleep states, has gathered to itself a dungheap of impressions, all purely sensuous. But these cannot be



effective when the same ego, transcending these three planes, comes to experience the plane of Godconsciousness."

Let's also add this closing comment from Swami Venkateshananda, who says that upon seeing the Supreme (the Self of all)... "The mind and even the senses will seek only God and rest in him. It is then that one becomes a true devotee, directing the functions of all his senses and mind towards the realisation of God's indwelling omnipresence. It is then that daily life becomes divine life." And then that all of one's activities are rooted in joy and happiness, and devoted to the benefit of all, with love of all.

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 48

Now the Lord will tell us more about the lower sense nature (ego centered self) and its tendencies, comparing this to the higher nature (divine Self) and guide us in our path of releasing our attachment to the lower nature-

#2-60

यततो ह्यपि कौन्तेय पुरुषस्य विपश्चितः।

इन्द्रियाणि प्रमाथीनि हरन्ति प्रसभं मनः॥६०॥

Yatato hyapi kaunteya puruṣasya vipaścitah|  
Indriyāṇi pramāthīni haranti prasabham manah|

"Oh son of Kuntī (kaunteya)<sup>1</sup>, no doubt (hi) that the harassing and shaking (pramāthīni) senses (indriyāṇi) violently (prasabham) carry off (haranti) even (api) the mind (manas) of a wise (vipaścitah) person (puruṣasya) who endeavors to reach (yatatah) (final liberation)"

Translation, "The turbulent senses, O son of Kunti, do violently carry away the mind of a wise-man, though he be striving (to control them)."

#2-61

तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत् मत्परः।

वशे हि यस्येन्द्रियाणि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता॥६१॥

Tāni sarvāṇi samyamya yukta āsīt matparaḥ|  
Vaśe hi yasyendriyāṇi tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā

"Having controlled (samyamya) all (sarvāṇi) those (tāni) (senses), the one who attained Yoga or Union (yuktaḥ) should remain (āsīt) devoted (paraḥ) to Me (mat), because (hi) is firmly established (pratiṣṭhitā) wisdom (prajñā) of the one (tasya) whose (yasya) senses (indriyāṇi) (are) under control (vaśe)"

Translation, "Having restrained them all, he should sit steadfast, intent on Me; his Wisdom is steady, whose senses are under control."

In his commentary Swami Chinmayanandaji speaks to this powerful formula for salvation (from our own self!) thus provided here by the Lord, "Since the sense-organs are thus the saboteurs in the Kingdom of the Spirit that bring the disastrous downfall of the Empire of the Soul, Arjuna is warned here that, as a seeker of Self-perfection, he should constantly struggle to control his sense-organs and their mad lustful wanderings in their respective

fields. Modern psychology would certainly look down with a squint-eye upon this Geeta theory, because, according to Freud and others, sensuousness is instinctive in man, and to curb it would lead to an unnatural suppression.

"According to the West, TO CONTROL is TO SUPPRESS, and no science of mental life can accept that suppression is psychologically healthy. But the Vedic theory is not pointing to any mental suppression at all. It is only advising an inward blossoming, an inner growth and development, by which one's earlier fields of enjoyments through the senses, drop out to make room for the perception of a newer field of ampler joys and more satisfying Bliss.

"This idea is very well brought out here, when Lord Krishna, as though in the very same breath, repeats both the negative and the positive aspects of the technique of Self-development. He advises not only a withdrawal from the unhealthy gutters of sensuousness, but he also gives the healthy method of doing so by explaining the positive technique of Self-perfection. Through a constant attempt at focussing our attention "ON ME, THE SUPREME," he advises the disciples to be steady.

"In this simple-looking statement of half-a-verse, the Geeta explains the entire technique of Self-development. Immoral impulses and unethical instincts, that bring a man down to the level of a mere brute, are the result of endless lives spent among sensuous objects, during the infinite number of different manifestations, through which the embodied soul, the ego in each one of us, had previously passed. It is humanly impossible for an individual to erase and transcend in his life-time, the thick coating of mental impressions gathered along his journey from life to life, from embodiment to embodiment. Naturally, this is the despair of all the promoters of ethics, the teachers of morality and the masters of spirituality.

"The Rishis of old, in their lived experience, discovered for themselves a technique, by which, all these mental tendencies could be eradicated. To expose the mind to the quiet atmosphere of meditation upon the All-perfect Being, is to heal its ulcers. By this process, one who has come to gain a complete mastery over his sense-organs, is considered as one who is 'steadfast-in-Wisdom.'

"The concealed suggestion in the stanza now becomes quite obvious; no one, who, with excessive force controls his Indriyas, by sheer strength of will and sense of abstinence, has any chance of flowering into a full-blown spiritual beauty. He who has all his sense-organs, of their own accord, lying tamely surrendered at his feet, who has come to re-discover the Infinite Perfection in himself, is called a man-of-Perfection. Neither has he ruined his instruments-of-cognition, nor has he closed down the arches-of-knowledge in him. A Perfect One is he whose sway over the animal in him is so complete that the inner Satan has become, for the Sage in him, a tame Caliban to run errands and serve faithfully."

I feel it important here to point out that the meditation discussed here is not what we think of in the west. This is not about simply sitting quietly and bringing the awareness inward, although this is a greatly beneficial practice. The seers, those that do see the Truth of this world, share with us that meditation is a state, not a practice, and that practices are inclusive and varied. The Yamas and Niyamas of Yoga are ethical and spiritual principles which must be observed in order to meditate, and when these are observed any life practice can be a practice of meditation if dedicated to the Self (instead of ego's cravings).

Finally universal Love and Meditation are one and the same. Love is the Self, when the Lord says "sit steadfast" He is speaking of the "sitting" which is internal, not just external. "Intent on Me" guides us to dedicate all of our actions, whether seated meditation practice or physical activity, or prayers/thoughts, or speech, to the highest Self, or Love, or Lord (all are names for the same) which is inside us and inside all.

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 49

Now the Lord speaks with us of our great challenge, how hard it is for us to live within the world without attachment to the idea that we are "of the world". Of course we are not, we are spirit. So why do we keep forgetting? And how can we remember? Please do read on.

#2-62

ध्यायतो विषयान्पुंसः सङ्गस्तेषूपजायते।

सङ्गात्सञ्जायते कामः कामात्क्रोधोऽभिजायते॥६२॥

Dhyāyato viṣayānpuṁsaḥ saṅgasteṣūpajāyate|  
Saṅgātsañjāyate kāmāḥ kāmātkrodho'bhijāyate

"For a person (puṁsaḥ) who thinks (dhyāyataḥ) of the objects (viṣayān), there arouses (upajāyate) attachment (saṅgaḥ) to them (teṣu). From attachment (saṅgāt), desire (kāmāḥ) is born (sañjāyate); from desire (kāmāt), wrath (krodhaḥ) is produced (abhijāyate)"

Translation, "When a man thinks of objects, "attachment" for them arises; from attachment "desire" is born; from desire arises "anger" . . ."

#2-63

क्रोधाद्भवति सम्मोहः सम्मोहात्स्मृतिविभ्रमः।

स्मृतिभ्रंशाद्बुद्धिनाशो बुद्धिनाशात्प्रणश्यति॥६३॥

Krodhādbhavati sammohaḥ sammohātsmṛtivyibhramāḥ|  
Smṛtibhraṁśādbuddhināśo buddhināśātpṛaṇasyati

"From wrath (krodhāt), complete delusion and bewilderment (sammohaḥ) comes into existence (bhavati); from complete delusion and bewilderment (sammohāt), confusion (vibhramāḥ) of memory (smṛti); from loss (bhraṁśāt) of memory (smṛti), the destruction (nāśaḥ) of intelligence (buddhi), (and) from the destruction (nāśāt) of intelligence (buddhi), (such a person) perishes (pṛaṇasyati)"

Translation, "From anger comes "delusion" ; from delusion "loss of memory" ; from loss of memory the "destruction of discrimination" ; from destruction of discrimination, he "perishes."

Commentary by Swami Venkateshananda, "This is somewhat parallel in construction to Arjuna's words in Chapter I, verses 40-42.

What are the 'steps to destruction' (anartha-parampara)? Arjuna had traced it from war to the destruction of traditional religion. Here, lord Kṛṣṇa points out that the trigger of self-destruction is within oneself. It is the very act of thinking! Self-willed and desire motivated

thinking leads man away from his own self. Going away from his own centre, the Self, he roams on the periphery of worldly life, and, like a rudderless ship on the stormy uncharted sea, wanders aimlessly, helplessly and hopelessly, till he 'destroys himself'. What can be more self-destructive than to miss the goal of human life, which is Self-realisation or to be established in the self?

"'Dhyāna' or contemplation is the channel by which the mind goes towards construction (integration or self-realisation) or destruction. When it thinks of the worldly objects, it takes the path to destruction. This thinking is an important idea. It can be positive or negative. The man who dislikes wine is thinking about it as much as the man who likes it! Failure to appreciate this thwarts the well-intentioned efforts of ascetics. Thought itself must be dropped, not by the suppression of thought – which is done by another thought – but by becoming aware of its root and source, which is the 'I' thought! The self is right 'next' to this. Enquiring into the self or God is meditation. 'Meditation' must be of God and this is possible if our stable value is God and only God, which implies the dropping away of every conditioning – for God is the unconditioned."

Construction, then, is not actually building something, it is rather realization of what is already there. And, in this case, the "there" is "here", in the center of each of us. All that we seek is "here".

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 50

The Lord continues to answer THE question about the nature of Peace, of one at Peace and attainment to that Peace.

#2-64

रागद्वेषविमुक्तैस्तु विषयानिन्द्रियैश्चरन्।  
आत्मवश्यैर्विधेयात्मा प्रसादमधिगच्छति॥६४॥

Rāgadveṣavimuktaistu viṣayānindriyaiścaran|  
Ātmavaśyairvidheyātmā prasādamadhiḡacchati

"However (tu), by eating (caran) the objects (viṣayān) through senses (indriyaiḥ) that are completely liberated (vimuktaiḥ) from attachment (rāga) (and) aversion (dveṣa), and under control (vaśyaiḥ) of Ātmā (ātma), the self-controlled one (vidheya-ātmā) obtains (adhiḡacchati) tranquility (prasādam)"

Translation, "But the self-controlled man, moving among objects, with his senses under restraint, and free from both attraction and repulsion, attains peace."

#2-65

प्रसादे सर्वदुःखानां हानिरस्योपजायते।  
प्रसन्नचेतसो ह्याशु बुद्धिः पर्यवतिष्ठते॥६५॥

Prasāde sarvaduhkhānāṁ hānirasyopajāyate|  
Prasannacetaso hyāśu buddhiḥ paryavatiṣṭhate

Translation, "In that peace all pains are destroyed; for, the intellect of the tranquil-minded soon becomes steady."

Commentary by Swami Chinmayananda, "It is natural for an Arjuna-mentality of uncompromising intellectualism to ask Krishna: "Then what?" And as an answer, the Lord explains why he should develop and maintain tranquillity of the mind in himself. "IN TRANQUILLITY ALL SORROWS ARE DESTROYED."

"This sentence is obviously commented upon as a definition of happiness. A peaceful mind is significant of happiness. PEACE IS HAPPINESS; HAPPINESS IS PEACE. The least-agitated mind is proof against all sorrows inasmuch as sorrow is nothing but a state of agitation in the mind.

"This explanation does not satisfy us completely since Krishna's assertion is that 'sorrows will be destroyed' (hanih). In order to bring out clearly the meaning implied in the phrase 'destruction of sorrows,' we will have to understand it as the "elimination of vasanas." Earlier, in the introduction, we have said that the vasana granulations, giving a thick coating to the subjective mind, are the cause for its delusion which creates all sorrows for the imperfect; while the Perfect transcends the vasanas (tendencies within the mind-stuff which manifest as thought and actions when the senses are acted upon by an experience) through the Buddhi yoga explained earlier.

"It is very well-known that all the vasanas existing in an individual who is facing life constantly, cannot be fully eradicated by him. The secret of doing so has been explained here by the Lord. Keeping the mind exposed to an atmosphere of tranquillity (Prasada), consciously brought about through an intelligent life of self-control, is the secret whereby all the vasanas can get eliminated."

Adding commentary by Swami Venkateshananda for perspective on this, "This is the technique of yoga in essence. The mind and senses are controlled by the yogi. Control is not suppression, repression, ignoring evil and thinking of the opposite, or resorting to a routine method – all of which, though initially helpful and desirable, will inevitably fail. It is inner alertness. As life flows on, the yogi watches the mind and the senses constantly; the enlightened buddhi (intellect focused entirely upon the Divine Self) which is in constant contact with the Self within watches over the mind and the senses. Desires and the latent psychological impressions which give rise to them are thus effectively monitored.

