

# **THE SPIRITUAL IMPORT OF THE MAHABHARATA AND THE BHAGAVADGITA**

*By*

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## **PREFACE**

Rare is the opportunity for a spiritual seeker to hear words of wisdom spoken by a great sage. Speakers may be many, but true sages are few. His Holiness Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj is a learned and wise saint of the very highest order of attainment, and he is a person who has the marvelous gift to impart his wisdom to others in a clear and precise way. While his language can at times be highly philosophical in nature, the clarity and essential simplicity of his message nevertheless shines through. To say that Swami Krishnananda is a lover of the Mahābhārata and the Bhagavadgītā would be a tremendous understatement. The Bhagavadgītā is a presence that fills his very being and is with him every step of the way. Swamiji spoke many times on its import and message and gave others the inspiration and understanding to delve into this great gospel of Sri Krishna. The residents and visitors to the Sivananda Ashram in Rishikesh had many opportunities to hear Swami Krishnananda's enlightening teachings, as he typically spoke every Sunday at the evening Satsang on various topics that were helpful and inspiring to the listeners. The talks that are included in this book come from Satsangs held between 3 June, 1979 and 3 February, 1980. Swami Krishnananda takes the listeners through the Mahābhārata and through each of the chapters of the Bhagavadgītā in successive talks, elucidating the main points in each chapter and giving insight and guidance for all. Always and in every case his teachings are practical and applicable in daily life. He takes the highest truths given in the Bhagavadgītā and makes them relevant to every spiritual seeker. Not only his teachings, but also his very life are both wonderful gifts to all seekers of Truth.

May the blessings of Lord Krishna and Holy Master Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj be on all those who take to the study of this valuable book.

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# CHAPTER 1

## THE PLIGHT OF THE PANDAVAS

The great sage, Bhagavan Sri Vyasa, wrote a world masterpiece known as the Mahābhārata. It is a pre-eminent specimen of forceful literature, coupled with a supernormal power of poetic vision, philosophical depth and human psychology. The Mahābhārata is primarily a magnificent narration of a great battle that took place between two families of cousin-brothers—the Pandavas and the Kauravas. Both these family groups, the Pandavas and the Kauravas, were descendants of a common ancestor. They were also known as the Kurus, generally speaking, to indicate that they were descendants of a common lineage or parenthood, originally. These brothers, the Pandavas and the Kauravas, were born of a royal family, and therefore they lived a very happy life, with every conceivable kind of comfort that can be expected in a royal family. The brothers lived as great friends, playing together, eating together, and residing in the same palace. They were taken care of, protected, and educated by reputed experts in the lore of that time—Bhishma, Drona and other persons of that calibre.

This happy life went on for some time during the childhood, we may say, or perhaps the early adolescent period of the Pandavas and the Kauravas; but this joy of life in the family could not continue for long. Emotional, diverse senses began to speak in a pronounced language among the brothers. Particularly the cousins known as the Kauravas developed a negative attitude towards the Pandavas, and there arose a marked gulf of difference in the feelings connecting the Pandavas and the Kauravas. The difference got intensified to such an extent that it was practically dissidence leading to family dissension. The Kaurava brothers were not tolerant in any manner whatsoever towards the Pandavas. There was jealousy of an inveterate type. Attempts were made by the Kauravas to destroy the Pandavas by fighting, by setting fire to their residence, and several other tactics which they adopted.

The Pandavas were few in number and they had little help from the royal family, on account of a peculiar circumstance that prevailed in the royal residence. The Kauravas were born of a blind old man called Dhritarashtra, and he was virtually the king, being the eldest. And at the same time, because of his blindness, he was only a titularly head, all the powers actually being vested with the eldest of the Kauravas, known as Duryodhana. So there was a tremendous advantage of political power on the side of the Kauravas, headed by Duryodhana as king, and the Pandavas were helpless in every respect of the term. They did not get any patronage from the elderly king, the blind Dhritarashtra, who had naturally the expected affection towards his own children, the Kauravas. The story goes that there was a deep enmity between the two groups, the Pandavas being harassed every moment, wherever they went, until it came to a point where the Pandavas had to escape for their lives.

The Pandavas went away from the vicinity of the palace and lived for a year or more in unknown places. But due to an accidental collocation of forces, by providence we may say, by chance or whatever be the name that we give to it, they came in contact with the powerful rulers of the time. By a marriage alliance which happened to take place with the Pandavas, they achieved some sense of political strength, and with the confidence of

that backing from this political union, they returned to the palace. Politics is politics; everyone knows what it is. It can turn like a weathercock, this way or that way, in any direction as becomes necessary under the conditions. They were welcomed, not because they were loved or treated affectionately, but because political maneuvering required an invitation to them. They came, and as political tactics were called for, they were given a share of property in the kingdom. Their virtues were known to people; they rose up in high esteem among the public, and a time came when the chief of the Pandavas, Yudhishtira, was crowned as the ruler of the state of which he was the head. According to the tradition of the time, he performed a great sacrifice known as *rajasuya* which enhanced his renown far and wide, together with the embittering of the relationship of the Kauravas and the Pandavas simultaneously, for obvious reasons.

Further inimical tactics were employed—the playing of dice and what not—by the Kauravas, in which the Pandavas were thrown out of their kingdom, and they lost the moorings that they had a little while on earth. And, as we all know, according to conditions of the dice game, they had to go to the forest for years, ending with a year in incognito. Torturous life, unthinkable suffering and grief which the human mind cannot imagine, were the lot of the poor Pandavas in the forest. Here ends the Adiparva or the Vanaparva of the Mahābhārata, and a sudden shifting of scene of the dramatic performance occurs towards the beginning of the Udyogaparva where the great heroes, belonging to various royal groups like Sri Krishna, came to help the Pandavas, and held a conference as to what was to be done in the future.

*Sama, dana, bheda* and *danda* were the political methodologies prescribed by the scriptures. All the four were to be contemplated. The first was *sama*: political conciliation, humane; *dana*: a political sacrifice; *bheda*: a threat that something unwanted may happen if proper steps are not taken to bring about a conciliation; and *danda*: if everything fails, there is a fight. Finally it was decided by the well-wishers of the Pandavas that the three earlier methods could not succeed, though they attempted their best in the pursuance of these policies. War took place, and details of the war are given in the Bhishmaparva, the Dronaparva, and the Karnaparva of the Mahābhārata, ending with the Shantiparva where, by mysterious maneuvers and divine interventions of various types, the war was won on the side of the Pandavas. The chief of the Pandavas, Yudhishtira, was crowned king.

The search for truth by seekers on the spiritual path is a veritable epic, which is the subject of the poetic vision in the Mahābhārata. The whole universe is portrayed by the masterly pen of Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa. Everything looks like milk and honey in this world when we are babies, children—we are all friends. Children belonging even to inimical groups in the neighbourhood do not realise that they belong to such factions of society. Even if the parents know the difference, the children do not. The children of one family may play with the children of another family, while the two families may be bitter opponents. The babies may not know this.

Likewise is the condition of the soul in its incipient, immature, credulous waking. The spiritual bankruptcy and the material comforts combined together makes one feel that there is the glorious light of the sun shining everywhere during the day and the full moonlight at night, and there is nothing wanting in this world. The emotions and the periods of understanding and revolutions are all in the form of an orb, where there may

be a little bit of gold, a little bit of iron—the one cannot be distinguished from the other. Children, in their psychological make-up, are like an orb—their components are not easily distinguishable. So spiritual seekers lead a very happy life in the earlier stages, imagining that everything is fine. They have not seen the world; they cannot see through the world.

The psychological rift occurs when the realities of life begin to sprout forth into minor tendrils and begin to lean towards the daylight of practical experience. The psychic components of the individual are descendents of a common ancestor, as the Pandavas and the Kauravas were descendants of Kuru, the great hero of ancient times. Yes, it is true—what we call the positive and the negative are not two forces, really speaking; they are two facets or diverse movements of freeing the bound soul. In the Upanishads we read that both the *devas* and the *asuras* were born to Prajapati, notwithstanding the fact that the *devas* and *asuras* had to fight with each other. It is something like the right hand and the left hand fighting with each other, though they belong to the same common organism or being. There is a similar parentage of the *deva* and the *asura sampat*. The *devas* and the *asuras* are the Pandavas and the Kauravas, in the language of the epic. They are the *sattvic samskaras* on the one side, and the *rajasic* and *tamasic samskaras* on the other side.

The embittered feelings manifest themselves into concrete forms when the child grows into an adult, and there is psychological tension. Slowly, as age advances, we become more and more unhappy in life. The jubilation and buoyancy of spirit that we had when we were small children playing in the neighbourhood or playground—that joy slowly diminishes. We become contemplatives with sunken eyes and a glaring look, and a concentrated mind into the nature of our future. We begin to exert in a particular direction, while exertion was not known when we were small babies—we were spontaneous. Spontaneity of expression gives place to particularised exertion when age advances. We become more and more marked in our individual consciousness, whereas it is diminished in the baby. There is practically a rising of the ego in the child. It sprouts up into a hardened form when age advances into youth, and even earlier. These two principles are present in the individual; they are present in human society; they are present in the cosmos.

The Puranas, particularly, embark upon an expatiation of the war that takes place between the *devas* and *asuras*, in a cosmic sense. Often people say the *devas* and the *asuras* described in the Puranas are allegories of psychological functions in individuals. These are all artificial, modernised interpretations, under the impression that that reality is confined to one section of life alone. We cannot say that there is no cosmic counterpart of the individual psyche. The Puranas are right; the psychologists also are right. It is true that there is a Ganga flowing in us in the form of the *sushumna nadi*, and there are the Yamuna and the Saraswati in the form of the *ida* and *pingala*. There is no gainsaying; it is perfectly true. But there is also an outward Ganga; we cannot deny it. The world outside and the world inside are two faces of the single composite structure of reality. So the battle between the *devas* and the *asuras* takes place in every realm and every phase of life. It takes place in the heavens, it takes place in the cosmos, it takes place in society, and it takes place within ourselves. The Mahābhārata is not merely a depiction of a human series of events that happened some centuries back—though it is also that. It is a cosmic drama portrayed before us, at the same time coordinated with

the psychological advancement that occurs in the process of individual evolution.

The Pandavas and the Kauravas are especially interesting today in pinpointing the subject of the conflict of the spiritual seeker. The Pandavas and the Kauravas are inside us, yes, as well as outside. The *sadhaka* begins to feel the presence of these twofold forces as he slowly begins to grow in the outlook of his life. There is a feeling of division of personality, as mostly psychologists call it, split personality. We have something inside us and something outside us. We cannot reconcile between these two aspects of our outlook. There is an impulse from within us which contradicts the regulations of life and the rules of society in the atmosphere in which we live, but there is a great significance far deeper in this interesting phenomenon. The opposition is between the individual and reality, as psychoanalysts usually call it. Psychoanalysis has a doctrine which always makes out that psychic tension or psychotic conditions of any kind are due to a conflict between the individual structure of the psyche and the reality outside. Well, as far as psychoanalysts are concerned, what they mean by 'reality' is the social set-up. When the individual psyche inside, with its emotions, desires, aspirations, etc. comes in conflict with the rules and regulations of human society, it finds itself incapable of fulfilling its inner urges. When the urges within are not allowed to express themselves on account of the mandates of the superego—we have to put it in the language of psychoanalysis—the social forms, there is no alternative except to revolt against society; rebel against the laws operating. Or if this is not possible for reasons obvious, to push these impulses inside the subconscious and finally the unconscious. If the first alternative is taken, one becomes an antisocial person, unwanted by people. One may come across as a criminal—that is what people call such a person. But if that is not an advisable and practicable move, one becomes a maniac, a crazy person, a tense individual with obsessions inside, and writhes in sorrows and grief at that time.