"It is difficult to decide where the world is! The objects outside have no value for you if you are not conscious of them. When the mind alights on an object either directly or through resurrection of past experiences stored as memory, the object is reproduced in the mind. This causes a desire to arise, because the mind selects particular objects on account of its past tendencies or conditioning (vasanas). Desire in turn gives rise to anger and one loses his temper; losing one's temper means losing the temper (keenness) of the intelligence within. When thus one's discrimination is lost, the ego identifies itself with the mind (and therefore the object in it) and forgets its substratum, the atman. This was described in verses 62-63 above.

"The wise man's buddhi treats both the mental image and the external object, as objects of perception. He develops the witness-consciousness. Even as a spectator is unaffected by the events in the ring, the yogi is the blissful, peaceful and silent witness of this world-play."

With this last commentary one more note. When we say here that the yogi, or the one established fully in the Self, is silent witness of the world-play we do not intend that such a

one sees nothing. We say instead that such a one sees the one divine Truth always, in the play. One sees Unity in the diversity, the one Actor/Director in all.

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 51

The concept shared in #50 is that Happiness is Peace, and Peace is Happiness. How is this so? If you but take a moment and reflect back on a very happy moment, then consider the state of your mind, "what were you thinking?" during that moment, you will observe that you were either thinking nothing or were aware of a divine flow of consciousness, such as gratitude. Happiness is not in the object or the experience that we attain to, no matter how great the thing or how hard we strive for it. When we attain the thing our mind stops for a moment or a few, and in these moments there is peace. We are, quite simply, free of ourselves in these moments. Free of fear, anger, anxiety, completely free of "me-ness". It is in these moments that we experience happiness. Happiness, then, is your own natural Self. Peace, then, is the absence of thought. Happiness is known when the mind is quiet, both Peace and Happiness are the space between the thoughts (or That which underlies or is beyond thought). They are one and the same. We continue...

#2-66

नास्ति बुद्धिरयुक्तस्य न चायुक्तस्य भावना।

न चाभावयतः शान्तिरशान्तस्य कुतः सुखम्॥६६॥

Nāsti buddhirayuktasya na cāyuktasya bhāvanā|

Na cābhāyayataḥ śāntiraśāntasya kutaḥ sukham

"For one who has not attained Yoga or Union (ayuktasya... ayuktasya), there is neither (na asti) intelligence (buddhiḥ) nor (na ca) contemplation (bhāvanā). And (ca) for one who does not practice contemplation (abhāyayataḥ), there is no (na) peace (śāntiḥ). How (kutas) (might there be) happiness (sukham) for someone with no peace (aśāntasya)?"

Translation, "There is no knowledge (of the Self) to the unsteady; and to the unsteady no meditation; and to the unmeditative no peace; to the peaceless, how can there be happiness?"

Commentary by Swami Venkateshanandaji, "'Peace above all' should be the wise man's motto to guide his life. For if there is no peace of mind, one cannot have the least happiness here. Peace cannot be had in the market! One cannot strive for this peace which is disturbed by the very effort! It has to be discovered within oneself, and what is more important and difficult, too, it has to be preserved without being disturbed by anything that happens around one. This is possible only if we meditate regularly and build a 'shock-proof' protective armour around ourselves. Meditation will provide us with the background of thought (like 'I am the immortal ātman, a witness of this world-play untouched by pain') and, by diligent, effortless alertness we should maintain this background of thought. This background of thought is, however, not thought, but an awareness of truth beyond thought. It is this truth which is realised in meditation.

"Peace is happiness: they are indistinguishable. Even worldly happiness is not possible if we do not enjoy peace of mind. Craving for pleasure drives pleasure or happiness away by creating a tension or stress. Satisfying this craving only temporarily allays the tension



by weakening it. But soon the tension is built up again: it is pain. The peace sustained by regular meditation and coupled with the four-fold bhāvanā or sane attitude towards our neighbours (friendliness towards equals, happiness at the status of superiors, compassion for the less fortunate, and indifference towards the wicked) will ensure unperturbable inner tranquillity and, thus, supreme and perennial bliss. The awareness of truth beyond thought – the inner light – will make it impossible for any disturbing thought to arise, though natural life (with the natural functions, thought, word and deed) will continue to flow in inner and outer harmony."

Peace is Happiness.

Regarding meditation, it is so important to note that what is discussed here is not a particular meditation practice, and that service as well as devotional practices are also meditation practices. What we commonly think of as meditation is in fact a practice, not the state of peace, or meditation, itself. This state comes through grace according to our preparation for it. We prepare, and the loving Truth gives us glimpses of meditation to encourage us along, to show us the way. A walk through the woods is great meditation practice, as is preparing and serving a meal to the needy and offering it to God.

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 52

Let's continue with this great teaching of Yoga (union with the God centered nature, or Self).

#2-67

इन्द्रियाणां हि चरतां यन्मनोऽनुविधीयते।

तदस्य हरति प्रज्ञां वायुर्नावमिवाम्भसि॥६७॥

Indriyāṇāṃ hi caratāṃ yanmano'nuvidhīyate|

Tadasya harati prajñāṃ vāyurnāvamivāmbhasi

"Because (hi) that (tad) mind (manas) which (yad) acts conformably (anuvidhīyate) to the wandering (caratāṃ) senses (indriyāṇāṃ) carries away (harati) his (asya) wisdom (prajñāṃ) just as (iva) the wind (vāyuḥ) (carries away) a boat (nāvam) on the waters (ambhasi)"

Translation, "For, the mind, which follows in the wake of the wandering senses, carries away his discrimination, as the wind carries away a boat on the waters."

#2-68

तस्माद्यस्य महाबाहो निगृहीतानि सर्वशः।

इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थभ्यस्तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता॥६८॥

Tasmādyasya mahābāho nigrhītāni sarvaśaḥ|

Indriyāṇīndriyārthebhyastasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā

"Therefore (tasmāt), oh big-armed one (māhā-bāho)<sup>1</sup>, his (tasya) wisdom (prajñā) is firmly established (pratiṣṭhitā) (whose) senses (indriyāṇi) (are) thoroughly (sarvaśas) held back (nigrhītāni) from (running after) the objects (arthebhyaḥ) of the senses (indriya)"

Translation, "Therefore, O Mighty-armed, his knowledge is steady whose senses are completely restrained from sense-objects."

Commentary by Swami Chinmayanandaji, "It is natural, in conversation, that we do not directly give our wise conclusions upon "the do's and don'ts" of life, without giving the logic of our thoughts leading to our conclusions. Without preparing our friend's mind to perceive the logic of these conclusions, we dare not declare to him any truth, however divinely acceptable the declarations are. Arjuna has been told earlier all the necessary arguments, and here in the stanza, Krishna reasserts the same proposition: "Life in self-control alone is life worth living, if we demand from it anything more than tears, sobs, sighs and groans."

"He alone is a man of Wisdom, rooted in joy and bliss, who has completely restrained all his senses from their wild roamings among their sense-objects.

""BY DESTROYING THE SENSE ORGANS ROAMING IN THE SENSE-OBJECTS," it does not mean that a man of Self-development should destroy his capacities for perception of the world outside; nor does it mean that he is one who has been rendered incapable of enjoying life. Sense-debility is no sign of better-knowledge. It is only meant here that the sense-objects filtering through the five archways of knowledge will not, in a Perfect man, flood his mind to bring chaos and destruction of his established inner peace and tranquillity.

"The ordinary individual, in his ego-centric existence, becomes victimized by the sense-organs, while he who has conquered the ego and has transcended his matter-identifications, comes to live in freedom and perfect control over the tyrannical sense organs."

Spiritual life is hard. All life is hard. We ask what is the goal of life, this is our common question. "What am I to do with my life?" We learn that life is hard, full of disappointments, never fully meeting our expectations and requiring of great effort. Whether we are striving for sense attainment (attaining the things or experiences and avoiding the things or experiences that our lower nature tells us will make us happy and prevent us from suffering) or if we are striving to attain to the highest, it is hard. It is easy for us to become discouraged and to feel that life is not worthwhile, that we can never find what we seek, but life does not give up, does not stop. Whichever goal we seek we must go on.

When the spiritual life is finally sought we will hear that it is a "turning away" or a "renunciation" of the world, and considering that we all see some degree of beauty in the world and feel hope (no matter how deeply buried) we struggle to fully commit to the path we are given. Even when we have come to know that what we seek is our own true Self and have embarked on this path we continue to hold on, to things and experiences, even the most subtle experiences we still strive to attain and hold on to. We can hold nothing though, and the teaching here is that we need not, we must not.

In this way letting go (of results, not effort) is so hard for us because it is a commitment to the unknown. To our ego centered self Truth seems to be a void, an emptiness. It seems to be a letting go of all that holds hope, of all of the things and experiences, of the entire world. Here, then, in these stanzas and in Swamiji's commentary we are given guidance that this is not the case. Swamiji tells us that, contrary to our embedded belief (all beliefs reside in lower self), once we fully let go we are not turning our back upon the world but

rather embracing it fully and completely, rooted in Love and compassion, aware of the one Reality, and able to enjoy it without fear, anger, lust, greed, hatred or jealousy. We come to know that these lower emotions are what we let go of, this is what we renounce. And, once fully renounced, once we fully lift ourselves from attachment to them and to our ignorance, the glorious fullness of Life shimmers in every thing and every experience in this great world. There is but one Truth and it is omnipresent.

It is more than worth it to let go. Though the spiritual life is hard it is full. As we empty we discover the fullness that has always been and Joy, Love, Kindness fill our nature.

### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 53

Today we contemplate one of the most "famous" and least understood slokas of the Gita. What is "day"? What is "night"? What is "sight"? "Blindness"? "Awake" and "sleep"? What is "Life" and what is "death"?

#2-69

या निशा सर्वभूतानां तस्यां जागर्ति संयमी।

यस्यां जाग्रति भूतानि सा निशा पश्यतो मुनेः ॥६९॥

Yā niśā sarvabhūtānāṁ tasyāṁ jāgarti saṁyamī|

Yasyāṁ jāgrati bhūtāni sā niśā paśyato muneḥ

"The self-controlled one (saṁyamī) is awake (jāgarti) during that (tasyāṁ) which (yā) (is) night (niśā) for all (sarva) beings (bhūtānāṁ). (And) that (sā) during which (yasyāṁ) the beings (bhūtāni) are awake (jāgrati), is night (niśā) to the seeing (paśyataḥ) sage (muneḥ)"

Translation, "That which is night to all beings, in that the self-controlled man keeps awake; where all beings are awake, that is the night for the Sage (MUNI) who sees."

Commentary by Swami Chinmayanandaji, "In order to bring home to Arjuna the idea that the world, as experienced by an individual through the goggles of the mind-intellect-body, is different from what is perceived through the open windows of spirituality, this stanza is given. The metaphorical language of this verse is so complete in detail that the data-mongering modern intellect is not capable of entering into its poetic beauty.

"Of all the peoples of the world, the Aryans alone are capable of bringing about a combination of poetry and science, and when the poet-philosopher Vyasa takes up his pen, to pour out his art on to the ancient palmyraleaves to express the Bliss of Perfection, in the ecstasy, he could not have used a better medium in the Geeta, than his poetry.

"Here, two points-of-view --- of the ignorant and of the wise --- are contrasted. The ignorant person never perceives the world as it is; he always throws his own mental colour on to the objects and understands the imperfections in his mind to be a part and parcel of the objects perceived. The world, viewed through a coloured glass-pane, must look coloured. When this colouring medium is removed, the world appears AS IT IS.

"The Consciousness in us is today capable of recognizing the world only through the media of the body, mind, and intellect. Naturally, we see the world imperfect, not because the world is so, but because of the ugliness of the media through which we perceive it.

"A Master-mind is he who, rooted in his Wisdom, opens up the windows-of-his-perception and looks at the world through the eye-of-Wisdom.

"When an electrical engineer comes to a city, and when at dusk, the whole city smiles forth with its lights, he immediately enquires: "Is it A. C. or D. C. current?"; while the same vision, to an illiterate villager, is a wondrous sight and he only exclaims: "I have seen lights that need no wick or oil!" From the stand-point of the villager, there is no electricity and no problem of A. C. or D. C. currents. The world the engineer sees among the very same lamps, is not realised or known by the unperceiving intellect of the villager. Nor is the engineer awake to the world of strange wonderment which the villager enjoys.

"Here, we are told that the ego-centric, finite, mortal is asleep to the World-of-Perception enjoyed and lived by the Man-of-Steady-Wisdom; and that the Perfect One cannot see and feel the thrills and sobs which the ego experiences in its selfish life of finite-experience."

We are each given experiences to show us the truth of this statement. Every personage in this world, whether human, animal or plant... even the "inanimate"... wants happiness. With eyes open we never see it, and yet we do have a universal experience where we in fact know the happiness that we seek. For this we add a paragraph from the commentary of Swami Venkateshanandaji.

"The worldly man is ignorant. The sage 'does not understand' how the worldly man finds his pleasure in the objects of the world, in spite of the fact that the daily deep sleep experience teaches him that all happiness is within and life teaches him that pleasure is inseparable from pain."

Of the three states that we commonly know (waking, dream and deep sleep) happiness is known only in deep sleep. When we awaken each day from deep sleep we say, "ahhh, that was wonderful! Let me sleep more." We think that deep sleep is completely empty, and yet this is not so. It is indeed empty of "self", or "lower mind". There is no drama, no story, no conscious activity. There is no emotion, no planning, no judgment, there are no "things". To think this empty though is our great mistake. The "I am" that we THINK we are, what we TAKE OURSELVES to be, is indeed not there. Yet the pure I is certainly there, and full of it's own glorious Self. In this we rest. When we awaken we have "forgotten" the experience because all "memory" is from the subconscious mind. Make no mistake, though, we did experience happiness. This is what we do know when we awaken... we don't know what we experienced, we don't remember, but we know that it was good for we want it again having come directly from it. The "it" is quite simply the Self, or God. It is pure, unconditioned. The purpose of our life is to awaken, to know this Self consciously, for this is perfect alignment. One who knows what is beyond one's own limited self is indeed awake and consciously, fully, Alive.

Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 54

#2-70

आपूर्यमाणमचलप्रतिष्ठं समुद्रमापः प्रविशन्ति यद्वत्।

तद्वत्कामा यं प्रविशन्ति सर्वे स शान्तिमाप्नोति न कामकामी॥७०॥

Āpūryamāṇamacalapratiṣṭhaṁ samudramāpaḥ praviśanti yadvat|  
Tadvatkāmā yaṁ praviśanti sarve sa śāntimāpnoti na kāmakāmī

"Just as (tadvat) the waters (āpaḥ) enter (praviśanti) into the ocean (samudram), (but the latter) stands firm (pratiṣṭham) (in spite of being ever) being filled (āpūryamāṇam), so (tadvat) all (sarve) desires (kāmāḥ) enter (praviśanti) into that (self-controlled one) (yaṁ), (but he stands steady). He (saḥ) who follows the dictates of the desires (kāma-kāmī) does not (na) attain (āpnoti) to peace (śāntim)"

Translation, "He attains Peace into whom all desires enter as waters enter the ocean, which, filled from all sides, remains unmoved; but not the 'desirer of desires.'"

Commentary by Swami Venkateshanandaji, "The mind which runs outside, carried away by the senses is full of evil qualities, the chief among which is ceaseless and insatiable desire, born of rajas and tamas. The mind that is controlled by buddhi is pure. The pure mind is peaceful. Desirelessness is peace.

"Kṛṣṇa gives us a beautiful picture vividly illustrating this wonderful truth. Water rises from the ocean as vapour. The wind drives it over the land where the clouds drift over hill-tops and the water comes down as rain. As little streams and rivers, it is then drawn down, and its fate before it reaches the plains is one of extreme uncertainty and restlessness. As it flows over the plains, it is a bit calmer, but not till it reaches the ocean does it attain that supreme peace which was its own original nature! However, the vapour that rises from the ocean regains its original state at once if it rains on the ocean itself. Ocean itself remains the same all the time.

"The man who is ignorant and full of rajas and tamas is like the cloud driven over the land – restless and unhappy. Only when he reaches the plain of the guru's feet and satsang does he have a little peace. After much restlessness he attains God, the ocean. But the desireless, sāttvika man knows how to redirect every desire into its own source, the self. When a desire arises in the mind, let it get reabsorbed into itself, the source of bliss. The self or what-is does not undergo increase or decrease, though all life apparently emerges from it and returns to it."

The idea of "desirelessness" is worth a little discussion. As Swamiji says here what we attain to is not the end of desires, for desires come along with the sense objects themselves. Desire resides within the ego-self, the body consciousness. One that says "I like pizza" has but to smell a fresh baked pizza to feel desire for it. It is not that when one is free of attachment that the smell of the pizza will not be enjoyed, of course it will be. Desire will naturally arise for it as well. The one who has attained to "desirelessness" has come to know the emptiness of sense fulfillment, that is such a one knows that happiness can never be attained in this way. The desire experienced will be offered up, released. There is no attachment to it, or as the Lord here says of the one attached to these desires and always following them, "not the 'desirer of desires'". The world can of course be enjoyed, as can pizza. The key teaching here is that happiness is never in the sense objects and that all of our suffering is due to our attachment to the embedded subconscious notion that it is. Further we come to know that in walking past the wonderful smelling pizza no harm comes. We cannot break desires, not on our own. What we can do is offer them up and not live our life following them. Then, finally, we observe that the sense objects no longer have any hold over us; that we are happy come what may.



I share with you a vivid memory of blessed Swami [Premanandaji](#) Maharaj telling us in class one day, "The last desire is the desire to be desireless." Desire for the sense objects and experiences is an empty desire, following it can never lead to happiness. The spiritual desire is different; for if one desires to be free of the hold of the desires of the lower self the eternal Source of joy will come to be known.

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 55

Yesterday we discussed desires and the nature of desires. [Bryant](#) ji had asked a great question about this, and this led us to discuss the concept of raga-dvesha, or "desires and aversions", which we are told are integral with the senses and sense objects. In other words we are told that there is no difference between the sense object and either desire or aversion. Within the lower self there is constant evaluation of every thing and every experience, along with judgment as to whether it is "good" or "bad" (pleasurable or painful) and storage of the event in detail. Desires come from this memory and the pursuit of happiness, which in the delusion of self we take to mean pursuing a life of pleasure and avoidance of pain. This, though, does not lead to happiness as happiness is an inner state, it is who you already are. Our craving (living our life in pursuit of desires and avoidance of pain) veils happiness... it covers it up and therefore cannot lead to it.

Here is a wonderful article from Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj on raga-dvesha; please do take a moment to contemplate it: [http://sivanandaonline.org/public\\_html/...](http://sivanandaonline.org/public_html/...)

You may ask, "if desires are not different than the sense objects and the senses themselves and one cannot help but be exposed to them how then to avoid desires?" Ahhh, a beautiful question, effectively the one that dear Bryant asked. By transcending the lower self. Going beyond it, stripping ourself free of it just as a snake sheds its skin or a caterpillar becomes a butterfly. Our single problem has always been that we have accepted the version of the story that our lower self gives us. This story is, quite simply, wrong. With this decision to go beyond the limited version (I am man, or woman, young, or old, I am separate and have reason to be afraid, etc...) one is given help to transcend. You see, you are always the Self, you have never been the story or the role that you play. This dear ones, is the absolute truth of you. You are not separate, not the body, have never been, could never be. At some point we must decide not to accept the story making machine in us that is rooted in the delusion that we are the body and nothing more. Once we decide to be desireless, once we set this as our life's desire, everything changes and Life begins. We begin to separate from the delusion, to strip it away and take a new birth, and the true nature of the world begins to shine forth for us.

More about desires and Peace from the Lord:

#2-71

विहाय कामान्यः सर्वान्पुमांश्चरति निःस्पृहः।

निर्ममो निरहङ्कारः स शान्तिमधिगच्छति॥७१॥

Vihāya kāmānyaḥ sarvānpumāṁścarati niḥspr̥haḥ|

Nirmamo nirahaṅkāraḥ sa śāntimadhigacchati

"That (saḥ) man (pumān) obtains (adhigacchati) peace (śāntim) who (yaḥ), having completely abandoned (vihāya) all (sarvān) desires (kāmān), moves about (carati) free



from longing (niḥsṛṇāḥ), without (niḥ) (the notion of) "mine" (mamaḥ) (and) devoid (niḥ) of ego (ahaṅkāraḥ)"

Translation, "That man attains peace who, abandoning all desires, moves about without longing, without the sense of 'I-ness' and 'my-ness'."

Commentary from Swami Chinmayanandaji, "There are commentators who believe that this and the following stanza explain the Path of Renunciation, which is, in fact, not altogether ignored in the text of the Geeta. Since, as we said earlier, the second chapter is almost a summary of the entire Divine Song, it has to indicate even this Samnyasa Yoga, which will be later on explained at length and hinted at different places during the entire length of the Geeta.

"This stanza seems to ring clearly the significant advice given earlier by Krishna, almost at the very opening of his philosophical discussions, in this chapter. He had advised therein: "HAVING CONQUERED THE MENTAL AGITATIONS CREATED BY THE PAIRS-OF-OPPOSITES, FIGHT THE BATTLE OF LIFE." The same idea seems to be resounding here at the close of the chapter.

"The first line of the stanza explains the mental condition of one who comes to discover Real Peace in himself. Such an individual, it says, renounces all desires and has no attachments or longings. The second line describes the condition of such an individual's intellect and it asserts that it is without any sense of 'I-ness' or 'my-ness.' The ego is the cause for the sense-attachments and longings. Where the ego is not perceptible, as in sleep, there are no longings or desires in the individual or, at least, they are dormant. Thus, if the first line of the stanza is describing a negation of the effects of "ignorance," the second line asserts the absence of the very cause from which desires and the agitations arise.

"Earlier, in the introduction, we explained that the split in the personality of Arjuna was caused by the intervention of the sense of his ego and his egoistic-desires, which broke up the subjective and objective aspects of his mind into two independent islands with a vast ocean of surging waves of desires between them. With a soft suggestion, after explaining all the logic of thought, Krishna is carefully placing his finger on the very ulcer in the Pandava's mind.

"The stanza, in its sum-total suggestions, advises us that all our sufferings in the world are caused by our own egocentric misconception and the consequent arrogance characterised by our ever-multiplying demands for wealth and our endless desires.

"Samnyasa means sacrifice, and to live in a spirit of sacrifice after renouncing completely one's ego and its desires is true Samnyasa, wherein an individual comes to live in constant awareness of his fuller and ampler Divinity. The general misunderstanding that to run away from life is Samnyasa, or to colour the cloth is to become a true monk, has cast an irreparable slur on the philosophy of the Upanishads. Hinduism considers him alone to be a Samnyasin "who has learnt the art of living his life in constant inspiration, which is gained through an intelligent renunciation of his ego-centric misconceptions."

"Shankara beautifully explains this point of view in his commentary on the stanza. "THAT MAN OF RENUNCIATION, WHO, ENTIRELY ABANDONING ALL DESIRES, GOES THROUGH LIFE CONTENTED WITH THE BARE NECESSITIES OF LIFE, WHO REGARDS NOT AS HIS, EVEN THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE NEEDED FOR MERE

BODILY EXISTENCE, WHO IS NOT VAIN OF HIS KNOWLEDGE, --- SUCH A MAN OF STEADY KNOWLEDGE, WHO KNOWS BRAHMAN, ATTAINS PEACE (NIRVANA), THE END OF ALL THE MISERY OF MUNDANE EXISTENCE (SAMSARA). IN SHORT, HE BECOMES BRAHMAN."

Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 56

We now complete what is often called the "mini-Gita" that is the second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, named "The Yoga of Knowledge".

#2-72

एषा ब्राह्मी स्थितिः पार्थ नैनां प्राप्य विमुह्यति।

स्थित्वास्यामन्तकालेऽपि ब्रह्मनिर्वाणमृच्छति॥७२॥

Eṣā brāhmī sthitiḥ pārtha naināṁ prāpya vimuhyati|  
Sthitvāsyāmantakāle'pi brahmanirvāṇamṛcchati

"Oh son of Prthā (pārtha), that (eṣā) (is) remaining (sthiṭiḥ) in Brahma (brāhmī), having obtained (prāpya) which (enām), (one) is not deluded (na... vimuhyati) (any longer). By abiding (sthitvā) in this (state) (asyām) even (api) at the time of death (anta-kāle), one attains (ṛcchati) extinction or dissolution (nirvāṇa) in Brahma (brahma)"

Translation, "This is the BRAHMIC-state, O Son of Pritha. Attaining this, none is deluded. Being established therein, even at the end of life, one attains to oneness with BRAHMAN.

Commentary by Swami Chinmayanandaji, "To renounce all desires is to destroy completely the last vestures of one's ego. Renunciation of ego is not a state of dull, meaningless emptiness. Where the delusory ego has ended, the State of Full-Knowledge, or Selfhood, has dawned. To realise the Self in one's own bosom is to realise at once the Self which is All-pervading and Eternal (Brahman).

"When the ego has ended, the Consciousness is not known to be anything other than the Eternal, and as such the Knower of Truth, in a brilliant experience of the Self, becomes the Self, and therefore, this state is called Selfhood (Brahmi-sthitiḥ).

"A doubt may still arise that even after this realisation, we may again fall into the delusion of the ego and come to suffer the ego's world of imperfections and sorrows. To deny this tragedy, we have been told how, having realised the Self once, no more can the individual fall back into his ancient delusions. This experience of the Self need not necessarily take place in the very youthful days of one's life. Even in old age --- nay, even in the last moment of this embodiment --- if a seeker can come to experience, even for a moment, this egoless State of Tranquillity and Poise, even a passing glimpse of the Selfhood, it is sufficient to gain this Brahmic-State pointed out in Vedantic literature.