Now, this is a tension between the Pandavas and Kauravas in a very low sense of the term—purely from the point of view of psychoanalysis or psychology. But the Mahābhārata is not merely a scripture of psychoanalysis or psychology. It is a spiritual epic, which tells us something about our destiny in this world in the context of our aspiration for God-realisation, ultimately. This conflict between the Pandavas and Kauravas is an inner conflict within the spiritual seeker, and what the Pandavas underwent, the spiritual seeker also may have to undergo. The jubilant spirit of a youngster who knows nothing of life ceases when he is opposed by the realities of life. The realities may be social; they may be political; they may be economic; they may be material—whatever they may be, it does not matter. They are oppositions of various types which put the spiritual seeker in a state of great hardship as to how to move forward when he is in the same type of position that the Pandavas found themselves. He has no other alternative than to escape from this turmoil of life, and he withdraws himself into a monastery, may be a temple, or goes to Uttarkashi or some other such place. Well, this is the life that the Pandavas led in Indraprastha—unwanted, unknown, unseen by the Kauravas. In case of any trouble just go away; one cannot bear this further.

In Uttarkashi you cannot get your stomach filled—you have to come back to Rishikesh with a hungry stomach. You say, "Thank God, goodbye to Uttarkashi." You come back. People have tried; they cannot live there, because human nature is a very complex structure. You cannot simply tabulate it into pigeon holes. It is an ununderstandable,

impossible organism, and cannot be easily handled. You cannot stay either in Uttarkashi or in Hollywood. Either place would be a failure due to the miraculous dissidence that is within us, as miraculous as we ourselves are, because it has an element of the mystery of the cosmos. And so one cannot teach it in a mathematical or scientific manner, or purely in the light of logic. It is a mystery. Life is a mystery, and it is not mathematics. It is not an equation. We cannot say that 'this plus that is equal to that'—that is not possible in spiritual *sadhana*. It is very difficult task. It is an art rather than a science, we may say. Well, coming to the point, this difficulty that the spiritual seeker faces, as he advances on the path, is similar to the difficulties of the Pandavas. He comes back; he changes the outlook of life and accelerates in *sadhana* by new techniques, by the help that he receives from well-wishers—may be teachers, may be friends, may be books, may be libraries, may be circumstances. He gains some sort of superiority, importance, by the *sadhana shakti*.

But here is a caution that has to be written on a placard when we may have the complacency that we are advancing in the spirit. The *rajasuya* sacrifice was the crowning glory of success for the Pandavas, but that very glory was a curse upon them which increased the jealousy of the Kauravas and ended in their being turned out of the kingdom into the wilderness. So the little satisfaction, the little vision that we have in meditation, and the little satisfaction that we are on the right path may rouse the jealousy of the natural forces with whom we have not become friends, for reasons which cannot be explained at present.

The external forces, the objective forces, are the Kauravas. The forces that are subjective may be likened to the Pandavas. So the Mahābhārata is a war between the subject and the object. Now, what this object is, is also very difficult to explain. It may be a pencil; it may be a wristwatch; it may be one single item in this world that we may call an object. It may be one human being who may be in the position of an object. It may be a whole family, it may be an entire community, and it may be the whole human set-up, the entire mankind or the whole physical universe—it is an object in front of us. The irreconcilability between the subjective attitude of consciousness with its objective structure is the preparation for the Mahābhārata battle. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to give a very homely example. Fire can burn *ghee*, as everyone knows. If we pour *ghee* over fire, the *ghee* will be no more. It is simply burned to nothing; it simply becomes vapourised. Yes, it is true, fire has the power to burn *ghee* and destroy it completely. But, says Sri Ramakrishna, if we pour one quintal of *ghee* over one spark of fire, what will happen to that fire? Though it is true, in principle, that fire can burn *ghee*, that one spark of the fire will be extinguished by the quintal of *ghee* that we poured.

So, in the earlier stages, the aspiring spiritual aspirant is like the spark, and the whole world is like a hundred quintals of sticks that are poured over it, and it cannot be faced. The world cannot be faced by the individual seeker in the earlier stages—it is too much for us. We cry, "It is too much, it is too much, I can not bear this anymore." Hunger on one side, thirst on another side, illness on both sides and an unhappy atmosphere of various types around us. There is nothing that we can say is okay—everything is irreconcilable, everything is at sixes and sevens. So, when this has been reached by the powerful objective forces in retaliation to the various suppressive attitudes that we have put on by the rejection of life by the so-called *vairagya*, *sannyasa*, renunciation, whatever it is; when a retaliation is set up by the forces of nature, we are in the same

condition as the Pandavas. The glory of the *raja suya* goes, and after the anointing on the throne that was done in the midst of all, we weep.

The seekers are not safe even at the gate of heaven, as John Bunyan put it in his *Pilgrim's Progress*. There is a possibility of there being a hole leading to hell even at the entrance to heaven. A big gate leads straight to heaven and we are just there, standing. But there is a pit, like a manhole, and we fall in. And where do we go? Into Yama's abode. Well, it is strange that there is a hole there, just at the entrance to heaven. This is possible, says John Bunyan, and says everyone. The idea is that the boat can sink even near the other shore—not necessarily in the middle. The point is that we have to be very cautious about the powers of the world. The world is not a petty cat or a mouse in front of us, and we should not be under the impression that we are great yogis who can simply tie the whole world with our fingers. It is not so. We are not Krishnas, blessing Arjuna with one hand. We are babies, spiritually. And the baby Pandavas were not an equal match to the terror of the Kauravas, who had the tactics of the time, who could counterblast the little aspirations of the spirit which were about to blossom in the hearts of the Pandavas.

Goodness does not always succeed in the earlier stages. Truth triumphs not always. In the Ramayana, Ravana appears at times to be more glorious than Rama. Valmiki describes eloquently the significance of Ravana, and many a time one could almost imagine that Ravana was Valmiki's favourite. It looks as if Valmiki was writing from the side of Ravana. The idea behind it is that the glory of the world sometimes can obliterate the sprinkling of the fire of the spirit inside in the early stages of *sadhana*. It is not true that the Absolute will manifest itself in us at once, though the little spark in us is a spark of the Absolute. Let us not forget that it is after all a spark, though it is of the Absolute. The magnitude of the universe is so large that the material within us, the magnitude of the spark, is incompatible with it.

Now, quality is important, and quantity is not unimportant. While we assess the value of a thing from the point of view of quality, we are doing the right thing, no doubt, but it is not true that quantity has no value at all. It has a value. For instance, one British pound may be qualitatively more than one Indian rupee; but a hundred thousand rupees may be greater than one pound, though the quality from the point of view of foreign exchange may place the pound in a superior category to the rupee. Likewise we may say that qualitatively the spirit in us is superior to the whole world; it is true. The little spark in us is far superior to the entire physical universe. But, and it is a very important 'but', we should not forget that it is a spark, and it cannot, in its babyhood of innocence and credulity, face these terrible *asuras* of objects. When it makes the mistake of facing them prematurely, it faces the destiny of the Pandavas in the wilderness of the forest, as they were in the Aranyaparva. Well, what sufferings they had to undergo in the forest, we need not describe. The worst condition imaginable was the lot of the Pandavas. The great hero Yudhishtira wept—the man who would not weep easily. He asked the sage whom he met in the forest, "Vrihadasva, great Master, have you seen any more unfortunate being in this world than myself?"

Well, these words must have come from the mouth of Yudhishtira with a torrent of tears in his eyes. "Have you seen, great Master, a more unfortunate being than myself in this world?" To pacify the poor Yudhishtira the great sage said, "Yes, there was one

who was also suffering. He was King Nala.” The great story of Nala and Damayanti is recounted in the Aranyaparva of the Mahābhārata, but this is beside the issue. The point at this moment is that even after a tentative degree of success in spiritual practice, we are not out of danger until and unless we are in a position to make alliance with the divine powers, not before that, and the Pandavas had no alliance with divine powers up to that time. They were various individuals working on the strength of their own arms, which was not enough before the might of this whole world. This is a very interesting subject, relevant to spiritual practice, and will be pursued later on.

## CHAPTER 2

### CHALLENGES OF THE SPIRITUAL SEEKER

The power of *sadhana* does not gain adequate confidence until divine powers collaborate with it, and God Himself seems to be at the back of the seeker of God. We have been noting a great epic symbol in the Mahābhārata, wherein we are given the narration of the adventure of the spirit in its struggle for ultimate freedom. The wilderness of the forest life that the Pandavas had to undergo is a great lesson to the spiritual seeker. No one can escape the ups and downs of life, the vicissitudes of time through which the ancient sages and saints have passed; everyone seems to have the duty to tread the same path. We have to walk the same path, and the path is laid before us with all its intricacies, with all its problems and difficulties, as well as its own facilities. We seem to be lost to ourselves and lost to the whole world, with no ray of hope before us, at least to our waking consciousness.

When the Pandavas were in the forest, they did not know what would happen in the future. It was just oblivion and gloom which hung heavy like dark clouds upon them. When we are in the thick of the dark night of the soul—a dark night not of ignorance, but of the spiritual quest; when we are in a period of transition between the world and the Absolute, a universal screen falls in front of our eyes, as it were, and we cannot see what is ahead of us. When we are going to be severed from our attachments to the particular objects of sense and are about to enter into a larger expanse of a vaster experience, in that period of transition there is an unintelligible difficulty. Efforts cease, because all the effort that the human being can harness has been tried and found wanting.

The strength of the Pandavas was not equal to the task. Draupadi in the forest reprimands Yudhishtira as a coward and insults God Himself, as it were, when she cries aloud saying, “If God had eyes, He would certainly see our fate, and that He does not seem to be seeing us is not of any credit to Him.” Yudhishtira could not bear these words of taunt which Draupadi expressed even against God Himself; his reply was simple and expressed in a few words. He was aware of the strength of the other side. He spoke to Draupadi, “Poor lady, you do not know where we are actually standing. The power of Bhishma, the power of Drona and Karna is so immense that we would not be a match to these heroes, and to take up arms against them at a premature time would be folly.” To fight the world one must have strength enough—otherwise one would be in that condition described by the old adage: “Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.” Seekers, enthusiasts and honest *sadhakas* many a time overestimate their powers, and they do not know the strength of the world. The Kauravas had their own strength and it could not be in any way underestimated. When the war was actually to take place, the strength would be seen. And it was seen—not an easy task it was.

God helps us, it is true, but He helps us in His own way—not in the way we would expect Him to work. There is a logic of His own, which is not always expressed in terms of human logic. Sri Krishna was there, alive, even when the Pandavas were tortured, almost, in the forest, but we do not hear much about his movements during this period of twelve years. There was, however, a mention of his casual visit to the Pandavas, where he expresses in a few words his wrath, his intense anger against what had happened.

“Well, I am sorry that I was not present. I would not have allowed this to have happened if I had been present.” That was all he could say, and that was all he did say. Well, his associates were more stirred up in their feelings than could be discovered from the words of Krishna Himself. They spoke in loud terms and swore, as it were, to take active steps in the direction of the redress of the sorrows of the Pandavas at once, without even consulting Yudhishtira. But Krishna intervened and said, “No. A gift that is given is not as palatable as one’s own earning. The Pandavas will not accept gifts given by us—they would like to take it by themselves. We may help them, but this is not the time.”

Many a time we feel as if we have been lost and have been forsaken totally. Even advanced seekers, saints and sages have passed through this critical moment of the sinking of the soul when, in anguish, words which would not ordinarily come out of their mouths do come and did come in respect of God. ‘God, are You blind?’ can be a poem of a great saint when no action is taken to redress the sufferings of the seeker, no blessing is bestowed upon him, no vision comes forth and he is only put to the grind and made to suffer more and more, more critically than the world would have tortured him had he been in the world. All these are peculiar psychical conditions in which we have to find ourselves and for which we have to be prepared, and no one is exempt from the law of the mind. Whether it is Buddha’s mind or it is the mind of a rustic in the fields, the structure of mind is the same, and in its evolution it has to pass through all the stages of agonizing suffering, emotional tearing, as it were, on account of the tussle that one has to undergo between the spirit within and the spirit without.

This spirit that is implanted in us suffers for union with the spirit outside, the Absolute. There is its critical moment. It is as if we were going to embrace the ocean. This experience has been compared in many ways to merging into fire, tying a wild elephant with silken threads, swallowing fire, etc. The problem arises on account of the peculiar nature of the mind. The mind is addicted to sense experience. It is accustomed to the enjoyment of objects, and it is now attempting to rise above all contacts and reach the state of that yoga which great masters have called *asparsha* yoga—the yoga of non-contact. It is not a union of something with something else; that would be another contact. It is a contact of no contact. It is difficult to encounter because of a sorrow of the spirit, deeper than the sorrow of the feelings, which even a saintly genius has to experience. The deeper we go, the greater is our sorrow, because the subtle layers of our personality are more sensitive to experience than our outer, grosser vestures. We know very well that the suffering of the mind is more agonising than the suffering of the body. We may bear a little sorrow of the body, but we cannot bear sorrow of the mind—that is more intolerable.

There is such a thing called the sorrow of the spirit, though it may look like an anomaly. How could there be sorrow for the spirit? Yes, there is some kind of situation in which our deeper self finds itself in its search for the Absolute. These are all interesting stages that are in mystical theology and the yoga of the advent of the spirit. Some of the songs and poems of the Vaishnava saints of the south, the Alvars, particularly the Nawars, and some of the rapturous expressions of the leading Shaivite saints, will be enough examples to us of the inexpressible and intricate spiritual processes through which the seeker has to pass. We are accustomed merely to a little *japa*, a little study of the *Gītā* that we chant and repeat by rote every day like a machine, and we feel that our work is over, that we have done our *sadhana*. The deeper spirit has to be touched, and it has to

be dug out like an imbedded illness. When it is pulled out there is a reaction, and the reaction is a spiritual experience by itself, through which Arjuna had to pass. A little of it is given to us in the First Chapter and the earlier portions of the Second Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā.

The *jiva* principle within us has the double characteristic of mortality and immortality. We are mortals and immortals at the same time. It is the mortal element in us that causes sorrow when it comes in contact with the immortal urge, that seeks its own expression in its own manner. There is a tremendous friction, as it were, taking place between the subjective feelings and the objective cosmos. No one can know the strength of the universe. The mind cannot imagine it, and we are trying to overstep it. We can stretch our imagination and try to bring to our memories what could be the magnitude of this task. We as individuals, as we appear to be, are girding up our loins to face the powers of the whole universe—a single Arjuna facing the entire Kaurava forces, as it were.

Yes, Arjuna had the strength, and also he had no strength. If Arjuna stood alone, he could be blown off in one day by a man like Bhishma. Well, Duryodhana pleaded every day before Bhishma and cried aloud, “Grandsire, you are alive, and even when you are alive, thousands and thousands of our kith and kin are being massacred. How can you see it with your eyes? We are depending upon you, we have laid trust in you—and with all this, this is what is happening.” Bhishma’s answer was, “Don’t bother; tomorrow, let me see.” Many “tomorrows” passed and there were massacres on the side of the Kauravas. Again Duryodhana came to plead, “How is it that while you are alive this could happen?” He gradually lost faith in Bhishma and wanted to replace him with someone else like Drona or Karna, if possible, but he could not speak these words. He dared not speak to this terrible old man, so instead he tauntingly expressed his misgivings concerning the future of this great engagement in war. “But there are some faults,” said Bhishma, “which I am not able to face.” This will come a little later.

I am just giving an outline of the situation, which goes deeper than the ordinary psychological level. It touches the borderline of the spirit, and yet has not entered into the universal spirit. That situation is a terrible situation indeed, where we have lost everything that we can call our own, and lost our grip and hold over things which are near and dear to us, yet have lost also our grip over that which we are seeking. This is exactly the condition of being left adrift at sea. “I am at sea,” as they say, which means there is no succor. We are just sinking because there is no support at all from anywhere. It is not true that there is no support, but it appears as if we are sinking on account of a contradiction between the values of the individual and the values Universal. We are still wedded to the calculative spirit of the individual sense, which assesses even the Absolute God Himself in terms of individual benefits and rewards. It is impossible to get out of our brains the idea of reward and pleasure.

Before the Universal takes possession of us, it burnishes us and cleanses us completely. This process of cleansing is the mystical death of the individual spirit. There it does not know what happens to it. That is the wilderness; that is the dark night of the soul; that is the suffering, and that is where we do not know whether we will attain anything or not. We weep silently, but nobody is going to listen to our wails. But the day dawns, the sun shines and there seems to be a ray of light on the horizon. That is towards the end of the

Virataparva of the Mahābhārata. After untold suffering for years, which the human mind cannot usually stomach, a peculiar upsurge of fortune miraculously seems to operate in favour of the suffering spirit, and unasked help comes from all sides. In the earlier stages, it appeared that nothing would come even if we asked. We had to cry alone in the forest, and nobody would listen to our cry. Now the tables have turned and help seems to be pouring in from all directions, unrequested for. Great princes, rulers of the time, join themselves into a force and gather into a power in an assembly led by Sri Krishna, contemplating the future steps to be taken under the circumstances. The most beautiful and magnificent force of literary strength of Vyasa comes in the Udyoga parva of the Mahābhārata. God Himself takes up the responsibility of guiding the spirit. Well, when that happens there is nothing else that we need. We need not even speak—He speaks for us. He does everything for our sake. He advises us, He reprimands us and shows us the path.

The Udyogaparva, which describes in a beautiful manner the assembly of the princes of the time in the court of Virata, goes further into greater detail of the contemplations of these princes. There are difficulties in the decisions to be taken—what is to be done? There are various opinions coming forth from various parties. Whenever a personality faces the world, the universe in front of it, it has various interpretations of it. Are we to make friends with it? Are we somehow or other to adjust ourselves with it, to make its law our own law? Are we to change the world, or are we to change ourselves—which is better? What is the relationship between me and the world? These were the questions, the deliberations of the great assemblies that were held prior to the war of the Mahābhārata. Ambassadors were sent on both sides; there was concourse between one party and the other party. A decision was difficult to take. We cannot finally come to a conclusion as to our relationship with the world. We always have favoured the things of sense and the delights of reason. This difficulty persists even to the last moment, until doom, we may say, because the evaluations of things in terms of worldly experience continue even at the last point of spiritual aspiration.

God-realisation is interpreted in terms of sense experience and psychical satisfaction. If we read the history of the evolutionary process of religion, we find that people always hesitated to touch the last point, and always satisfied themselves with everything but that last deciding factor. It will not be clear to us what is it that we are actually asking for, unless the logical limit of the conclusion is reached. But we never want to reach the logical conclusion of anything. We leave everything halfway. We somehow or other adjust ourselves with the law of things and then allow the things to rule us, though in a different manner. We may not be servants, vassals or underlings of an emperor, but the subjection continues. The freedom of the spirit is not a possession of any status or an acquisition of a power that is empirical, but a complete dissolving of all empirical values and an awakening into a new set of values altogether, which the mind at present can never even dream. Hence to think God would be a futility. The mind cannot think, because all thoughts are conditioned by evaluations, which again are nothing but interpretations of sense.

The decision is taken by God Himself—man cannot take the decision. And Sri Krishna took up the lead in this path of what decision is to be taken finally. Is the universe as an object to be retained, even in a subtle form, or is it to be abolished altogether? Is it to be absorbed totally? And do we have to see to the deathbed of the entire objective

existence, or is it necessary to strike a lesser note and come to an agreement with factors which are far below this level of extreme expectation? Yudhishtira was wavering, he could not come to a conclusion; and we too are wavering. It is not easy for us to love God wholly, because that would mean the acceptance of the necessity to dissolve the whole world itself in the existence of God, and one would not easily be prepared for this ordeal. "It is true that Krishna is my saviour and my friend, philosopher and guide, but Duryodhana is my brother-in-law and my cousin—how can I deal a blow to him? Bhishma is my grandsire and Drona is my Guru. My own blood flows through the veins of these that seem to be harnessed against me in the arena of battle." So there is a double game that the spirit plays between love of Krishna and love of the world, love of relations, love of individuals and love of family contacts, or to put it in a clinching manner, love of empirical values.

But God is an uncompromising element. There is no compromise with God. Either we want Him, or we do not want Him. There is no half-wanting God; that does not exist. But if we want Him really, as we would expect Him to understand the situation and expect us to want Him, it would be a terror to the ego, and that is the last thing which anyone would be prepared for. Who wants more with the world, because that is an undecided adventure. Every battle is undecided as to its future—it is only a game of dice, as it were. And so, an intellectual, philosophical or metaphysical acceptance of the absoluteness of God would not really cut ice before the practical necessity to face a reality that is there as a terror before us. The world has something to tell us, in spite of our acceptance of God's supremacy. We may be intellectually prepared, but emotionally unprepared. There is something in us deeper than our understanding, and that is the voice of the spirit within us. While it is decided that God is supreme and the demand of God is unconditional, which means to say there cannot be any kind of acquiescence with the law of the world, there is a tentative acceptance of it; but a string is tied to this acceptance.

The leader of the Pandava forces, from the point of view of military strategy, was Arjuna. It was he who finally agreed that war was the only way—there was no way out. But it is he who became diffident, in contradistinction to the spirit of valour which he exhibited earlier. There is a great mystical situation before every seeker also. Every one of us is convinced that God is All. Who is not convinced? We have read the scriptures; we have listened to the Srimad Bhagavatam; we have attended *satsangas*; we have heard so many sermons from Mahatmas. We agree that the realisation of God is the ultimate goal of life and nothing else is worth attaining, but this conviction is not enough when the task is there before us is as a daylight reality. Any kind of psychical, intellectual, rational or philosophical acceptance is not enough to touch the bottom of the spirit within us. Our whole soul has to accept it, and it appears perhaps that Arjuna's entire soul did not accept that venture. So when the whole world was there glaring or staring at Arjuna in the form of an army arrayed before him, he changed his attitude immediately—and everyone will be subjected to this quandary of changing of ideas.

The compromise with the condition of the human individual is a very strong impulse which has been planted in us since ages past, and no one wishes to die. To enter into the field of battle is to be prepared for death, whatever be the reason behind the justice of the war. But death is the last thing that anyone would be prepared for, because all life is for mere being. If being itself is threatened, what is the purpose of action? All my

adventures, all my efforts, all my activities are ultimately to perpetuate my being—my life is to be secure. If I am embarking upon an activity which is going to threaten my very life itself, then I will have to think thrice before taking a step in that direction. Arjuna was despondent. “It appears as if we are going to lose everything, and the very intention behind which this great adventure was embarked upon is at stake. The very goal is being frustrated; the very purpose is not going to be served. The purpose of war is victory—nobody says that the purpose of war is defeat. But is it sure that victory is going to be ours? Perhaps the victory may be of the other side. Where is the guarantee that the victory is going to be ours?”