"'Negation of the false and assertion of the True' is the Path that has been indicated in the Upanishads. The very same path, in its practical application, is designated here in the Geeta, in Vyasa's original contribution, as Karma Yoga. To work without attachment and desires, egoism and vanity, ever in perfect equilibrium in both success and failure, is to deny the ego its entire field of activity, and unconsciously to assert the greater Truth, the Self. Thus, in technique, the Geeta's Karma Yoga is not at all different from the Vedantic Technique of Meditation. But Arjuna got confused and perplexed because he took

Krishna's words too literally, and therefore, in the following chapter, he expresses his mental confusion in the opening lines. The Lord, therefore, explains Karma Yoga exhaustively in the next chapter."

The chapter closes with this statement, "Thus, in the UPANISHADS of the glorious Bhagawad Geeta, in the Science of the Eternal, in the scripture of YOGA, in the dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, the second discourse ends entitled: THE YOGA OF KNOWLEDGE"

It is a good time now to reflect back upon the second chapter, we will take a day off and post the beginning of chapter 3 on Monday. The 2nd chapter started here with Lesson 12, all are here if you would like to review, or you may wish to do so with your own copy of the Gita.

### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 57

When learning public speaking we are taught that to keep the group's attention and make the talk valuable we should:

- Tell people what we are going to tell them.
- Tell them.
- Tell them what we told them.

This is wisdom, for we require not only an insightful guidance of the truth of us, we need to hear it over and over again and we need to know how to find this truth (which lies within us). In fact no amount of reading can give us the insight, we must do it ourselves... but we need a guide. I recall that years ago when I would drive a car, prior to Google and GPS, I would drive according to my instinct and invariably I would get lost. After being lost for some time, and feeling the frustration and stress that comes along with this, finally coming to know that I needed help I would swallow my false pride and ask someone "how can I get to such-and-such?". I would try to ask an expert, so I would go to a gas station, a policeman, or a taxi driver.

On our spiritual path it is the same. We are lost, we don't know who we are or what is the truth of us and this world. We strive for happiness but cannot find it. We follow our instincts but they never take us where we want to go, so finally we must ask. We ask people that don't know though, and this does not help us. Finally we realize that there are those that do know, and we hear that the "knowing" itself is the Lord, and that the Lord speaks through these knowers. Such is Lord Krishna in this blessed work of the Bhagavad Gita. Lord Krishna is the trustworthy gas station attendant that has lived forever in the place that we want to find. He knows where God, or happiness, is. When we have finally given up on our own instincts and on other people's instincts or bravado and we are ready to ask and listen to the expert on "where is happiness", the Lord is right here in our heart speaking to us, and externally in the form of Lord Krishna in this holy text (as the Lord does in countless forms, voices and texts) Guiding us home, to the great promised land. More than this, in fact... If we but surrender to Him and do what He asks of us without expectation of results He will drive us home!

Such is this text and the dialogue between Arjuna (representing each of us) and Lord Krishna. In the first two chapters the Lord has first set the stage (chapter 1) then told us

who we really are and how to realize our own highest nature of freedom and happiness (chapter 2). Now He continues by giving us the detail of this greatest teaching.

Chapter 3 - "Karma Yoga", or the "Yoga of Selfless Service"

#3-1

अर्जुन उवाच

ज्यायसी चेत्कर्मणस्ते मता बुद्धिर्जनार्दन।

तत्किं कर्मणि घोरे मां नियोजयसि केशव॥१॥

Arjuna uvāca

Jyāyasī cetkarmaṇaste matā buddhirjanārdana|

Tatkiṁ karmaṇi ghore mām niyojayasi keśava

Arjuna (arjunah) said (uvāca):

"Oh You who agitates (ardana) men (jana), if (ced) buddhi or intelligence (buddhiḥ) is considered (matā) by You (te) as superior (jyāyasī) to karma or action (karmaṇas); therefore (tad), why (kim) (do) You compel (niyojayasi) me (mām) to a terrible (ghore) action (karmaṇi), oh long-haired One (keśava)?"

Translation, "Arjuna said: 1. If it be thought by you that 'knowledge' is superior to 'action,' O Janardana, why then, do you, O Kashava, engage me in this terrible action?"

#3-2

व्यामिश्रेणेव वाक्येन बुद्धिं मोहयसीव मे।

तदेकं वद निश्चित्य येन श्रेयोऽहमाप्नुयाम्॥२॥

Vyāmiśreṇeva vākyaena buddhiṁ mohayasīva me|

Tadekaṁ vada niścitya yena śreyo'hamāpnuyām

"You bewilder (mohayasi) my (me) intellect (buddhi), as it were (iva), (with Your), in a certain manner (iva), ambiguous (vyāmiśreṇa) assertion (vākyaena). Tell (me) (vada) definitely (niścitya) that (tad) only (means) (ekam) by which (yena) I (aham) (can) obtain (āpnuyām) what is most auspicious (śreyas)"

Translation, "With this apparently perplexing speech you confuse, as it were, my understanding; therefore, tell me that "one" way by which, I, for certain, may attain the Highest."

Commentary by Swami Venkatsahanandaji, "The pendulum swings from one extreme to the other – that is its nature. The subtle middle path where the opposites blend is elusive and the gross mind refuses even to believe in it or see it. We all know what is activity. We all know what is knowledge. With us knowledge is in the mind and action flows from the limbs. We do not even feel it necessary to find their point of contact, or the subtle middle path where God meets man, where the divine meets and blends into life, forming divine life. In it there is no contradiction between knowledge and action. On the contrary, knowledge is action.

"In the absence of true understanding, confusion is quite natural; it is inherent in the very nature of the mind, but the vain ego always tries to blame it on others! Kṛṣṇa did not confuse Arjuna; the confusion is in Arjuna's own mind. This is extremely difficult to see in the initial stages of our spiritual progress.

"The disciple (Arjuna) is yet keen on attaining śreyas (the ultimate good). Whenever we are on the horns of a dilemma (even a real one), we should look for the path that will lead us to our ultimate spiritual good, the. śreya-marga. Much of our misery is due to the fact that very often we are satisfied with superficial solutions which yield immediate satisfaction, though it may be temporary and unsatisfactory in the long run. The sincere spiritual aspirant has his eyes rivetted on śreyas."

#### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 58

God is both inside and out. This is the most practical bit of wisdom that can be shared with us. As we come to understand this we begin to realize that this entire world is fully interactive with us, and that we are being guided home through this interaction. To accept the guidance we must be observant, aware and humble. Humility is a silent mind; it is the mark of a quiet and controlled ego. This is not easy certainly, and the lessons are always about this. It is not something to be ashamed of when the ego pops up to "save the world", rather it is an opportunity for awareness and to choose love.

The statement that God is inside us is completely true, and it is also true (though only relative) to say that satan is inside us. This satan is not an absolute force, it is the force of confusion. As long as we are confused it is a mighty force but when our confusion ends we see it as a paper tiger. We see it for what it is, confusion, and we also see that this confusion is the sole "problem" with which we wrestle. What is the confusion? Well this is spoken to very directly by the Lord in chapter 2 of the Gita. It is the confused idea that "I am separate" and that "I am this body", therefore "I need to add that which is pleasurable and avoid that which is painful in order to be happy". From this all manner of havoc arises, including the idea of saving the world. The world is already saved you see, it is what it has always been. The world, these vast universes in which civilizations come into and go out of existence every moment (from "Yoga Vasishta") is God, God is the world. It is an interactive mirror, it provides us with the opportunity to free ourselves from the confusion.

Karma Yoga is not about saving the world or doing something important for the world. Who are we to judge what is important and what is not? It is about using the gifts that we have to serve the Lord, or we can say all of mankind. To do our duty without judgment. What is our duty? Here is where we come to "God is outside". Whatever is in front of us that we can perform and offer with love, this is our duty. Whatever gifts we are given, our duty is to offer them. Who are we to say that when God is standing in front of us in the form of a person that this person is underserving of our compassion and love? Or that when God is in front of us in the form of a sunrise that we are not to admire it and tell it how beautiful it is? Or when God is in front of us in the form of a singing bird that we are not to join it in song? Or a leaky faucet that we are not to close it? Or a piece of trash that we are not to pick it up? Or that the gift we have been given is not valuable, and that we need something else? Only the voice of confusion says no, with the idea that there is something more important to do in the non-existent future. Our opportunity is to rise up in love with whatever we are given, and what we are given is who and what we are with at this very moment. Our opportunity is to give our all in the moment.

Remember that Arjuna ji did not choose to start a war to save the world. He was simply living his life, one step at a time, and along the way, in each moment, he had to make a choice. The culmination of his choices led him to this battle, and of course we see that the



real battle it has led him to is the battle between the forces of God (the charioteer who is advising us) and of confusion (the loud and needy ego centered voice) within him. He specifically chose the Lord to be his charioteer, and this is as symbolic as it gets. Two voices inside. One tells us to pick up a piece of trash, or to forgive, or to listen, or to be kind, or to focus on the breath, to do our asanas, to eat healthy food, etc. Or to fight the inner battle, which is what this great Gita teaching is about. The other tells us to do what is important (in order to prove our self worth), or to please ourselves, or to avoid that which might cause us pain. If we choose the Lord as our charioteer we are choosing to follow the higher voice, both inside and out, and leaving the results to the Lord. Arjuna ji made the choice but as we see following the Lord is not easy... so self forgiveness and compassion is required... but that this Lord is persistent, all wise and all powerful. He clearly points out to us that all of the forms we see are already dead, for He as the great killer named Time has already killed them all. The Truth of you, and of all, cannot die however.

So everything that we do, ultimately, is about detaching from the idea of doership and of the limitations of this body. We do in order not to do, in order to give up all doing to the Lord. We must do, but our doing is simple. Observe, look at the gifts we are given. Ask inner questions and listen, really listen. Be persistent, keep asking and observing, listening. Follow the highest light inside - our own highest beliefs, live the way we feel that all should live, and resist the ego centered judgmental ideas that come. And, once the way is clear, then we must do with our entire being, devoting the results to the benefit of all. If we give ourselves to this life completely, with our head, our heart, and our hands, we will know our great Self. Whatever the Lord has given us is perfect, our opportunity to know God and to merge with God consciousness lies within whatever we are given.

And by all means please do pay rapt attention to chapter 3, the Lord's teaching on what is and how to perform selfless service, or Karma Yoga. The opportunity for truly selfless service is the Lord's offering to us, it is our path to the great freedom that we seek.

Let us continue as the Lord lays out for us this path of selfless service.

#3-3

श्रीभगवानुवाच

लोकेऽस्मिन् द्विविधा निष्ठा पुरा प्रोक्ता मया नघ।

ज्ञानयोगेन साङ्ख्यानां कर्मयोगेन योगिनाम्॥३॥

Śrībhagavānuvāca

Loke'smin dvividhā niṣṭhā purā proktā mayānagha|

Jñānayogena sāṅkhyānām karmayogena yoginām

Venerable (śrī) Bhagavān (bhagavān) said (uvāca):

"In this (asmin) world (loke), a twofold (dvividhā) steadiness (niṣṭhā) (was) formerly (purā) described (proktā) by Me (mayā), oh faultless one (anagha)!: (1) in the form of Yoga (yogena) of knowledge (jñāne) for the ones who tread the path of knowledge and discrimination (sāṅkhyānām)3, (2) in the form of Yoga (yogena) of action (karma) for the yogī-s (yoginām)"



Translation, "The Blessed Lord said: In this world there is a two-fold path, as I said before, O sinless one; the 'Path-of-Knowledge' of the SANKHYANS and the 'Path-of-Action' of the YOGINS."

In commentary by Swami Venkateshanandaji we are given help to reconcile this statement, "This is a truly Kṛṣṇa-like statement!"

"There are not two paths; the path is a synthesis of the two, it is twofold! The path to God-realisation is two-fold; in fact the statement need not be restricted to refer to the path to God-realisation! In this world, the path taken by anyone and everyone is of this twofold nature! Kṛṣṇa does not exclude anyone in this world.

"The sāṅkhyā or the 'philosophers' speculated about the reality. The yogī were busy living a life of service and rituals. The former did not interest themselves in living. The latter did not ensure that the service or the ritual had the light of knowledge to illumine and enliven the spirit in it. The two drifted apart; the philosopher and the yogi specialised in their own fields, and built their own empires which in course of time actually became antagonistic! If they are exclusive of each other, there is conflict and confusion, knowledge becomes hypocritical and action becomes destructive and self-aggrandising.

"Thus, the two which sound very healthy and wholesome, actually produce contrary results. Kṛṣṇa reconciles them. On another level, neglect of this 'wholesome' approach is fraught with danger. Modern science bears witness to this. The so-called 'true science' generates knowledge of nuclear forces and of genetic mutations. Applied technology creates dangerous weapons – for which neither accepts responsibility. A 'wholesome' (holistic) approach will bring them together – and avoid dabbling with destructive forces.

"The path is twofold. The two (knowledge and action) must blend in every one of us. As we shall presently see, the one implies and includes the other: a philosopher is no philosopher if he refuses to act on his philosophy – obviously he is not sure of it! A yogi is not a yogi if he does not know what he is doing! Blind action and lame philosophy must unite to march forward to the goal of divine life. This is Kṛṣṇa's yoga – buddhi yoga (discussed previously, he speaks of bringing the intellect to yoga, or union with the Lord. We could call it as conscious surrender to the highest).