This doubt will come at the last moment, at the critical point when everything is ready to strike the match. When the fire is going to be ignited, at that very moment the spirit doubts. “Doubts are our traitors,” says Milton in a passage. Our enemies are our doubts, and finally we have a doubt after everything is clear; and that final doubt crushes down all that we have done up to this time. Finally the doubt comes: Is it after all going to bring anything, or am I going to lose everything under the pretext of going to gain God to attain salvation? This doubt will not present itself in the earlier stages. The most ferocious enemy always comes later; the lesser powers are released earlier. In every war, in every battle, the minor powers are used first and the powerful reserves are kept for the last action.

So we seem to be very complacent and everything seems to be all right; all doubts are removed and we are clear in our heads. But there is a subtle pull which is secretly kept inside our own psyche, and that pull will manifest itself as a final doubt of the ‘perhaps’. A peculiar ‘perhaps’ will come out. “Perhaps I am not up to the mark. There is some defect in the whole bold procedure that has been undertaken, and I am going to lose.” Buddha had this. A great master, a genius like Buddha had this feeling. “After all, this has brought nothing; tomorrow I am going to die.” This is what Buddha also felt. “I think today is the last day. All my austerities have brought nothing; I have wasted my efforts. I have lost this world completely. All the pleasures of life are gone, and nothing else is going to come. Okay, this is the last moment. I am going to breathe my final breath.”

This what a man like Buddha felt, and why not anybody else? The great mystics, whether of the West or the East, had these difficulties. These problems are described in various types of nomenclature as *maya*, Mara, Satan and what not. But all these descriptions are only enunciations of the peculiar reaction that is set up by the world, the universe as a whole in its encounter with the spiritual aspirations of man. These powers of the universe are again like the powers of a large army. The lesser powers come first and the larger powers are kept for reserve in the end. There are layers and layers of cosmos. We have heard of various *lokas*—*bhu-loka*, *bhuvar-loka*, *suvar-loka*, *mahar-loka*, *jana-loka*, *tapo-loka* and *satya-loka*. These *lokas* are nothing but the various layers of the powers of the universe, as we have layers inside us—*annamaya kosha*, *pranamaya kosha*, etc. The inner layer is more powerful than the outer, and when we somehow or other succeed in overcoming one particular level, the other one comes in with its power and faces us. These encounters from the various levels of objective power are the descriptions of the Mahābhārata battle in the Bhishmaparva, Dronaparva, Karnaparva, etc., all of which are enunciations of the spiritual encounter of the soul with the layers of the cosmos in its attempt at the realisation of the Absolute.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE WORLD IS THE FACE OF GOD

In the journey of spiritual practice, there are many halting places on the way. It is not a direct flight without any stop in-between. At the very inception of this endeavour known as spiritual *sadhana*, there is an upheaval of the powers of aspiration, an innocent longing for God and a confidence that one would reach God—perhaps the same kind of confidence that a child has in catching the moon. The innocence and the credulity do not permit the acceptance of the difficulties involved in this pursuit. There is simplicity, sincerity and honesty coupled with ignorance, and this is practically the circumstance of every spiritual seeker. There is a humble innocence, very praiseworthy, but it is also attended with ignorance of the problems on the path and the difficulties of attaining God. The innocence of childhood is simplicity incarnate. Everyone loves a simple, innocent child, and everyone is happy about a simple, innocent seeker of truth. The Pandavas—we are studying certain implications of the Mahābhārata—were innocent children playing with their own cousins, the Kauravas, and they would never have dreamt, even with the farthest stretch of their imaginations, of the forthcoming catastrophes in the life to come.

There is a peculiar circumstance in which the seeker finds himself at the outset, and there is a tentative picture presented before the mind of a seeker of great success. The intense austerity that we practice—the *japa*, the studies, the prayers, the worships— attract attention from everyone, and we become an object of adoration. Yudhishtira was crowned with the *rajasuya* sacrifice; it was a great glory indeed. The world begins to know us as a great austere seeker and a man of God; but the vision of people is different from the vision of God. It is inscrutable, and no one can say what the way of God is. The most compassionate conceivable and the hardest nut to crack—all combined in one, as it were, appears to be the attitude of God. Great difficulty, hardship and judicial strictness coupled with parental affection is the characteristic that is generally attributed to God. Law and love combined together; justice and affection both seem to be blended in Him. We cannot understand how these go together, but they do go, and perhaps they have to be together in a mysterious manner which the human mind cannot grasp. The justice of God is not contrary to the response that is evinced from Him by the affection that the seeker develops in respect of God. The love that is divine is compatible with law that is justice.

But the human concept of law and the human concept of love both require emendation. There is a cosmical interpretation and a standpoint taken on the basis of an interdependence of things, when things are looked at from the point of view of God. But human minds are not made in that manner. The interdependence or the interconnectedness of things in a universal manner is a theoretical concept which surpasses the imagination of the individual, and in practice it escapes notice wholly. We take an individualistic view of things, a finite attitude towards objects, bifurcating the relationship of one with the other, and therefore unexpected consequences follow from our attitude to things. Our satisfaction need not necessarily to be taken as a sign of success, because our satisfaction is that which satisfies our individuality. The satisfaction of an individual is not really a genuine and a permanent satisfaction. It flies

away like the wind, and it moves as the individual moves.

In the process of evolution there is a transfiguration of the structure of individuality. The individuality transforms itself in the process of evolution, and simultaneously with this transformation, the notions, the ideas of right and wrong, good and bad, pleasure and pain also change. What is pleasant today need not be pleasant even to me, myself tomorrow, on account of the change of my attitude to things due to a shift of emphasis in the process of evolution. This is commonplace and does not require much commentary. Hence we should not be under the erroneous notion that a jubilant feeling within us is a sign of spiritual vision, since our jubilation is somehow or other connected with the nature of our own personality. The likes and dislikes of the mind of an individual are reactions set up by the structure of the mind of that individual. The structure of the mind is responsible for the particular type of satisfaction that it feels, and the particular type of dissatisfaction also, which follows automatically from this structure. So what I like need not be your liking, it follows, because of the simple fact that minds are not made in the same manner. Hence, a particular sense of elation within oneself can be a great credit to the capacity to achieve in one's own individual mind that which one seeks as something pleasant. But we are told again and again that the pleasant need not necessarily be the good, and the good need not necessarily be the pleasant, although the good can also be the pleasant. Hence the mass of votes poured upon Yudhishtira in the form of the *rajasuya* sacrifice, culminating in his coronation through the *rajasuya*, struck at the same time a note of retrogression by ways and means which were unthinkable; and this elation, and the rising to the throne after the *rajasuya*, ended in the banishment of the very same empire and emperor to the grief-stricken life of the wilderness of the jungles in the Aranyapurva.

The life of a saint is a mystic Mahābhārata itself. Every sage or saint has passed through all the stages of the Mahābhārata conflict. No one lived as a great saint without passing through untold hardships, and no one ever left this world with the feeling that it is all milk and honey flowing. The truth of the world becomes evident to the eyes that are about to close to this world; the untutored mind takes it for what it is not. Hence the glory of the royal coronation and success ended in untold grief, because of a negative aspect that was hidden in the joy of the coronation. There was something lacking. It was a glory that was bestowed upon Yudhishtira by the power of people, like the ascent of a person to the throne of a ministry by the raising of hands of the vast public. But the hands can drop down tomorrow; they need not always be standing erect. There is always an unpredictable uncertainty about mob psychology, and therefore a dependent success cannot be called a success. If I have become great due to your goodness, that would not be real greatness, because your goodness can be withdrawn. If the greatness is at the mercy of another's opinion or power, it falls.

People cannot help us, because people are like us. Everyone is made of the same character, a chip off the same block, as they say, and so the help that we receive from people of our own type will be as fallible and unreliable as the passing clouds in the sky. The realities of life started to stare glaringly at the faces of the Pandavas, and they began to realise that there is a gap between the hopes of the mind and the joys that it had experienced earlier. It is not always the playful innocent joy of a child that will pursue us throughout our life. The pains of life are hidden like knives under the armpits of thieves, and they are unleashed at the opportune moment. Every dog has his day, as they say;

everything has its own time.

Individual strength is no strength; our efforts cannot be regarded as ultimately adequate to the task. We have observed that the world is too vast for us. It is mighty enough—it is all-mighty, we may say. Who can touch the stars, the sun and the moon with the fingers of one's hand? The strength is inexorable; the law is very precise and unrelenting upon people, like the law of gravitation which has no pity for any person. Such being the world, such being the universe, such being the law of things, our endeavours, our efforts on the path of the spirit have to become reoriented according to the needs of the case. There is suffering on account of not knowing what to do. We are helpless—we have been thrown out of the chair and no one is going to look at our face. This is not a circumstance which can escape the experience of any individual. One day or the other we will be in the pit, and everyone has fallen into the pit and then got out. This was the case with mighty heroes of the past, what to say of the credulous masses who are walking the stereotyped path of the blind leading the blind.

But suffering is also a kind of catharsis that is administered to the soul to purge its sins. It is not a curse that has descended upon us. Suffering is not a curse. It is a cleansing process, like a fever that comes to clean the system and throw out the toxic matter from the body. We suffer due to certain automatic reactions that are set up by certain actions. Actions are performed by people without the knowledge of the nature of the consequences that these actions would produce, because the consequences are conditioned by factors beyond one's thought. We have some idea as to what we are capable of doing, but we cannot have a complete idea of what we fall on, because the effects are determined by various factors other than merely the idea about it in the mind of the doer of the action.

So, unforeseen consequences retaliate upon the individual; they are called sorrows. They are called sorrows because they are not in conformity with the likes or the desires of the individual at that given moment of time. If we are thrown into the Ganga and feel chilled inside, that would be a sorrow in deed; but if a fish is thrown into the Ganga, that would not be a sorrow for it. So it is the condition of the individual that determines a particular experience to be either pleasant or otherwise. Ultimately there is no such a thing as absolute pleasure or absolute pain—they do not exist. They are always relative to the nature of the individual experiencing them. However, such consequences, when they rebound upon the individual, become sources of pain on account of one's not being prepared for them. Such are the sorrows of the spiritual seeker also, because of his immature efforts in the direction of God-realisation, not knowing his true relationship to God, because there is a powerful world between us and God. This should not be forgotten. There is something between the seeker and that which we seek, and if we completely ignore the presence of that which is between, it would be a mistake. The God which we seek cannot be directly seen except through the spectacles of the world.

In the Ramayana, Tulsidas gives a beautiful description of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana walking, with Sita in the middle, and gives the image by saying that Sita was there as *maya* between *brahma* and *jiva*. Likewise, there is this world before us, which we are likely to unintelligently ignore in our enthusiastic aspiration for God. The world is the face of God; it is the fingers of the hands of God Himself moving, and the so-called appearance of the world is rooted in the reality of the Absolute. There is a very

unfortunate aftermath of this interesting analysis, namely, we ourselves are a part of this appearance, and to put on the unwarranted status of the reality in ourselves, while we are looked at as appearance, would be to disregard the law that operates in the realm in which we are placed. Appearance is, after all, an appearance of reality—it is not an appearance of nothing. If it had been nothing, the appearance itself would not be there. Inasmuch as the appearance is of reality, it borrows the sense of reality. The snake is in the rope, yes, but we must know that the rope is not absent. Though the way in which the rope is seen may be an erroneous perception, the fact of the rope being there cannot be ignored—that is the reason why the snake is seen at all. If the rope is not there, even the snake would not be there. It is the reality of the Absolute, the presence of God that is responsible for the appearance of the world.

So, there is some mystery in this world. We can call God only as a mystery, and no thing else; and we are involved in this world of appearances. We are a part of this world; therefore it is not given to us to completely reject the law of the world. A complete carelessness towards the rules that are prevailing in the cosmos would be to the doom of the individual, and that foolhardy aspiration for God would be paid back in its own coin as sorrow. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to say that the devotee of God is not a foolish man; he is a devotee, but he is not foolish—he is wise. What is wisdom? Wisdom is nothing but an understanding of the nature of life. To understand what life is would be wisdom, and to mistake life for what it is not would be unwisdom.

Religions often have made the mistake of a transcendent ascent of the religious spirit, overcoming the laws of the world, facing God in the high heavens and preaching a renunciation of the things of the world to the extreme point, the breaking point we may say, until it would be not tolerated by the laws of the world. The person who renounces the world is a part of the world—we forget that, and there lies the mistake. The suffering of the seeker is due to a mistaken notion of himself in relation to the world outside. He has not yet become a part of God, though he is aspiring to be such, and the hands of God work through the forms of the world—that cannot be forgotten. Just as the power of the president or the prime minister may work through a small official, and we cannot ignore this official merely by saying that we are not concerned with him in any manner inasmuch as we are somehow or other placed in an atmosphere over which he has jurisdiction, the world has jurisdiction over our individuality.

The world is made up of several grades of density, to which we have already made reference. There are the various *lokas*—*bhu-loka*, *bhuvar-loka*, *suvar-loka*, *mahar-loka*, *jana-loka*, *tapo-loka* and *satya-loka*. The ascent of the spirit is through the ascent of these various densities of manifestation, the *lokas*; and we are in the physical realm, not in other realms. We are not in *jana-loka*, *tapo-loka*, *satya-loka*—we are in *bhu-loka*. The earth pulls us by its gravitation—water can drown us, fire can burn us, air can blow us, which means to say we are strongly conditioned by the physical world. In passing, I may mention the various *samadhis* mentioned by Patanjali in his *sutras*—*savitarka*, *nirvitarka*, etc. are nothing but the ascent of the soul from the physical realm. How difficult it through these *lokas*, *savitarka* being the ascent of the soul from the physical realm. How difficult it is to overcome the clutches of the physical world can be gathered from the importance that Patanjali gives in his Yoga Sutras to the preparations that have to be made for reaching the state of the first ascent of the soul. The first step in the ascent of the soul, which is *savitarka*, is the real beginning of the divine ascent, for

which so much preparation—*yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana* and *dhyana*—has been made. We are not suddenly jumping to the skies, and any mistake in the understanding of these intricacies would be to our ruin and grief.

So we pass our life in Aranyakapurva for years in search of light; but the honesty, the sincerity, the asking is paid its due. Though God enforces discipline upon the individual, He does not forget to reward him for having passed through the difficulties. Reward comes. Devas—Indra, Varuna, Rudra and others—take pity on the Pandavas, and unasked help comes. Rudra gives *pashupata*, Indra gives his *vajra*, Varuna gave *pasha*, and Agni his *agneya*, and what not. The powers of the Pandavas get enhanced by the help they receive from the gods.

The gods are watching us. They are seeing us even now. They are not non-existent myths, as people may imagine. They are as real as hard brick before us, and the Yoga Vasishtha tells us in a beautiful verse that when a person becomes completely surrendered to the law of the world—he is egoless, in other words—it becomes the duty of the rulers of the cosmos to take care and protect this individual. As the divinities take care of all the quarters of the cosmos, so the seeker is protected by all the angels in the heavens—gods in *swarga*, divinities all over, to whom we have paid scant respect earlier due to the affirmation of our ego. God Himself descends in a magnificent form, and to recollect what we have studied earlier in the Udyogaparva of the Mahābhārata, divine forces get gathered for the help of the Pandavas.

Yet everything has not been done, and everything has not been said. There is much more to be done, much more to be said. We know very well that the great glory in which the Pandavas found themselves in the midst of powers like Sri Krishna in the Udyogaparva was not the end of all things. There was suffering yet to come because, again to recall to memory the *samadhis* of Patanjali—*savitarka, nirvitarka, savichar, nirvichar*—they are not enough. There is great struggling on the path; every moment there is an encounter. At every moment, at every step, there is a power that is facing us as an opposite, as an object. The object opposes the subject at every level, and objects change their colours every moment, at every stage, like a chameleon. If today people are the objects, tomorrow the five elements are the objects, and they stand before us. What will we do to them? It is in the *savitarka* process of Patanjali that we encounter the five elements. The people have already gone; we do not have any more trouble with people afterwards. The dealings with people are over in the earlier stages of *yama, niyama*, etc. We have no fears from human beings or any other living beings; we have fear only from the five elements, and we do not imagine that they can give any trouble to us. Really speaking, they are the masters. The five elements are the rulers, and we can do nothing to them. We cannot please them easily, because to comply with the law of physical nature is hard enough.

So it is naturally a surprise to the unsuspecting seeker to be faced with such realities, and to be terrorised once again in the same manner as before by forces unseen and unexpected. When we face in battle any power, it pushes forth all its energies to the maximum extent. Our energies come to the forefront only when we are opposed; other wise no one can know what one's strength is. When everything is failing and our last resort is to save ourselves, then we unleash all our strength. So it is that the Pandavas had to face a set of forces which encountered them with all their might and mane. At

that time there is a peculiar sorrow of the soul, which catches it by the neck, as it were, and the soul retaliates. “Not this, and it is not for me,” says the soul.

Here we find Arjuna at the very beginning of the Bhagavadgītā. All the supports and all the weapons that we have in our hands do not seem to be sufficient to meet the powers that are arrayed before us in battle. The soul recoils from the fact of its having to come in opposition to the powers of the world which are vastly arrayed before it. Then doubts arise. I mentioned to you something about the nature of the havoc that doubt can play in our minds, and doubts will not leave us till the last moment of our lives. There are varieties of doubts; when one doubt goes, another one comes that was not there previously. Doubts shake us from the root, and we become diffident at that moment. Perhaps there is a mistake—this is what we begin to feel. Various arguments were thrust forward by Arjuna to discount the justice of the war. “What is the point in facing Bhishma, Drona and others who are our venerable ancestors?” The regard for elders, the regard for people, love and affection for kith and kin is so strong that a violation of this law is usually regarded in society as an unpardonable mistake. He becomes a renegade in society. “Is this practical, and is this ethically permissible?” is the query of Arjuna. “No, not permissible,” he himself gives the answer. “To cut the throat of those people who have taken care of me from childhood, from whose hands I have eaten food, to strike a blow at their own heads would be a heinous sin,” says the ethics of the world. This would not be permitted. The other argument is: “Where is the guarantee that this battle is going to end with success on our side? May be somebody will win—may be the other side. Why should it be only this side? And all our efforts will be in vain. We will be doomed and destroyed, and will be seeing only bloodshed. What will be the fate of those people who we have harnessed for battle and who have dedicated their lives for our sake, and who have left their mortal coil in our name?” This is another argument—there is no certainty of the consequences of war apart from the fact that there is a mistake in encountering people who are our own. Thirdly, there is a doubt: “The world is not as bad as it appears, and there is something worthwhile in it.” The rejection of the world for the sake of God is involved in a subtle error of not recognising the values that are present in life.

These questions are the sum and substance of the First Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā. Doubts and doubts and doubts—at least three different doubts are mentioned. The retort of Sri Krishna to it, in the Second Chapter, is that we have no correct understanding of the matter. We have no *samkhya buddhi*. *Samkhya buddhi* is correct understanding; that Arjuna lacked. These are the words that Sri Krishna utters: “All this logic, ethics and morals that you spoke of in favour of the world and against the justice of the war—all this that you have said is an outcome of a lack of understanding. You have not understood what Truth is. There is a necessity for clarity of the power of reasoning before you begin to reason. A muddled reason cannot bring correct results. Therefore *samkhya*, understanding, is the first thing that you have to strive for, and not merely employ this ruptured weapon of unintelligent reason to justify erroneous notions.”

“Well, is it so?” says Arjuna. “Am I mistaken? There is diffidence in my heart. I cannot face this world, and there is a sense of the human in me which always speaks its own language, and the human sense cannot always reconcile itself with what the battle of the spirit expects it to.” We are human and think human, but Sri Krishna wants us to be

divine. How is it possible for a human being to be divine? That is possible only if there is the capacity in the individual to rise to the understanding that is equivalent to the character of the spirit. That understanding, which is the light of the spirit, is *samkhya buddhi*; that is the higher reason, the higher self also, in this way. “What is this *samkhya*, what is this higher understanding which I lack? Why is it that you say I have no *samkhya buddhi*, that I am faulty in my arguments? What is wrong?” This will be taken up in further chapters.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE COSMIC MANIFESTATION

The turmoil in the mind of Arjuna, described in the First Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā, is attributed by Bhagavan Sri Krishna to an absence of correct understanding. Every sorrow which sinks the heart is regarded, in the light of higher thinking, as a consequence of inadequate knowledge. Man is not born to suffer; it is joy that is his birthright. It is hammered into our minds again and again that our essential nature is not grief, and therefore to manifest grief cannot be the manifestation of our essential nature. Sorrow is not our birthright; it does not belong to our true substance. What we are really made of is not capable of being affected by sorrow of any kind. There is a deep quintessence in the heart of every person which defies contamination by sorrow of every type. Hence, the great point made out by Bhagavan Sri Krishna is that the sorrow of Arjuna is unbecoming of the knowledge that would be expected of a person of his kind. What is this knowledge that we are lacking, whose absence is the source of our sorrows? Whatever be the nature of sorrow, it is just sorrow—a kind of agony that the individual feels.

This sorrow is due to a lack of knowledge of *samkhya*, says the Second Chapter of the Gītā. *Samkhya* is correct understanding. This Arjuna did not have; therefore he was grieving. There is a necessity for enlightening the *buddhi* or intellect with the wisdom of the Samkhya philosophy. In the ancient Indian system of thinking, *samkhya* has been considered as knowledge of reality. Knowledge of things as they are is called *samkhya*. What is this word *samkhya*? We may have heard words like *samkhyatikari* in governmental circles. The Auditor General or the chief of the statistics department is called *samkhyatikari*. *Samkhya* is a number, calculation, counting, categorising, etc. Perhaps the word *samkhya* has come from the fact of its having been based on the categories of the items involved in the process of the evolution of what they call *prakriti*.

The word *prakriti* occurs for the first time in the Third Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā. To explain what this knowledge or *samkhya* could be, the Teacher of the Gītā introduces us to the principle of what He calls *prakriti*. It would be worthwhile going into some detail as to what these categories which the *samkhya* hangs upon are, one of whose principal categories being *prakriti* itself. The Gītā uses the term *prakriti* oftentimes, and the Samkhya philosophy has the term *prakriti* as its main principle of exposition. What is *prakriti* which is the *forte* of the Samkhya, what are these categorisations of *samkhya*, the ‘numberings’ from which it has assumed its name? According to the philosophy of the Samkhya, which the Bhagavadgītā accepts, in one of its phases *prakriti* is the substance of the cosmos. The stuff out of which the world is made is called *prakriti*. It is a general term, designating the matrix of all things. The basic building bricks of the cosmos are variations of *prakriti*.