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 59

The Lord continues to describe to us this middle path of Karma Yoga, the path combining both Sankhya (wisdom) and Kriya (Action). In following this path one's actions are rooted in the wisdom of knowledge of Self (that all are children of God and are to be treated as the Divinity, that action performed for the benefit of all does indeed benefit all) and one's wisdom (the Truth of all is the divine Self alone, that Love alone prevails) is expressed with action (such action then is the expression of Love for all).

#3-4

न कर्मणामनारम्भान्नैष्कर्म्यं पुरुषोऽश्नुते।

न च सन्न्यसनादेव सिद्धिं समधिगच्छति॥४॥

Na karmaṇāmanārambhānnaiṣkarmyaṁ puruṣo'śnute|  
na ca sannyasanādeva siddhiṁ samadhigacchati

"A person (puruṣaḥ) does not (na) attain (aśnute) freedom from action and its influence (naiṣkarmyam) by not undertaking (anārambhāt) actions (karmanām), nor does (na ca) he attain (samadhigacchati) Perfection --i.e. Mokṣa or Liberation-- (siddhim) by renunciation (sannyasanāt) alone (eva)"

Translation, "Not by non-performance of actions does man reach 'actionlessness' ; nor by mere renunciation does he attain 'Perfection.'"

#3-5

न हि कश्चित्क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत्।

कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः॥५॥

Na hi kaścitkṣaṇamapi jātu tiṣṭhatyakarmakṛt|  
Kāryate hyavaśaḥ karma sarvaḥ prakṛtijairguṇaiḥ

"Nobody (na... kaścid) ever (jātu) remains (tiṣṭhati) without doing (a... kṛt) actions (karma), even (api) for a moment (kṣaṇam) indeed (hi), because (hi) every (being) (sarvaḥ) (who) has no free will (avaśaḥ) is made to do (kāryate) action(s) (karma) by the qualities (guṇaiḥ) born (jaiḥ) of Prakṛti (prakṛti)"

Translation, "Verily, none can ever remain, even for a moment, without performing action; for, everyone is made to act helplessly, indeed, by the qualities born of PRAKRITI."

Commentary by Swami Venkateshananda, "The vicious circle has to be broken. It is the self-perpetuating momentum of karma. Action produces reaction and the reaction serves as action producing its own reaction. Cause gives birth to result which serves as the cause for another chain-result. It is like the seed and the plant, the egg and the hen – one leads to the other in an endless chain.

"Shall we sit quietly then, and refuse to have anything to do with this? This view of actionlessness appeals to some, but not to Kṛṣṇa.

"Action is threefold – thought, word and deed. Action is performed by the individual at various levels of his consciousness, on different planes of his inner being. It is ignorance to think that we live only on the periphery of our personalities. Deep within are the springs of real action. Whether they take gross, subtle or causal forms, they are actions still, enough to keep the wheel of karma in motion. For, refusal is an action, as firmly based on the false ego as the performance of action. 'Action for material achievement' and 'refusal to act believing that only thereby one can achieve salvation' are both equally deceptive mental conditioning. This conditioning is bondage – neither action nor what one believes to be inaction.

"As we shall see, the whole creation is the body of God and individuals live as part of his nature. The qualities of his nature will function, independent of individual will; to try to stop this is as easy as it is to chew up the stars! Kṛṣṇa's solution to this is the yoga of the Bhagavad Gītā. It is true transcendence (naiṣkarmyam) in which the ego is stripped of its mask. All action is seen to be life, and the Self is realised to be divine – Divine Life."

To expand on the topic let's also look at an illuminating view of the teaching from Swami Chinmayananda - "Spiritually, as the Self, everyone of us is All-full and Perfect. Due to our 'ignorance' of this spiritual experience, we entertain in our intellect unending desires, each of them being our own intellect's attempt to fulfil itself! It is very well-known that we

desire things that are not already with us in full, or in a satisfying quantity. As the desires in us, so are our thoughts; thoughts are the disturbances created in our mental zone by our desires. At every moment, the texture and quality of our thoughts are directly conditioned and controlled by our desires.

"Thoughts in an individual, expressed in the outer world of objects, become his actions; actions are nothing other than the actor's thoughts projected and expressed in the world. Thus, in this chain-of-'ignorance,' constituted of desires, thoughts, and actions, each one of us is caught and bound.

"If we observe them a little more closely, we find that these are not so many different factors, but are, in fact, different expressions of one and the same spiritual IGNORANCE. This ignorance (Avidya), when it functions in the intellect, expresses itself as DESIRES. When the desires, which are nothing other than the 'ignorance,' function in the mental zone, they express themselves as THOUGHTS. These thoughts, when they express in the outer world, become ACTIONS. Naturally, therefore, if the Supreme can be defined as "the experience beyond ignorance," it must necessarily be true that the Self is "the State of "DESIRELESS-NESS"

Finally, also from Swami Chinmayanandaji, "Therefore, not to act at all is to disobey the laws of nature which shall, as we all know, bring about a cultural deterioration in ourselves. If there is a creature who remains inactive physically, he will get dissipated in his thoughts. Therefore, the Geeta advises him to act vigorously with a right attitude of mind, so that he may avoid all internal waste of energy and learn to grow in himself."

We are told that action is necessary, and further that our personal desires bind us to the state of confusion and suffering. Our challenge, then, is not action itself, it is why we act! As long as we do for our own self (this includes also "my world", all of the things and people that I indicate possession of with the word "my") we are bound, when we do for the benefit of all we are combining wisdom and action, thus we are loosing our own bonds to the state of suffering.

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 60

### The essence of Karma Yoga.

We continue where we left off in Chapter 2. Lord Krishna reminds us of how we achieve Yoga (union with the Self) as He steps us through His detailed instructions. Yesterday we had two wonderful questions about the power of thought. We have the strong idea that if we do not act out our thoughts they do not bear fruit, and yet paradoxically we are taught that this is not so; we are told by the great teachers that thought is every bit as important as action. Logically this does not make sense in a world of things and separation, and yet what we are given is a deep truth; it is intuitive (not instinctive - thus it goes completely against what we think). It is not just that thoughts bear fruit you see, it is that thoughts ARE fruit. They are subtle fruit, but every bit as real as gross actions or objects... in the same way as steam is subtle but is every bit as real as the gross ice cube.

Those familiar with Jesus' teaching will recognize this same theme in this important teaching from the Gospel of Matthew: "5-21: You have heard that it was said to the ancients, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' 22: But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again,

anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' will be subject to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be subject to the fire of hell."

#2-6

कर्मेन्द्रियाणि संयम्य य आस्ते मनसा स्मरन्।

इन्द्रियार्थान्विमूढात्मा मिथ्याचारः स उच्यते॥६॥

Karmendriyāṇi saṁyamya ya āste manasā smaran|  
Indriyārthānvimūḍhātmā mithyācāraḥ sa ucyate

"He is said to be (ucyate) a bewildered (vimūḍha-ātmā) hypocrite (mithyā-ācāraḥ) who (yaḥ), having controlled (saṁyamya) (his) Karmendriya-s or Powers of action (karma-indriyāṇi), continues (āste) mentally (manasā) recollecting (smaran) the objects (arthān) of the senses (indriya)"

Translation, "He who, restraining the organs-of-action, sits thinking in his mind of the sense-objects, he, of deluded understanding, is called a hypocrite."

#2-7

यस्त्विन्द्रियाणि मनसा नियम्यारभतेऽर्जुन।

कर्मेन्द्रियैः कर्मयोगमसक्तः स विशिष्यते॥७॥

Yastvindriyāṇi manasā niyamyārabhate'rjuna|  
Karmendriyaiḥ karmayogamasaktaḥ sa viśiṣyate

"However (tu), oh Arjuna (arjuna), he (saḥ) excels (viśiṣyate) who (yaḥ), having controlled (niyamyā) the senses (indriyāṇi) by (his) mind (manasā), undertakes (ārabhate), with no attachment (asaktaḥ), Karmayoga or Yoga of action (karma-yogam) through the Karmendriya-s or Powers of action (karma-indriyaiḥ)"

Translation, "But, whosoever, controlling the senses by the mind, O Arjuna, engages his organs-of-action in KARMA YOGA, without attachment, he excels."

Sharing a comment from Swami Chinmayananda about the teaching shared in these two slokas, "In these two innocent looking lines we have the entire Science-of-Right-Action and the complete technique of right living. The ECONOMICS OF THOUGHT is a science unknown to the modern world while the thought economists of yore carved out a Rishi-India and guided the country to the golden era of its spiritual culture."

Commentary by Swami Venkateshananda, "Kṛṣṇa's yoga is karma yoga or buddhi yoga; the yoga that does not discourage activity, but, on the contrary, insists on intelligent dynamism. The man who refuses do his duty vainly rebels against God's will. There is activity in his mind; if the mind is not active, he would cease to live. Even the mind's recognition of the position of one's own limbs is the result of wrong identification of the self with the body which is part of the world. Foolish suppression of mental activity will only result in an explosion which could take the form of a simple mental aberration, a criminal tendency or lunacy. What is vital is a direct perception of the conditioning which generates aspirations and aversions which in turn taint one's mental and physical activity. Such perception dispels the psychological conditioning and its offspring (the ego), and reveals the divine as the source and goal of all life.

"Kṛṣṇa's ideal is one of self-controlled participation in the divine will, which is karma yoga. Control is not suppression or repression. In any field of life, suppression only means compression which, sooner or later, leads to explosion. We see this happen in the life of a man, of society, of communities and of nations. Control, on the other hand, is right expression – neither suppression nor licence. This is the middle path of the Buddha, the buddhi yoga of Kṛṣṇa, the Christian way, and the Divine Life of our Master. An excellent parallel is seen in the expression – "Mr. So-and-so has good control of the car." He knows when to stop or to start, which way to go and at what speed. The enigma of this yoga lies in its simplicity."

### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 61

We so often feel the urge to "get away", and eventually we learn that what we really want to get away from is not something outside of us, it is our own self. This is the freedom we want, but as our actions are always binding us to further actions (remember; thought, word and deed are all actions) how do we stop this seemingly never ending wheel of cause and effect? We are told that we must act, so what kind of action prevents us from being bound to the cause of our suffering?

#3-8

नियतं कुरु कर्म त्वं कर्म ज्यायो ह्यकर्मणः।

शरीरयात्रापि च ते न प्रसिद्ध्येदकर्मणः॥८॥

Niyataṁ kuru karma tvam karma jyāyo hyakarmaṇaḥ|  
Śārīrayātrāpi ca te na prasiddhyedakarmaṇaḥ

"Perform (kuru... tvam) (your) prescribed (niyatam) duty (karma) because (hi) action (karma) is superior (jyāyas) to inaction (akarmaṇaḥ). Even (api ca) the maintenance (yātrā) of your (te) body (śārīra) cannot be accomplished (na prasiddhyet) through inaction (akarmaṇaḥ)"

Translation, "You perform (your) bounden duty; for, action is superior to inaction. Even the maintenance of the body would not be possible for you by inaction."

#3-9

यज्ञार्थात्कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः।

तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय मुक्तसङ्गः समाचर॥९॥

Yajñārthātkarmaṇo'nyatra loko'yaṁ karmabandhanaḥ|  
Tadārthaṁ karma kaunteya muktasaṅgaḥ samācara

"This (ayam) living being --also, 'world'-- (lokaḥ) is bound (bandhanaḥ) by actions (karma) with the exception (anyatra) of the action (karmaṇaḥ) (which is performed) for the sake (arthāt) of Yajña (yajña). (Thus,) oh son of Kuntī (kaunteya), free from attachment (mukta-saṅgaḥ), perform (samācara) action(s) (karma) for (artham) Him (tad)"

Translation, "The World is bound by action other than those performed 'for the sake of sacrifice' ; do thou, therefore, O son of Kunti, perform action of that sake (for YAJNA ) alone, free from all attachments."

Commentary by Swami Venkateshananda, "Kṛṣṇa has the divine genius of going at once to the root of the problem. What binds man to the wheel of action-reaction, or more simply, sin and suffering? Selfish desire and attachment. Removal of these two liberates us from it.

"On the other hand, if we stubbornly and ignorantly refuse to take part in the world's activity, we lose the best way to understand the nature and strength of the chain that binds us. It is the ego, the 'me' It is the ego that suggests that inaction is liberation. The approval and adulation of ignorant people stiffens and strengthens the ego of the pseudo sage who has 'renounced the world'. Covering filth with a Persian carpet cannot remove it. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa advocates positive action and vigilant effort at self-purification.

We are bound to the wheel of karma by selfish desires. These must be sacrificed, and our actions should be our sacrifice at the altar of the omnipresent God. 'Ya' (that) 'jñā' (knowledge) – that action which is of knowledge and leads to knowledge. If yajña means 'animal sacrifice', the animal to be sacrificed is not outside, but within us. That animal is the personality full of selfishness, lust, hatred and egoism – in a word, 'me'. But if sacrifice means 'offering' then we should offer all our actions to God as sacrifice. If sacrifice means 'to make sacred' then everything (all our actions, experiences, and even the ego) should be offered to God to be made sacred. Self-sacrificing, selfless service will not bind us, but liberate us.

"But even these should be performed without attachment to the actions (the feeling that we do or do not do) and their rewards."

Thus we are told that it is not just what we do (do our duty, do that which is meant for us) but rather how we do it (in the spirit of self sacrifice) that frees us from our suffering and brings us to happiness.

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 62

And what of selfless service? The Lord here expounds on the concept and the power of it.  
#3-10

सहयज्ञाः प्रजाः सृष्ट्वा पुरोवाच प्रजापतिः।

अनेन प्रसविष्यध्वमेष वोऽस्त्विष्टकामधुक्॥१०॥

Sahayajñāḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā purovāca prajāpatiḥ|

Anena prasaviṣyadhvameṣa vo'stviṣṭakāmadhuk

"Formerly (purā), after having created (sṛṣṭvā) the living beings (prajāḥ) along with (saha) the yajña-s --sacrifices-- (yajña), the lord of creatures (prajāpatiḥ) said (uvāca): 'Procreate (prasaviṣyadhvam) by this (yajña) (anena). Let this (yajña) be (eṣaḥ... astu) for you (vas) (like Iṣṭakāmadhuk or the cow of plenty) who grants (dhuk) (all) desires (iṣṭa-kāma)!"

Translation, "The PRAJAPATI (the Creator) , having in the beginning (of creation) created mankind, together with sacrifices, said, "by this shall you prosper; let this be the milch-cow of your desire --- "KAMADHUK" (the mythological cow which yields all desired objects)."

Commentary by Swami Venkateshanandaji, "The spirit of sacrifice was created by God. It is God himself. Hence we find that the seed dies to give birth to the plant, the mother



suffers birth-pangs to create new life. Metaphysically even creation is the supreme self-sacrifice of God – the one who has become many. It is this spirit of sacrifice that promotes life and well-being here."

#3-11

देवान्भावयतानेन ते देवा भावयन्तु वः।

परस्परं भावयन्तः श्रेयः परमवाप्स्यथ॥११॥

Devānbhāvayatānena te devā bhāvayantu vaḥ|  
Parasparaṁ bhāvayantaḥ śreyaḥ paramavāpsyatha

"Foster (bhāvayata) the gods (devān) with this (yajña or sacrifice) (anena), (and let) those (te) gods (devāḥ) foster (bhāvayantu) you (all) (vas)! By fostering (bhāvayantaḥ) one another (parasparam), you will get (avāpsyatha) the highest (param) good and welfare (śreyas)"

Translation, "With this, you do nourish the gods and may those DEVAS nourish you; thus nourishing one another, you shall, attain the Highest Good."

Commentary by Swami Chinmayanandaji, "The whole Vedic concept of Devas is that of one Universal Power, ever active in the world of phenomena, receiving appropriate names because of Its multiple functions. All Vedic gods are but functional names of the one Supreme Creative Power manifesting in myriad forms.

"In understanding the stanza in its more universal application, we have to interpret the term Deva as the very "presiding deity" in any field of activity, who blesses the worker in that field with his profit. The deity that blesses the worker in a field of activity can be nothing other than "THE PRODUCTIVE POTENTIAL" in that given field. When we apply in any situation our true and sincere work, the efforts and sacrifices so made, as it were, invoke the 'PRODUCTIVE POTENTIAL' in that situation, which comes to manifest and bless the worker. This becomes obvious when we try to understand what we, in the modern world mean, when we say Mother India. In thus symbolising the might of a nation we mean the 'PRODUCTIVE POTENTIAL' of that country in all her spheres of activities.

"It is obvious that the productivity that is dormant in any situation can be invoked only by man's sincere efforts. This potential which generally lies dormant everywhere is the Deva to be cherished by the worker through the Yajna activities, and certainly the Deva will manifest itself to cherish, or to bless the worker. "Thus cherishing one another, man shall gain the Highest Good," is the Divine intention in the mind of the creator, says Krishna in this stanza.

"The Law-of-Seva (selfless service) is faithfully followed by every sentient and insentient member of the cosmos instinctively. Man alone is given the freedom to act as he likes and to the extent he disobeys this Universal Law-of-Sacrifice, Yajna, to that extent he comes to suffer, because he, with his arrogant and egoistic actions, brings discord in the harmony of the existence around him."

Again, "Thus cherishing one another, man shall gain the Highest Good". We are told that this summarizes the teaching of 3-10 and 3-11.

Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 63

We continue with the Lord sharing wisdom of how the world really works. (We know by now that that it does not work the way we think that it does, this quandry causes us to continue to search... and finally to open.)

#3-12

इष्टान्भोगान्हि वो देवा दास्यन्ते यज्ञभाविताः।

तैर्दत्तानप्रदायैभ्यो यो भुङ्क्ते स्तेन एव सः॥१२॥

Iṣṭānbhogānhi vo devā dāsyante yajñabhāvitāḥ|

Tairdattānapradāyaibhyo yo bhuṅkte stena eva saḥ

""(And) the gods (devāḥ), fostered (bhāvitāḥ) by (such) yajña-s or sacrifices (yajña), will give (dāsyante) you (vas) the desired (iṣṭa) enjoyments (bhogān) indeed (hi). He (saḥ) (is) just (eva) a thief (stenaḥ) who (yaḥ) enjoys (bhuṅkte) what have been granted (dattān) by them --i.e. by the gods-- (taiḥ) without giving (apradāya) (the same thing) to these (gods) (ebhyaḥ) (in return)""

Translation, "The DEVAS, nourished by the sacrifice, will give you the desired objects.' Indeed he who enjoys objects, given by the DEVAS, without offering (in return) to them, is verily a thief."

If you note the above, first the word for word translation, and then the full english translation below, you will see that the words "Devas" and "gods" are used interchangeably here. In many traditions the idea that there are "gods" (multiple) is seen as heresy. In fact we could say that perhaps it is simply misunderstood, and that something different is not actually being pointed to in these great traditions. Swami Venkateshananda ji deals with this idea in his commentary:

"This is a great psychological truth.

"When the spirit of yajña or sacrifice rules the heart of man and becomes the content of his thoughts, words and deeds, even the gods are pleased and man obtains the desired objects. He is peaceful, happy and prosperous.

"Who and where are the gods? They are the subtle forces or powers that animate the whole of creation. They have their seats in the various organs of the body, too. Thoughts and emotions have a tremendous effect on these. Anxiety grips the stomach. Anger alters the colour of the skin and the eyes. Fear chokes the throat. Thoughts are things! Good thoughts can favourably influence the gods presiding over the organs of our body. The selfless man's face is bright and cheerful. Compassion flows from his eyes. His speech is honeyed and sweet. His gait is soft. The vibrations that emanate from him are holy and beneficent. People readily pick them up and also react favourably. The selfless person is not deliberately setting an example for others to emulate – any such motivation would re-activate selfishness, however subtle it may be. But people may be inspired.

"Thus the selfless man's limbs are strong and healthy. He thinks well, speaks well and acts well. He achieves the desired objective; the gods presiding over his limbs enable him to do that. The gods residing in all, and in the very atmosphere, also help him in every possible way.

"The man who is selfish, who grabs, is a thief. A society composed of such people can obviously not be prosperous. Selfishness is the most deadly virus which is highly

contagious. In no time one man's selfishness expands to epidemic proportions. It destroys one's vision and perverts one's intelligence. If you observe yourself and the world you live in, you can see for yourself the havoc it can cause."

Indeed, this is timely teaching, is it not? It can help us to understand what we see in the world, and in ourself, and it points inexorably to the cure. In a world full of selfish action there is nonetheless the opportunity to be selfless, as the cure to all that ails us is always vibrating like a perfect and brilliant gem inside each and every one of us.

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 64

Here the Lord speaks to the nature of the world, of action, and of intent, and how these are interrelated. Note that the western societal view is that results count, not intent. "Do what is needed to win" is the byword within so much of what we see in society today, and in fact we see it because this same idea has its roots inside each of us. Our confusion is strong and binding. The confused aspect, known as ego, advocates within us that the truth of the world is merely physical and that attaining to pleasure while avoiding pain will lead us successfully to happiness. When we examine this notion closely we see it to be categorically wrong and the cause of our suffering, and yet still we follow it! Clearly the guidance that the Lord provides to us is not popular, for it requires us to go against our instinct. So if satisfaction does not come from pleasurable results how is it to be obtained? This is what we are being taught.

In the last stanza the Lord gave us the concept of a social "thief", one who takes for himself first, and we discussed what happens to a society when this is the predominant trait. This discussion continues here.

#3-13

यज्ञशिष्टाशिनः सन्तो मुच्यन्ते सर्वकिल्बिषैः।

भुञ्जते ते त्वघं पापा ये पचन्त्यात्मकारणात्॥१३॥

Yajñaśiṣṭāśinaḥ santo mucyante sarvakilbiṣaiḥ|  
Bhuñjate te tvaghaṁ pāpā ye pacantyātmakāraṇāt

"The good people (santaḥ) enjoy (aśinaḥ) what is left (śiṣṭa) from the yajña-s or sacrifices (yajña) (and thus) they are liberated (mucyante) from all (sarva) (their) faults (kilbiṣaiḥ). Nevertheless (tu), those (te) wicked (people) (pāpāḥ) eat (bhuñjate) sin (agham) who (ye) cook (pacanti) (only) for their own sake (ātma-kāraṇāt)"

Translation, "The righteous, who eat the "remnants of the sacrifices" are freed from all sins; but those sinful ones, who cook food (only) for their own sake, verily eat but sin."

Commentary from Swami Venkateshananda, "Not the ritual called 'yajña', but the simple universal daily act of cooking food itself is regarded as 'yajña' or sacrifice here. It is symbolic and illustrative, but not descriptive and exhaustive. Even so, all our actions should be acts of self-sacrificing, selfless service – always for others, never for ourselves. We are 'the other' of others!

"That settles once and for all this futile wrangling over ethics – what is good and what is evil? Self-sacrificing, selfless and desireless service is good; selfish action is evil. It does

not matter what the action appears to be externally – an act of selfless service is good. It does not matter how grand and philanthropic it looks – a selfish action is evil.

"The spirit of sacrifice was woven into the very fabric of our life, so that we were almost compelled to feed our fellow-men and animals and insects before we ate. Self-sacrifice is our religion. Charity is our supreme duty. Our prayer to the Lord is that everyone should be happy; all beings should enjoy peace, happiness and prosperity. Bali-dāna (popularly, an animal sacrifice or its symbolic equivalent) is the culminating point of yajña. According to Bhāgavatam, king Bali gave everything to the Lord and eventually offered himself too, in an act of supreme self-sacrifice. True Bali-dāna is total sacrifice of our whole being, our very soul, at the altar of God so that in the full and direct realisation that the 'I' is and has always been a non-entity, a shadowy dividing factor, even the thought 'I do this' or 'I enjoy' or 'I suffer' is no more in our heart. Charity involves sacrifice. Sacrifice leads to self-sacrifice. We are freed from sin."

Within this stanza lies the first use of the word "sin", and in various circles there is much dialogue about this concept. Some will say that we are by nature sinners and that we are to accept this lot, some will say that there is no sin. What of these concepts and of the pointing word "sin"?

We can contemplate this word in the context of two more often controversial words "heaven" and "hell". As we become more aware we see that in fact heaven and hell do both exist, and that they are always where we are. If we equate "heaven" with peace and "hell" with suffering, we see that we experience both within the moments of life. Further, when we analyze them we see that "heaven" is when our mind is at rest and "hell" is when it is most active and given over to anger, or fear, or various instinctive causes of unrest. When we look out at the examples we are provided in this world we see that most all creatures are experiencing these states of heaven and hell in much the same way that we do, but we also see exceptions. We see those who are psychologically ill and come to understand that they inhabit a much more hellish existence, and we see the saints and come to know that they have an undisturbed experience of "heaven". Like all of these, saint is just a word, and it is used to describe a person that no longer identifies with their own lower self and is thus free of the disturbances of ego identified mind. I've lived with saints and can attest to their experience; they are completely undisturbed by their lower human nature; they have mastered it and now their mind and body serves the highest good.

These saints, and the great teachers, tell us that there is nothing that we can do for which we are not forgiven. They also tell us that all that we do does have repercussion though, and that the "bad" deeds that we do have the effect of creating a more hellish inner environment. These deeds pile up in front of us and make our path harder. They become walls and seemingly climb higher and higher as we move forward in our life. They are not external punishment though, they are the results of our own actions (karma) and are observed in our own mind as negative, painful and judgmental thoughts. If we look at them as punishment we can say that the punishment is part and parcel with the selfish act, or if we choose to look at them as learning opportunities we see that for every act we are given a challenge to overcome which will allow us to finally negate the results of the act. This negation is internal as well.