We are told by the Samkhya that *prakriti* is constituted of three source into which it modifies itself. We do not know how to translate the word *guna* which appears in the Samkhya system. We can safely say they are powers, forces of nature which is *prakriti*. These forces or powers are conditions into which *prakriti* casts itself at the very inception of the process of evolution, and are known as *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. When

there is an equilibration of all forces, these three aspects of *prakriti* do not reveal themselves independently. This condition where the three exist in harmony is called *samyavastha*, where one cannot say what is and what is not. Often philosophers compare this cosmic condition of equilibrium of the *gunas* of *prakriti* to the deep sleep of the individual. Though in many respects the two are different, in some way we can say they are like the sleep of the individual in the sense that there is an oblivion of everything. Yet a presence of everything is there in seed form. All the activities, all the impulses, all the powers of action of the individual are imbedded in a potential state in the condition of sleep.

Likewise, all that is going to be the universe to come is present in a potential form in the *samyavastha*, or the equilibrated condition of the cosmos—*prakritimulaprakriti* in its primordial state. *Sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* in this cosmical sense are different from the ethical qualities to which we attribute these characteristics. We say a person is *sattvic* or *rajasic* or *tamasic*, by which we mean a person is manifesting goodness or distraction or inertia. But in this cosmic sense, *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* are far beyond the human concept. They are not ethical principles. There is no morality in *prakriti*—it is an impersonal power and it becomes a characteristic of judgment only when it is individualised subsequently. No question of judgment is possible in a cosmic set-up. It is difficult to explain what *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* could be in a cosmic state. We can only say they are something like the powers or forces which physics envisage in the modern sense of the term. They are not individuals and cannot be characterised by individual terminology. A condition in which all the forces of nature collaborate into action in a harmonious manner is *prakriti*.

Now, these cosmic aspects of *prakriti*—*sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*—further evolve themselves into subsidiary categories. The Vedanta and the Samkhya vary a little bit in their description of this process. However, there is not much of a difference; there is a little difference in their way of interpretation. The very purpose of the segmentation of *prakriti* into the characteristics of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* is the separating of the cosmos into the subjective side and the objective side. Creation cannot be meaningful unless there is an experience of an object. Creation begins the moment there is a consciousness of an object in front of the experiencer. When the object is absent, only the subject exists—there is no creation. The very inception of creation is the beginning of the consciousness of an object. The purpose of this categorisation of *prakriti* into these segmentations of forces is therefore the division in the cosmos into the subjective side and the objective side. The *rajas*, in its cosmical activity, catalyses the whole substance of *prakriti* into individualities. These are what are called the *jivas*. They are of various gradations and they are said to belong to almost an infinite variety of species.

It is said there are eighty-four lakhs (8,400,000) of *yonis* or species of creation of individualities. These individuals are the experiences of the objective universe. The objective universe is also, in substance, the *prakriti* itself. It is said that, to speak in the language of the Samkhya, the *sattva* of *prakriti* enables the reflection of *purusha*, or the universal consciousness, through itself. When this universal consciousness of the *purusha* reflects itself through the cosmic *sattva* of *prakriti*, it becomes what the Samkhya calls *mahat*—*mahatattva*. It is the cosmic intellect. We may compare it with the *hiranyagarbha* of the Vedanta; we may compare it to Brahma, the Creator, in the language of the Puranas. This cosmic intellect or *mahatattva* concretises itself further

into a cosmic individuality, and that is called *ahamkara*. It is not the *ahamkara* that I have or you have. It is a cosmic principle of self-consciousness. It is not the individual self-sense that we are speaking of here. It is an unintelligible cosmic situation where the cosmic intelligence is said to become self-aware—'I am' or 'I am that I am'—'*aham asmi*'. This is the cosmic *ahamkara*, comparable with the *virat* of the Vedanta.

Then there is a division. The *prakriti*, in its *tamasic* aspect, becomes the cause of what are known as *tanmatras*—*shabda, sparsha, rupa, rasa, ghanda*—which means the intangible powers that are behind the sensations of hearing, touching, seeing, tasting and smelling. These are the subtle powers which are behind objects, which elicit reactions from our sense organs in these manners. These *tanmatras*, by a kind of permutation and combination, become the cause of the five gross elements—earth, water, fire, air, and ether. This process of permutation and combination is called *panchikarana*, a peculiar term which implies a quintuplication of these *tanmatras* to constitute five elements.

Now, this objective universe is not completely severed from the subjective experiences, on account of the two being the limbs of *prakriti* herself. The perception of the objective universe by an individual is made possible by the presence of an intermediary link that is called the presiding deity or the *adhidaivata* of the mind, intellect, sense organs, etc. Thus, there does not appear that there is a real gulf between the seer and the seen. They are somehow made to appear as if one is different from the other, but the fact of their being children of the same mother, the cosmic *prakriti*, precludes any idea of their total isolation, one from the other. Not merely that; there is a connecting link between the seer and the seen. The sense organs and the mind also are constituted of these *tanmatras*, the very same substance of which the physical cosmos is made. These *tanmatras* again are subdivided into secondary *sattva, rajas, and tamas*. The *sattvic* portions of each of the five *tanmatras* become the causes or substances behind the five senses of knowledge—hearing, seeing, etc. The five put together become the substance of the mind or the *antakarana*. The *raja sic* secondary principles of the *tanmatras* become independently the cause of the five organs of action—grasping, locomotion, etc. Put together they become the *pranas*—*prana, apana, vyana, udana, and samana*. And in the *tamasic* aspect they become this body.

So what is there, in this personality, which is not in the outer world? Whatever the world is made of outwardly is also the substance of this individuality. The *gunas*, which are the substances of *prakriti*, are present in the individual experiencer and also in the objects of perception. So the Bhagavadgītā says: *guṇā guṇeṣu vartanta*—the *gunas* operate upon the *gunas*. The eyes see, the ears hear, the tongue tastes, the skin touches, and the nose smells. How it is possible for these senses to function in this manner? The possibility is on account of the fact of the collaboration that already exists basically between the senses and the objects outside, on account of the fact that both are evolutes of the same *tanmatras*—*shabda, sparsha, rupa, rasa* and *ghanda*.

So, the judgment of Arjuna in respect to the world outside, which he declares in the First Chapter of the Gītā, needs an emendation. What is judgment? It is a reading of meaning into the object by a particular subject; an interpretation of values by investing them with characteristics from outside. But this judgment implies an isolation of the subject from the object. If you are a part of the object itself, the judgment would be difficult. Just as a

judge cannot decide in a case if he himself is involved with the parties, if he himself is a client, the judgment of the intellect becomes ultimately untenable. Though acceptable in the beginning stages, ultimately it is not acceptable, because it is impossible to see any meaning in any judgment unless the subject is isolated from the object. But the two are not so isolated; hence there is a mistake committed by every subject in passing judgment on anything. “Judge not lest you be judged.” The cosmos will judge you if you, as an individual, begin to judge objects. Hence Arjuna’s judgment of values was not acceptable to the cosmic sense of Bhagavan Sri Krishna. *Prakriti*, which is universally spread out everywhere in space and time, is also beyond space and time. It being the sum and substance of both the objective side and the subjective side, there comes about a necessity to see things in a new light altogether. This new light is called *samkhya*. We have to visualise things as constituents of *prakriti*, not forgetting the fact that we are also a constituent thereof. This implies a necessity to rise gradually from the individual placement of values to a cosmic placement of values. Every judgment becomes a cosmic judgment.

It is difficult therefore to know anything unless we know everything. To know anything completely would mean to know everything completely. Only the cosmic mind can know all things correctly, and its judgment alone can be called correct. “So, Arjuna, your statements are based on your notion that you are a human being belonging to a class and category, an individual among many others, separate entirely from the objective world—which is not true.” Hence, a transvaluation of values becomes necessary. The individual has to rise up to the occasion, and the occasion is the recognition of the involvement of the very judge himself in the circumstance of judgment. Well, if this is the truth, what is the duty of the individual under this condition? One cannot act, one cannot move, one cannot even think perhaps, if it is to be accepted that the thinker is inseparable from that which is thought. The answer of Sri Krishna is, “It is not like that. This again is an individual’s judgment, that in that condition no action is possible.” We are imagining that in a cosmic state of things one would be inert, and no activity of any kind would be possible.

There is a transcendental type of activity which the human mind in its present state cannot understand, and that is the significance behind the great gospel of the *karma* yoga of the *Gītā*. *Karma* yoga can be said to be a transcendental action. It is not my action or your action; it is not activity in a commercial sense. It is an activity which is commensurate with the law of the cosmos. It is, again, an activity which is based on *samkhyabuddhi*—we have not to forget this point. The enlightenment of the *samkhya*, to which we made reference earlier, is the basis of this action called ‘yoga’ in the *Bhagavadgītā*. The *karma* yoga of the *Gītā* is therefore divine action, in one sense. It is not human action, because the human sense of values gets overcome, transcended in the visualisation of the involvement of the seer in the seen universe. Every thought becomes a kind of universal interpretation of things, and every action becomes a universal action. That action is divine action, and universal action is God acting—the two are not separate—and this action cannot produce reaction. Therefore there is no bondage in performing this kind of action.

Why does it not produce any reaction? Because the force of action is not separate from the result of the action; it is not even separate from the process of action. *Brahmārpanam brahma havir brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam, brahmaiva tena*

*gantavyarṁ brahma-karma-sāmadhinā*. The performer, the process of performance and the aim to which it is directed are basically connected by a link of—we may call it *prakṛiti*, we may call it *puruṣha*, we may call it Brahman—whatever is the name we give to it, there is a sum and substance which is at the root of all things. So *karma* yoga is an uplifted action of a highly transformed character based on the visualisation of God Himself, as it were, of the universal nature of the life that we live.

This is a very difficult thing. Anybody would say it is an impossibility, because our desires are so strong. We have impulses in us which tie us down to the body and to the society in which we are living. We have hunger and thirst and the urge to sleep; we are fatigued, we have anger, we have passions, we have jealousies, and we have every blessed thing. These impulses within us, which are inseparable from the nature of our mind itself, prevent us, or certainly hinder us, from contemplating any such possibility along the lines indicated here.

No mind can think in this manner because of the desires that are inside us—intense desire, which also, when it is frustrated, becomes intense anger. Desire and anger—these will not allow us to contemplate in this manner. Either we have desire or we have anger; one of the two is always there. We cannot be free from both. But they are one and the same thing appearing in two ways—anger and desire are not two things. When Arjuna queried, “What is this obstruction to this visualisation that you are proclaiming?” Bhagavan Sri Krishna said, “Desire and anger are the obstacles.” They are all-swallowing, all-devouring, fire-like, and insatiable. They can destroy anything, and as long as these are there it will not be possible for the higher mind to work, because as smoke is able to cover the brilliance of fire, the light of higher reason is clouded by the smoke of these desires and impulses. “Well then, what is the state of the individual? On one side you say this; on the other side you say that. On one side you say there is no alternative but to think in a cosmic manner. On the other hand we are told, at the same time, that these impulses will not allow us to think like this. Is there a remedy?”

There is a remedy, because the locations of these desires are the senses, the mind and the intellect. These are the harbingers of desire and anger. Therefore it is necessary to restrain the senses, the mind and the intellect. Desire is nothing but an urge of the individual to move towards objects. It is like the impulse of the river to move towards something outside, say the ocean which is its object. The individual, in its finitude of consciousness, in its agony of being conditioned to the body, cries to come out of itself; and in its attempt to come out of itself and unite itself with others, hugs objects of sense and runs to them. This urge or impulse of the individual to run to outside objects for the purpose of assimilating them into himself—that is called desire—and these desires are channelised through the sense objects and propelled by the mind, sanctioned by the intellect. So these three are the arch devils, we may say, or arch angels which are behind this activity of desire.

The senses are controlled and directed by the mind, and the mind works according to the understanding of the intellect. The one is higher than the other. Higher than the senses is the mind, and higher than the mind is the intellect. So by the power of the mind, the senses can be restrained. But how can the mind have the power to control the senses, when the intellect passes judgment that such-and-such thing is the proper thing? So the intellect has to be approached, and it has to put a check upon the mind

itself; and, sympathetically, the mind puts a check on the senses. But the problem arises—how will the intellect permit this process? It is the intellect that creates this mistake, and yet it is said that the intellect itself should restrain the mind, and the mind has to control the senses. The intellect sees a division between itself and the world outside. It is the creator of logic of every kind, and therefore it sees a gulf between itself and things outside. How will it permit the control of the senses by the mind?

Therefore, the great Teacher of the Gītā says: “You have to resort to a higher power.” There is something higher than the intellect, where the subject and the object are cemented together in a complete whole of integration. That is the *atman*. The *atman* is the *purusha* of the Samkhya, ultimately. This universal principle, when we resort to it by the power of a higher reason—we have to remember that within us there is a higher reason also, apart from the lower intellect which sees divisions in things—with the help of this higher reason which reflects the universal *atman* in us, we can bridge this gulf between subject and object created by the lower intellect. And when this gulf is bridged, the desire for objects of the senses automatically gets sublimated into the higher consciousness of this basic connection between the subject and the object. This is a very difficult practice, but it is a must—the essence of yoga is only this much. Here I have endeavoured to place before you the sum and substance of the Third Chapter of Bhagavadgītā.

## CHAPTER 5

### GOD IS OUR ETERNAL FRIEND

In our rapid study of the Bhagavadgītā, we could observe that there is an inherent defect in the understanding ingrained in human nature by the reply that Bhagavan Sri Krishna gave, as a retort, to the problems raised by Arjuna. This defect, this short coming, was also pointed out in the Third Chapter. The human way of thinking is not necessarily the right way of thinking, though it is accepted as the norm of thinking in the world of human beings. But, unfortunately, the world does not only consist of human beings—a point which man cannot accept due to the egoism of his nature. The ego is self-assertive and proclaims its superiority over the perceptual capacities of others. Do we not always measure everything else with the yardstick of our own way of perceiving and knowing? Everything should be in accordance with our way of thinking—only then do we regard it as right. And, yes, it is true that Arjuna employed this yardstick. He was a human being and he discharged the weapon of human understanding, and comparing the consequences of human activity with the preconditions of the human way of thinking, he projected his arguments.

Bhagavan Sri Krishna was there as a super-personal individual, the one who could think in a different way altogether, far different from the way in which all human beings can think. He was a total Man, 'M' capital, the true 'son of man', in biblical words, who could think as all human beings and yet go beyond the ken of human knowledge. The structure of the world is not the object of ordinary human perception. This is the theme of the Third Chapter of the Gītā, which we went through in a precise survey last time. The world is made in such a way that it cannot be comprehended by the apparatus of human understanding, and therefore to pass judgment on the consequences that follow from the actions of man in the field of this world would be to go off on a tangent and would not serve the purpose. It would not touch even the border of reality. The nature of the world conditions the effects of human action, as it conditions the effects of any action, for that matter. Every event is inwardly connected to the organic structure of the cosmos, and this structure of the cosmos being the determinant of the rightness or the wrongness of any procedure, a human being who always stands outside the world, regards the world as an object of the senses, would be a bad judge of the circumstances of life. The human being cannot be a good judge because he stands outside the world, and he cannot therefore appreciate satisfactorily the various factors of the universal argument, which is the purpose of nature as a whole. The senses which perceive the world are constitutionally involved in the objective structure of things. That is the reason why we cannot know things as they are.

This was the great answer which the Bhagavadgītā poses before us, who walk like peacocks with the pride of knowledge, and tells us where we actually stand. Yes, this is a great revelation indeed—that the world is involved in our perceptions and vice versa, and therefore no valuation can be acceptable in the end if it is purely individualistic, notional and limited to a single observer of things. Here we have the central philosophy of the Third Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā. I mention these few words only a kind of recapitulation of what we observed in the last Chapter.

All this is beautiful, yes, but who is to tell the senses that this is the state of affairs? Who is to give instruction to the mind that its perceptions and cognitions are erroneous? The teacher is absent, because the so-called teacher is the individual himself, and he is himself involved in the mistake that is committed in perception. The perceiver is involved in the perception, and if the perception is erroneous, and even in this erroneous perception the perceiver is also included, there would be no chance of enlightenment.

A question arises—what is going to be our fate? Who is to awaken us from the sleep of this ignorance? The Bhagavadgītā is again the answer. It is an answer to all our questions in all the stages of their manifestation. There is a subtle power that works throughout the world, which is invisible to the senses and uncognisable by the mind. There is a mysterious presence pervading and enveloping all things, sustaining everything, connecting one thing with another thing and maintaining a balance of relationship among all things. Its manifestation at every juncture of time, at every crucial moment, is the rectifying factor behind every erroneous movement of things. The mysterious descent of this Universal presence into temporal events is what is called the *avatara*, the Divine Incarnation.

God manifests Himself at all times, and this manifestation is a perpetual process. Divine grace is like the flood of a river or the flow of the oceanic waves that never cease. God never withdraws His grace; He is an unconditional Giver. There is a perpetual flow of charity from the benign hands of the Almighty, and His charity is not merely material. He is not giving something out of Himself—He is giving Himself. The charity that comes from God is not a charity of objects, as is the case with the charity of people—it is a sacrifice of Himself that He makes. A self-abandonment is performed by the great Almighty in the incarnation that He takes, in the blessings that He gives, and in the grace that He bestows.

So there is a great solace for all of us in the midst of the turmoil of life, in the sorrows of our days and the grief through which we are passing every moment of time. *Yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata, abhyutthānam adharmasya tadātmānaṁ śjāmyaham. Paritrāṇāya sādḥūnām vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām, dharma-saṁsthapanārthāya yuge yuge* is an eternal gospel. This one gospel is enough to keep us rejoicing day and night, completely forgetful of all the apparent sorrows of life. If anything is alive, it is God. Everything is dead without Him. This life force takes effective measures at the proper moment, whenever there is a conflict of forces. This conflict of power is the *yuga*. It has various connotations and denotations. Any kind of friction is a *yuga*, and one power colliding with another power is a *yugasandhi*. It may be of the *yugas* known as *krita*, *dvapara*, *treta* and *kali*, the well known classifications of time measurement, or it may be any other type of *sandhi* or transitional period.

It is in the period of transition, which works like anarchy, that we find ourselves at a loss; where our brains do not function, intellects are not adequate to the purpose, and we feel totally out of gear. Our efforts fail when we are in a period of transition, when we are neither here nor there. At that moment it is that the Universal power reveals itself as the *avatara*, the Incarnation. The divine hand is the mysterious aid that comes unasked. That is the peculiarity of God's grace; we do not ask for it—it comes unasked. While people grudgingly give some charity when asked, God gives abundantly even when not

asked, because He is omniscient. He knows the secret and the needs of the world and the necessity of the whole cosmos. There is a complete evolution of forces, as it were, throughout the universe, whenever there is any difficulty at any point in space or in time.

Every event is felt everywhere in the cosmos, just as a little prick on the sole of our foot is felt throughout our body, due to the connectedness of the system. This secret is to be known, and whoever knows this is not reborn into this world, we are assured. *Janma karma ca me divyam evaṃ yo vetti tattvataḥ, tyaktvā dehaṃ punar janma naiti mām eti.* We will not be reborn into this world of suffering, *mrityu loka*, having known this secret of the perpetual manifestation, incarnation of divinity in this world. Having known this, we become assured of a perpetual friend with us. We are not lost souls; we are not orphans, as many a time we feel in this world of wilderness. It may look that we have no succor in this world of various types of sorrow, but we have a friend who is always ready to help us in our needs. He is a friend who will never forget us, though we forget Him. We perpetually ignore His existence, deny it in every act of our perception, assert ourselves arrogantly, negate His very existence and try to blot Him out of the picture. This is the gratitude we show to God for the blessings that He bestows upon us. What a state of affairs, what a pity. But God is immeasurably kind; even million of mothers will not equal one God. Such is the compassion that God has upon people. Our insults upon Him are not taken seriously, and our denial of Him is not punished. Always, like the tree that gives fruit even if it is struck with an axe, like nature as a whole which fills us bounty in spite of our disregard for its laws God helps us.

Such is the glorious message that is inherently present in the Fourth Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā. When we are awakened to this fact, we are blessed not merely with knowledge, but also with a power that is not of this world. What are the blessings that this yoga of meditation and awakening into God-consciousness brings us? The blessings are these: equanimity of perception (*samatva*), dexterity in action (*karmasukaushalam*) and the capacity to see that which is between us and the world, that which works secretly in the midst of visible things, unknown and undiscovered. *Yoga-sannyasta-karmāṇaṃ jñāna-saṅchinna-saṁśayam, ātma-vantaṃ na karmāṇi nibadhnanti dhanañajaya.* This is the final touchstone of the grand message of the Fourth Chapter. One who has renounced by yoga and dispelled all doubts by *jnana* and is possessed of the Self—such a person is not bound by action. This is a difficult passage, but it has a profound meaning. The renunciation that we practice should be an outcome of yoga, and not a result of frustration or weak-heartedness, a cowardly attitude, or the ‘sour grape attitude’, as they call it. The renunciation that the Bhagavadgītā speaks of is an automatic consequence of yoga. That is why a person who is in this state is referred to as *yoga sannyasa dharma*. Actions are renounced by establishing oneself in yoga. The type of renunciation of action that is referred to here as a result of one’s steadfastness in yoga is not the abandonment of the form of the action as such, but the spirit of the action. Action is an attitude and not the form that the movements of the limbs of our body take. The renunciation of action, as the result of steadfastness in yoga, is nothing but the ability to rise above the very consciousness of one’s doership in anything in this world.

God is the doer of all things. His hands operate through every individual. As we are told again, all heads are His heads, all eyes are His eyes, all hands are His hands. He walks

through all the legs, thinks through all the brains, sees through all the eyes and performs actions through all the hands. So to whom does the credit of action go? Who is the agent of action, who is the performer of deeds? Not I, not you, not he, she or it. It is the rumbling of the powers of the whole cosmos that we call a total action. All action is a total action; there is no such a thing as individual action. When this awakening takes place, there is an automatic renunciation of the attitude of personalistic action, the agency that one feels in regard to oneself in performance of any deed. “I do it and therefore I have to appropriate the fruit thereof.” This is a wrong notion of one’s own self being the sole performer of deeds, contrary to the truth that the whole world is active at the manifestation of any event anywhere. This awakening is *yoga-sannyastakarmāṇāṁ*.