What, then, of sin? If we are forgiven for all then why the concept of sin? Sin is simply that which is selfish, for it is rooted in the confused idea of separation. Sin is that which leads us away from the pure Self, it has the effect of covering up the divine Truth within. Sin strengthens the powers of hell, and our experience of it, within us. All selfish action piles up karma for us and requires us to eventually face it. Sinful acts, then, may or may not cause harm to others, but they always cause spiritual harm to us.

Indeed you are not sinful; you are not the body nor the emotions or thoughts. You are the stainless Self, timeless and pure. You are the source of this great universe, you are Beauty and Love itself. You have taken birth in this world in order to come into full alignment with this Truth, to know and to be in your fullness, to be free of the animalistic lower nature. Nothing you can do will ever change this fact and salvation (detachment from the lower self and assertion of the highest Self) is yours. The Lord is with you whatever you do. To know this you need to be out of the box that you have created for yourself though, and we create this box through selfish thought, word and deed. The way out? Dedicating our life to selfless action and introspection. Sacrifice your self in all that you do and you will discover your own great Self standing where you are.

### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 65

#3-14

अन्नाद्भवन्ति भूतानि पर्जन्यादन्नसंभवः।

यज्ञाद्भवति पर्जन्यो यज्ञः कर्मसमुद्भवः॥१४॥

Annādbhavanti bhūtāni parjanyaḍannasambhavaḥ|  
Yajñādbhavati parjanyo yajñaḥ karmasamudbhavaḥ

"From food (annāt) the living beings (bhūtāni) come into being (bhavanti); from rain (parjanyaāt) (there is) production (sambhavaḥ) of food (anna); from yajña or sacrifice (yajñāt) rain (parjanyaḥ) comes into being (bhavati); (and) yajña (yajñaḥ) springs (samudbhavaḥ) from action (karma)"

Translation, "From food come forth beings; from rain food is produced; from sacrifice arises rain, and sacrifice is born of action."

#3-15

कर्म ब्रह्मोद्भवं विद्धि ब्रह्माक्षरसमुद्भवम्।

तस्मात्सर्वगतं ब्रह्म नित्यं यज्ञे प्रतिष्ठितम्॥१५॥

Karma brahmodbhavaṁ viddhi brahmākṣarasamudbhavam|  
Tasmātsarvagataṁ brahma nityaṁ yajñe pratiṣṭhitam

"Know (viddhi) (that) action (karma) comes (udbhavam) from Brahma --viz. Veda-- (brahma)1; Brahma (brahma) arises (samudbhavam) from the Imperishable One (akṣara). Therefore (tasmāt), all-pervading (sarva-gatam) Brahma or Veda (brahma) always (nityam) abides (pratiṣṭhitam) in yajña or sacrifice (yajñe)"

Translation, "Know you that action comes from BRAHMAJI (the creator) and BRAHMAJI come from the Imperishable. Therefore, the allpervading BRAHMAN (God-principle) ever rests in sacrifice."

No doubt these slokas will seem arcane to the western intellect, and yet what is being described here is the wheel of life, called "Samsara" in Sanskrit (the ancient language of the Vedas) and Pali (the language of the Buddha).

Commentary by Swami Venkateshanandaji, "Sacrifice produces rain! It is asserted by some that the smoke that rises from the sacrificial (homa) pit brings about the necessary change in the atmosphere to induce the cloud to rain.

"Even subtler than this is the power of good thoughts. There is a proverb in Tamil which says that if there is one good man in the village, the entire village will be blessed with sufficient rain to ensure its prosperity. The selfish man is more concerned with destroying the prosperity of the neighbour than with building his own, for he wants to shine as a superior person, one better than the neighbour. When all are selfish, the whole atmosphere is full of vicious thought-currents; ill-will fills the whole place and the mood of destruction prevails. The very elements respond to such thought-vibrations and we have famine and pestilence.

"On the other hand, if there is self-sacrificing selflessness in the heart of man, then there is prosperity. It is easy enough to see that with that selflessness in his heart, man will ever try to promote the prosperity of others. His actions will be pure and prosperity promoting. Such pure action is divine, rooted in the imperishable, the eternal law that has created and that sustains the whole universe.

"This is the law of the divine. Man should live a self-sacrificing, selfless life of service to all. Sacrifice is born of action. It is action, it is life. A life of sacrifice is therefore a full and dynamic life. Sacrifice knits knowledge and action into the fabric of divine life."

### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 66

We were told yesterday that the one who lives in unison with the wheel of life by living to give instead of to take is one who is blessed. What of the one that lives for their own pleasure and avoids doing what is right when it might be painful? The Lord addresses this here.

#3-16

एवं प्रवर्तितं चक्रं नानुवर्तयतीह यः।

अघायुरिन्द्रियारामो मोघं पार्थ स जीवति॥१६॥

Evam pravartitam cakram nānuvartayatīha yaḥ|

Aghāyurindriyārāmo moghaṁ pārtha sa jīvati

"Oh son of Prthā (pārtha), he (saḥ) lives (jīvati) in vain (mogham) who delights (ārāmaḥ) in the senses (indriya), whose life (āyus) (is) sinful (agha), (and) who (yaḥ) does not (na)follow (anuvartayati) here --i.e. in this world-- (iha) the wheel (cakram) thus (evam) set in motion (pravartitam)"

Translation, "He who does not follow here the wheel thus set revolving, is of a sinful life, rejoicing in the senses. He lives in vain, O Son of Pritha."

We discussed the concept of sin in lesson 64, please revert back to it if you missed it. The original sin is forgetting one's own nature (spirit) and living life as if we were this body. From this all fears and deluded actions spring forth.



Commentary from Swami Chinmayananda, "Every member in the entire kingdom of the minerals, the vegetables and the dumb-creatures, instinctively follows this principle of Yajna and contributes thereby to the smooth running of the Universal-Wheel-of-Action. Among living creatures, man alone has been allowed the FREEDOM OF ACTION to contribute to the harmony, or to bring about discord in the smooth running of this cosmic mechanism. So long as the majority of a generation manage to live abiding by the Law-of-Harmony they shall grow from strength to strength, opening up fields of happiness for themselves. Such periods are called the golden eras of their social and cultural life.

"But, this faithful obedience is not always possible, for all of them, at all times. At certain periods of history, man, as a social being, comes to revolt against this Eternal Law, and then, life starts slipping away from its peaceful domain of constructive growth, and shatters itself in tearful ruin. Such ages are the dark ages of despair and restlessness, war and pestilence, flood and famine.

"The question naturally arises as to why the bright day of the world slowly sets itself to bring in the dark night of chaos. The explanation is given here in the Geeta.

"A community is made up of its individuals. However much we may glorify the achievements of the community as such, we cannot totally ignore the contributions made by the units constituting the community --- the individuals. If the individuals are perfect, the community works smoothly. But, if the units are wrongly composed, then the entire healthy growth and strength of structure in the total collapses. The individuals' negative existence starts with their pre-occupation with their senses. In their limited recognition that they are themselves nothing more than their body, they become pre-occupied with its nourishment and fattening. As a body, they cannot perceive the Higher 'ways of life'; nor can they entertain any goal other than seeking satisfactions for their mere animal passions.

"In such an era, nobody would come forward to work in the redeeming noble spirit of Yajna, without which, no "favourable circumstances" (rain), could be created for the "productive potentials" (Devas) to manifest themselves as nourishing joy. Seekers of sense (Indriya-ramah), they compete among themselves, each seeking with lustful greed, his own selfish happiness, and they, often unconsciously, bring about a discordant rhythm in the Wheel-of-Action. Such people are considered by the Geeta as "living in sin," and the Divine Song asserts, "they live in vain."

Indeed we see this philosophy in action in the world. Upon introspection and contemplation, if we view events in the world with this wisdom teaching as a background, we can see the seeds of despair that take root both inside and about us. Having said this we are indeed spiritual beings, not these bodies, and these universal rules apply to each of us individually as well as collectively in society. That is that the individual does not rely upon society for salvation. Any person choosing to live in synch with the wheel and the teaching, and bringing their life to a life of willing and grateful service coupled with introspection, contemplation and devotion does reach salvation, they do find the happiness that they seek (as it is inbuilt, not acquired, all have the ability to find it by living in accordance with it). The teaching that we are given here is for our time, at any point it is possible to give up on the confusion that reigns inside us and to turn towards Wisdom, Truth and Love.

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 67

Now the Lord himself supposes Arjuna to ask the following questions, "is the wheel of action, thus set in motion, to be followed by all, or by him only who has not yet attained firm faith in the path of Knowledge?"

#3-17

यस्त्वात्मरतिरेव स्यादात्मतृप्तश्च मानवः।

आत्मन्येव च सन्तुष्टस्तस्य कार्यं न विद्यते॥१७॥

Yastvātmaratireva syādātmatrptaśca mānavaḥ|  
Ātmanyeva ca santuṣṭastasya kāryam na vidyate

"Nonetheless (tu), there is no (na vidyate) duty (kāryam) for that (tasya) human being (mānavaḥ) who (yaḥ) rejoices (ratiḥ) only (eva) in (his own) Self (ātma), (who) is (syāt) satisfied (trptaḥ) with (his own) Self (ātma), and (ca... ca) (who) feels quite contented (santuṣṭaḥ) in (his own) Self (ātmani) alone (eva)"

Translation, "But the man who rejoices only in the Self, who is satisfied with the Self, who is content in the Self alone, for Him verily there is nothing (more) to be done.

#3-18

नैव तस्य कृतेनार्थो नाकृतेनेह कश्चन।

न चास्य सर्वभूतेषु कश्चिदर्थव्यपाश्रयः ॥१८॥

Naiva tasya kṛtenārtho nākṛteneha kaścana|  
Na cāsyā sarvabhūteṣu kaścidarthavyapāśrayaḥ

"For him --i.e. for the human being mentioned in the previous stanza-- (tasya) there is no (na eva... na... kaścana) concern (arthaḥ) with (either) action --viz. what has been done-- (kṛtena) (or) the opposite --viz. what has not been done-- (akṛtena) here --in this world-- (iha). Also (ca), as for him (asya), there is no (na... kaścid) support or dependence (vyapāśrayaḥ) upon all (sarva) beings (bhūteṣu) for any purpose (artha)"

Translation, "For him there is here no interest whatever in what is done, or what is not done; nor does he depend upon any being for any object."

Commentary on these deep and seemingly obtuse slokas by Swami Venkatasahanandaji, "As long as you yourself are dependent on others, so long as your happiness and wellbeing are dependent on the services of others, serve and be good. These two verses both have a philosophic import and offer practical advice.

"Is this not a common failing of man? He expects others to serve him and work for him. He wants to enjoy all comforts himself at the expense of fellow-men. He will cheat those dependent on him, but will moan and grumble if he himself is let down. Here is Kṛṣṇa's sweet warning. As long as you expect others to serve you and to promote your prosperity, as long as your own happiness depends on what others do to you, take a deep interest in the happiness of others too. It is the re-statement of the golden rule: "Do unto others as you wish them to do unto you".

"However, there is a state of being where the sage rests in the Self. He is not obliged to do or not to do. But what is the Self in which the sage rests? Self is awareness – the all, the indivisible – not the fragmented thought-born personality which we selfishly call the

self. Self is 'the choiceless awareness' in the words of Ramana Maharshi, 'witness consciousness' of Gurudev Sivananda, and 'observation without an observer' of Kṛṣṇaji. When it is veiled, another self (the ego) arises apparently, not really, and thinks (the mind) that it is dependent or independent of others. Awareness being Self does not have a self to generate selfishness. The sage who rests in the Self alone is unselfish! The entire universe is his body. He is like the sun: by his light he illumines all. He is one with all and thus does everything through everyone. Though he might apparently be inactive; yet, he does nothing, though the body and mind might be busy, for the fragmented ego has vanished with the lifted veil."

In these verses the Lord reminds us of the deepest Truth, that this entire cosmos of action is but the divine play of the Lord, and that our ideas of "doing" and "doership" are completely wrong. To the Lord there is but Himself, He sees all of His children as His very Self. Of course there is Love, Love is transcendent. There is not, however, the idea of separation. We have this idea, it is in our conditioned self, it is delusion. As long as we have the idea of separation then we are bound to action and our action must be selfless if we are to be free (of our own self, or ego awareness). The sages and saints, or God Himself, does not see separation and therefore they see no "thing", they see God as all, as the Reality of this world.

As a practical matter we are not here yet as long as we see separation so these statements are mind boggling. We can set them aside for now and keep them as pointers to the highest Realization.

In Peace Pilgrim's great teaching "Steps to Inner Peace" she describes the steps as preparations, purifications and relinquishments, there are four of each. In relinquishments the first is relinquishing self will in favor of God's will, and near the end is the relinquishment of the idea of separation. This idea is to be transcended, and when it has one is not separate from the world but is in fact separated from all limited ideas. Of course service is still done, but the perspective is forever altered and peace is at hand.

## Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 68

The last two slokas speak of one who has attained to the highest, if you missed them certainly go back to review them if you would like. For the one that has not yet been freed from the wheel action is prescribed in order to become free. Here the Lord becomes more specific with us about the kind of action and the spirit in which it is to be performed.

#3-19

तस्मादसक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर।

असक्तो ह्याचरन्कर्म परमाप्नोति पूरुषः॥१९॥

Tasmādasaktaḥ satataṁ kāryaṁ karma samācara|

Asakto hyācarankarma paramāpnoti pūruṣaḥ

"For that reason (tasmāt), remaining detached (asaktaḥ), constantly (satatam) perform (samācara) action(s) (karma) as a duty (kāryam), because (hi) a person (pūruṣaḥ) who performs (ācaran) action(s) (karma) with no attachment (asaktaḥ) attains (āpnoti) the Highest --i.e. Mokṣa or final Liberation-- (param)"

Translation, "Therefore, always perform actions which should be done, without attachment; for, by performing action without attachment, man attains the Supreme."

Commentary by Swami Venkateshanandaji, "Kṛṣṇa is not in favour of our abandoning our 'duty'. Various expressions are used;

niyataṁ karma (action in accord with the cosmic order); kāryaṁ karma (action that should be done), or sva-karma (one's natural. action). And these are used as synonyms for sva-dharma (one's own duty). Duty holds society together. My duty is your privilege and vice versa. Action performed with this ideal in view is dharma. It holds people together in love and harmony.

"Both selfish action and the performance of another's function (obviously taken over through selfish desire) are to be abandoned, but not one's own duty. Not even a monk should renounce his own duty; Kṛṣṇa gives a revolutionary definition even to saṁnyāsa.

"Our scriptures give us several instances of yogī attaining perfection while leading their normal household lives in the right spirit, i.e. without desire and without attachment. An exaggerated value of worldly objects creates desire in the mind. This desire gives rise to attachment to the actions calculated to secure the desired object and the reward too. This attachment is the source of all sins; it itself is sin. Renunciation of attachment is the surest way to attain perfection. The world is not a hindrance. Work is not a hindrance either. But attachment is a definite hindrance on our path to perfection.

"What is popularly known as 'detachment' is not the true opposite of or antidote to attachment: that is another form of attachment – attachment to self-interest, selfesteem and the adoration of one's ideology, and aversion to others. Non-attachment is the discovery of the truth concerning attachment itself. Even so with 'duty'. It is the discovery of what is 'natural' to oneself, not some injunctions and prohibitions prescribed or proscribed by others."

What is "natural" to oneself? The modern American sage Joseph Campbell tells us to "follow your bliss". Follow what you are clearly gifted for and which, in the performance of, you experience bliss. Peace Pilgrim tells a wonderful story of working with a friend that she met who thought that, "I'm not good at anything". Peace asked her, "what do you like?" and the young woman described three things. She liked to play piano, but was not yet good enough to earn a living from it. She liked to skate, and she liked flowers. Peace encouraged her to follow the latter, and she introduced her to a florist friend that hired her. They stayed in touch over the years, and the woman blossomed much like the flowers that she tended to lovingly.

Our ego identified mind will tell us that we must "follow the money" or to "save the world" or "demonstrate what I can do", etc. These ideas are rooted in our confused notion of happiness and contribution. In truth you are already valid, all are. You need do nothing to be valid or to prove yourself, all of these actions end up being in vain because they cannot lead you to your own true nature. You already have a gift, and the answer is within you. You need not acquire a new one, simply follow what you love and offer it in the spirit of sacrifice. This gift is our way to express the Love that is inside us, and expressing this Love is Bliss.

So, we come back to Swamiji's statement. Doing what is "natural" to oneself is our path to freedom and happiness. We don't need to do someone else's duty, we are to recognize

and to perform our own and this simple step leads us to happiness as well as supporting the potential for a dharmic, or righteous, society.

### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 69

Now the Lord provides us with examples to help illustrate the way of the master (a "jivanmukti", one who has mastered his own self and is in full union with the Absolute) as well as those who aspire to be free.

#3-20

कर्मणैव हि संसिद्धिमास्थिता जनकादयः।

लोकसङ्ग्रहमेवापि सम्पश्यन्कर्तुमर्हसि॥२०॥

Karmaṇaiva hi saṁsiddhimāsthitā janakādayaḥ|  
Lokasaṅgrahamevāpi sampaśyankartumarhasi

"(The celebrated king) Janaka (janaka) and others (ādayaḥ) have truly attained (eva hi... āsthitāḥ) complete perfection (saṁsiddhim) through action(s) (karmaṇā). (So,) please, do (actions) (kartum arhasi) as well (api) with a view (sampaśyan) to the welfare (saṅgraham) of the world (loka) alone (eva)"

Translation, "(King) Janaka and others attained Perfection verily by action only; even with a view to protecting the masses you should perform action."

#3-21

यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः।

स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते॥२१॥

Yadyadācarati śreṣṭhastattadevetaro janah|  
Sa yatpramāṇam kurute lokastadanuvartate

"Whatsoever (yad yad) a superior being (śreṣṭhaḥ) performs (ācarati), that very thing (tad tad eva) an ordinary person (itarah janah) (does too)! Whatsoever (yad) he (saḥ) sets up (kurute) as an authority (pramāṇam), the world (lokaḥ) follows (anuvartate) that (tad)"

Translation, "Whatever a great man does, that other men also do (imitate); whatever he sets up as the standard, that the world (people) follows."

Commentary by Swami Venkateshanandaji, "Yet another reason why one should not abandon one's duty is given here. People are fond of imitation and a sinful action is more readily copied than a virtuous one! Even a sage like king Janaka, therefore, persisted in the performance of his duties. People blindly follow their leader and if the leader is even slightly negligent in his duties, the followers totally abandon theirs!

"So, then, firstly as a kind of reciprocity in return for the benefits that the yogi enjoys in this world, and secondly in order to set the right example for others to emulate, one should engage oneself in the performance of one's duty, even though he has nothing to achieve thereby. This is a double-edged sword and has to be handled wisely. If the only motivation is to be an exemplar, it might give rise to hypocrisy; but rightly understood, even an initial hypocritical example might lead to right action.

"Again, the sage who has cut off all attachment and who lives in complete dissociation of even his own body, will let the body exhaust its own karma and the past momentum. He does nothing; it is the body and mind that function in the world of matter. Why will he prevent them from doing so if he is unattached to them? True, he will not supply them with fresh fuel to gain more momentum. He is unattached, desireless and egoless, but if he even forcibly restrains them, he comes into contact with them and identifies the self with them. The worldly man is a slave of the senses, the ascetic holds them back, but they are both in contact with them. The sage is not."

If you are following this discussion you see already that these teachings are timeless and this certainly applies to what is expressed here. We can say from one perspective that this teaching applies to how the leader of a country or group should behave, and certainly this is so. From the deeper perspective it can also be seen that this applies to all of us, for based upon how we live we either enslave ourselves further or we become free. It is also so that for each of us others will follow us. This is so whether we engage in detrimental action or positive action, but it is even more so the case when we engage in positive, loving action for the benefit of all.

### Bhagavad Gita - Lesson 70

Continuing our discussion of Right Action, as told to us by the Lord. Here the Lord sets himself and the saints as the example for us and tells us why the Lord (one Truth, acting through the pure ones, it is the same Truth, not different people in spite of all appearance) act even though they need not act for their own purpose.

#3-22

न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किञ्चन।

नानवाप्तमवाप्तव्यं वर्त एव च कर्मणि॥२२॥

Na me pārthāsti kartavyam triṣu lokeṣu kiñcana|  
Nānavāptamavāptavyam varta eva ca karmaṇi

"Oh son of Pṛthā (pārtha), there is nothing (na... asti... kiñcana) in the three (triṣu) worlds (lokeṣu) that must be done (kartavyam) by Me (me), nor (na) (there is anything) unattained (anavāptam) which must be obtained (by Me) (avāptavyam)... (anyway, I am) engaged (vartaḥ) in action(s) (karmaṇi) certainly (eva ca)"

Translation, "There is nothing in the three worlds, O Partha, that has to be done by Me, nor is there anything unattained that should be attained by Me; yet, I engage Myself in action."

Three world = "heavens, hells and the physical world". Here the Lord is saying that He/She needs nothing, that there is no desire or like to pursue, nothing to attain.

#3-23

यदि ह्यहं न वर्तेयं जातु कर्मण्यतन्द्रितः।

मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः॥२३॥

Yadi hyaham na varteyam jātu karmaṇyatandritaḥ|  
Mama vartmānuvartante manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ



"Because (hi) if (yadi) I (aham) ever (jātu) would not (na) be engaged (varteyam) vigilantly (atandritaḥ) in action(s) (karmaṇi), oh son of Pṛthā (pārtha), the human beings (manuṣyāḥ) (would) follow (anuvartante) My (mama) path (vartma) in every way (sarvaśas) --i.e. they will not be engaged in actions either--"

Translation, "For, should I not ever engage Myself in action, without relaxation, men would in every way follow My Path, O son of Pritha."

#3-24

उत्सीदेयुरिमे लोका न कुर्या कर्म चेदहम्।

सङ्करस्य च कर्ता स्यामुपहन्यामिमाः प्रजाः॥२४॥

Utsīdeyurime lokā na kuryāṁ karma cedaham|  
Saṅkarasya ca kartā syāmupahanyāmimāḥ prajāḥ

"These (ime) worlds (lokāḥ) would fall into ruin (utsīdeyuh) if (ced) I (aham) would not do (na kuryāṁ) action(s) (karma). Also (ca), I would be (syām) an agent (kartā) of confusion - specially of castes-- (saṅkarasya), (and consequently) would damage (upahanyām) these (imāḥ) creatures (prajāḥ)"

Translation, "These worlds would perish if I did not perform action; I would be the author of confusion of "castes", and would destroy these beings."

Note that the idea of "castes" will be explored more. This does not mean what we tend to think of in the west or even in modern India. In the pure meaning of the word, and of the intent here, "caste" simply means, "predisposition". Each of us have gifts, this is accordingly our "caste". Some have a gift of writing, some are very organized, some are good speakers, some like working with their hands, etc etc. Where do these gifts come from and why do we each have different gifts? There is an order to them, they are all complementary. When I serve according to my gifts, and you serve according to yours, and all serve according to theirs, then this entire universes dances in rhythm. It is in no way shape or form random, it is all working according to clockwork, it is quite precise. Man has choice, but if mankind serves selflessly according to their own inner calling, or duty (and here called also "caste") then the dance continues its beautiful rhythm. If man chooses to live selfishly and to take what does not belong to him without sacrifice, or not to do their duty according to the predisposition given them, then disorder comes.

Commentary by Swami Chinmayanandaji, "If I do not perform action, it will not be conducive to the harmonious progress of the Universe, and the entire super-structure of our scientific laws and calculations will tumble down. The Universe is not a chaos; it is a cosmos.

"Lawless-ness is not noticed anywhere in the working of the cosmic forces. The phenomenal happenings, the movement of the planets, the rhythmic dance of the seasons, the music of creation, the law of colours are all happening in a harmony, implicitly obeying the law governing them all, and this Law is otherwise called the Mighty Power of Nature, or God. Lord Krishna, as an embodiment of Godhood, is declaring here: "If I do not perform work, the world would perish." Scientifically viewed, this declaration is not a superstitious absurdity, acceptable only to the blind believers, but it becomes a statement of fact, which even the microscope-gazers cannot honestly deny.

"The Lord represents not only the law governing the outer world of things and beings, but He is also the Law that governs the inner world of thoughts and emotions. The whole human society is divided into the four "castes" (Varna), by the Hindu saints and sages, ON THE BASIS OF THE INDIVIDUALS' MENTAL TEMPERAMENTS. In case the law governing the inner psychological temperaments is not functioning strictly, there will be confusion in behaviour and instability in character. The general translation "admixture of races" for "Varna- Shankara" contains a mischievous suggestion for the modern students inasmuch as they would directly understand it as a Divine sanction for the "caste-tyrannies" that are going on in the decadent Hindu society."

In the last line blessed Sri Swamiji speaks specifically to the corruption of the caste system in India from what is intended. He also speaks to what we see now around the world with so many living selfishly, stealing from the earth without giving anything back, and refusing to serve in accordance with what is given to them. Having said this the formula prescribed works for the individual irregardless of the societal issues. Even if others around us are living according to the animalistic tendencies and even if the society is sick for the one that lives life according to the cosmic rules being presented here, and selflessly according to the gifts given them, for that one there will be release and discovery of the happiness and joy within. This is so for every one of us. Truth is Truth, and awakening begins in the moment; the Lord is always at work within and without us. Don't ever give up on yourself or on others, there is no cause for fear, anger or hatred. Here we see the causes for the societal malaise, we are not being told though that the situation is hopeless or that others are bad. They are, quite simply, ill. As are we all when we suffer from living our life according to the voice of confusion within and without.