We are filled with doubts in our minds—we can prepare a dictionary of all our doubts—they are endless. Everywhere we have a suspicious attitude about the world, about things, about people, about ourselves, about the past, about the present, and about the future. These doubts can not be dispelled until knowledge arises, and we know what knowledge means, an insight into which we have been given in the Second Chapter of the Gītā. Knowledge is the knowledge of God ultimately, and as a result, knowledge of the nature of the world in its reality, as mentioned in the Third Chapter. This is true knowledge, and when we are awakened to this real knowledge, all doubts get dispelled. Then what happens? *Ātmavantarṁ*—we become truly possessed of the Self that we really are.

We are people who have lost ourselves and are in pursuit of things outside. Yes, this is what has happened; we have grasped the world and lost our own selves, and we are in search of our own selves in the things that we are trying to possess in the world. And this Self that has been lost can be possessed truly only when this twofold measure of yoga is taken—the renunciation of the notion of agency in individualised action, and the dispelling of all doubts concerning things, through *jnana*. These things take us to true self-possession, where we begin to behold ourselves in all things. “You will see the Self in yourself as also in Me.” says Sri Krishna. The Self will not only be seen in only yourself or myself, but it will be seen as the principle of truth inherent in the form of the world.

This is a complete philosophy before us, and yoga in a nutshell. When this is properly effected, we live a life of universal renunciation. It is not the renunciation of the monk or the monastic hermit in the social sense; it is the rising above the very consciousness of dualistic perception, and that state, which is called the state of *yogayukta*, brings further wonderful results.

## CHAPTER 6

### UNIVERSAL ACTION

In a single verse which occurs in the Fifth Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā, the gradual stages of the ascent of human perspective are given to us. *Yoga-yukto viśuddhātmā vijitātmā jitendriyaḥ, sarvabhūtātmabhūtātmā kurvann api na lipyate. Jitendriyaḥ*. ‘One who has restrained the senses.’ This is the definition of a person who has risen above the ordinary prosaic level of attachment to objects. The connection of the senses with objects is so common and apparent that we may almost be said to be living in object-consciousness, and living an object life, a fact that would be obvious. When we analyse our own minds and discover what we are contemplating, all our contemplations are of objects—of this and that and what not. The intention behind this thought of objects is a deluded notion of the senses, that they become enhanced in their dimension by the increase of pleasurable experiences.

The very same chapter in the Gītā gives us an insight into the futility of the search for pleasure in objects. *Ye hi saṁsparśaja bhogā duḥkha-yonaya eva te, ādy-antavantaḥ kaunteya na teṣu ramate budhaḥ*. There is a beginning and an end for the pleasures of sense. There is anxiety permeating this search for pleasure in objects; anxiety which is equivalent to sorrow, which is present continuously from the beginning to the end in one’s search for pleasure through objects. There is anxiety when the objects are not possessed. Because they are not possessed, there is an anxiety as to when they will be possessed. When they are actually possessed, then there is anxiety as to how long they will be in possession. One would not want to be deprived of this contact, and when there is bereavement of oneself from the objects, one need not explain the grief. Therefore there is grief and sorrow in the beginning, in the middle and in the end. There is no pleasure in the objects, which is practically demonstrated by our daily lives. Wise people do not indulge themselves in this search for object experience. *Na teṣu ramate budhaḥ*. It is the blind senses that, like moths rushing to fire, go headlong into external contact; a contact which they can never establish in this life, for reasons beyond their expectation and knowledge. Hence, it is necessary to control the senses.

*Vijitātmā jitendriyaḥ*: One who has restrained the senses is one who has taken one step towards the goal, risen at least one step above the earth level of object experience, object indulgence and object longing. All spiritual life is a step towards subjectivity of experience, from the externality or objectivity in which we are immersed. Yoga is only this much—a return to subjectivity from objectivity, a subjectivity which will encompass, in the end, all that we regard as the objects of sense. Towards this end the Bhagavadgītā admonishes us that we have to learn the art of restraining the senses so that we do not live an object life, and we must learn at least the first lesson, the kindergarten lesson, of returning to the subjectivity of experience which is the conditioning factor of all experiences. *Jitendriyaḥ*, a control over the senses, has to be exercised to the best of one’s possibility. Such a person is called *vijitātmā*, one who has attained self-control.

There is a very marked distinction between these two words used in verse— *vijitātmā* and *jitendriyaḥ*. On one hand we are told that we have to be controllers of the senses, and then the next step is the control of self— *vijitātmā*. The distinction is very obvious again.

The senses are variegated—at least five can be enumerated—but the self is one. Here the ‘self’ referred to is the mind or the psychic apparatus. One who has controlled the senses has to turn back upon the mind and control the mind in its totality, and then he becomes *vijitātmā*. The mind has to be controlled, which is of course more important than a tentative restraint exercised over the independent senses, because the mind is the dynamo which pumps energy into the senses. It is the powerhouse from which proceeds strength to the various centres of cognition. So when there is withdrawal of the energy flowing through the senses by means of sense control, there is an increase in the volume, the content of the energy of the mind.

A self-controlled person is also a sense-controlled person, and vice versa. The one is the same as the other, but the matter is not over here. There is an establishment of the mind in pure *sattva* when there is the withdrawal of sense energy into the mind by way of consideration and an establishment of oneself in non-distracted attention or concentration. All concentration of sense is distracted attention, but the concentration that we attain to when the senses are withdrawn into the mind is not distracted—it is *sattvica*. Therefore that state is referred to as *visuddhātmāta*. *Visuddhātmāta vijitātmā jitendriyaḥ*: We become pure in the literal sense, not only in the ethical or social sense. It is not the ethical righteousness that is spoken of here, but the purity that is of a spiritual character. The resplendence of *sattvaguna*, the equilibrated condition of the psyche where the *atman* within gets reflected as the sun is reflected in a clean mirror, that unity of oneself with one’s own Self is called yoga—*yogayuko*.

So here, in a half verse, we have a world of significance pumped into our minds, beautifully expressed in pithy language—*yogayukto visuddhātmāta vijitātmā jitendriyaḥ*. How gradually the words are used, systematically. Such a person who has established himself in the Self by means of the withdrawal of the senses from the objects by way of controlling the mind, by means of establishment of oneself in *sattva* or purity, by getting uniting with the reality within, becomes united with all things in the world.

To be united with your Self is equivalent to uniting with everything else. This is the magnificent outcome of the practice of yoga—to know your Self is to know everybody. This is a wonder indeed, that knowledge which is of the Self—Self-knowledge—is the same as world knowledge. It is equivalent to Universal knowledge. It is *brahmasakshatkarā*. You become *sarvabhūtātmabhūtātmā*. “He becomes the Self of all beings.” One who has become the Self of one’s own self has, at the same time, become the Self of all beings. To know my Self is to know you and everybody. Such a person acts not while acting, because actions cease to be actions in the case of a person who has ceased to be a person and thereby has ceased to be an agent of action, therefore evoking no consequence of action. This is Universal action; this is the great vision of *karma* yoga that the Bhagavadgītā places before us in a concentrated verse in the Fifth Chapter.

For this attainment, deep meditation is necessary. The Sixth Chapter explains to us what meditation is, but prior to that, towards the end of the Fifth Chapter, we are given a cryptic description of what this yoga is going to be, as it is to be explained in the Sixth Chapter. *Sparśān kṛtvā bahir bāhyāṁś caḥṣuś caivāntare bhruvoḥ, prāṇāpānau samau kṛtvā nāsābhyantara-cāriṇau*. Here is a concentrated verse once again. Abandoning all contact that is external, setting aside all externality and freeing the senses and the mind from contamination with externality, fix one’s attention in the middle of the eyebrows. This

teaching has, again, invoked many explanations and commentaries. What does it mean to fix the attention in the middle of the eyebrows? Physically, it is very clear. We concentrate psychically on the centre that is between the eyebrows. There are a variety of meanings implied in this instruction. According to the science of the psyche, the seat of the mind is supposed to be the centre described here, as that lying between the two eyebrows, sometimes called the *ajnachakra*. Here is the seat of the intellect or the reason, and to concentrate on the seat of the intellect is to bring it down under control. The science which expatiates on this theme tells us that the *ajnachakra*, that point between the eyebrows, is the penultimate point leading up to the crown of the head, which is supposed to be symbolically representative of cosmic experience.

Now, this is an esoteric teaching which has psycho-biological implications, with a spiritual profundity at the background. The various phases of the moon, which are fifteen in number counted through the bright half and the dark half of the lunar month, as we call it, are connected with the various plexuses in the system of the body, and the digits of the moon are regarded as representative of the digits in the psychic body, which are the plexuses or centres, called the *chakras*. They are not in the physical body, though they have an impact upon the corresponding centres in the physical body. According to this doctrine, the *ajnachakra* is the location of the blossomed intellect or the mind when it is fully awakened from the slumber of earth-consciousness and is about to wake up into the consciousness of the super-physical. This is perhaps the reason why this point is recommended as suitable for concentration, one having withdrawn the attention from the externals in the earlier stages.

*Prāṇāpānau samau kṛtvā*—there is another difficult technique. Following this advice, the process of breathing through the nostrils is constituted of the *prana* and the *apana* flowing through the nervous system, which is twofold in character, known as *ida* and *pingala*. This dual breathing through the two nostrils is the cause of distraction of the mind, swinging the attention from the subject to the object and from object to the subject, an alternate attention being thrust towards the object or the subject at different times on account of the ebb and flow of the *prana*, like the rise and fall of the waves of the ocean. This has to be curbed by a centralised breathing, which is the equanimity to be established between the two flows of *ida* and *pingala*. This equanimous breathing is called is the entry of the *prana* into the central nervous system, called the *sushumna*. They are all invisible nervous centres that cannot be seen with the eyes. This central breathing is connected with a central way of thinking, which means thinking neither the subject nor the object. Neither are you to concentrate on your personality, your own body, your own individuality as all in all, nor are you to concentrate on an object outside as if it is everything. The truth is in the middle between subject and object, as *sushumna* is between *ida* and *pingala*.

This equalisation of the breath between the *ida* and *pingala* by driving it into the *sushumna* is called the practice of *kumbhaka*, a stoppage of the breathing arrived at either by alternate breathing, known usually as *sukha purvak pranayama*, with which we are already acquainted, or by a sudden stoppage of breath which is called *kevala kumbhaka*—we neither breathe in nor breathe out. Various types of *kumbhaka* are mentioned in systems like the *sutras* of Patanjali, for instance. Either the breath can be held by alternate breathing, or after expulsion, or after inhalation, or suddenly. Generally, the sudden stopping is regarded as the highest type of *kumbhaka*, where we

do not think too much about the breathing process, but hold it by a sudden attention fixed upon the object of our meditation.

So, *prāṇāpānau samau kṛtvā nāsābhyantara-cāriṇau, yatendriya-mano-buddhir*. Here is the masterstroke of yoga, which rises above what I already have said. There has to be a totality of unitedness of the senses, the mind and the intellect. This is very important and hard to comprehend. Like three brothers working in unison in a single family, with one thought though the brothers are three, the senses, the mind and the intellect have to engage themselves in a single practice of absorption of oneself in the object of meditation. When the senses stand together with the mind, and the intellect does not operate, it is called the supreme yoga. When the five senses stand together with the mind, that condition is called *pratyahara* or the withdrawal of sense energy into the mind. Generally the senses operate independently of the mind, as children working independently of the parents. They are not united with the parents. *Pratyahara* is the union of the senses in the mind in such a way that it appears that the senses have become the mind itself. There is no distinction between the senses and the mind, and we do not know which is operating at a particular moment. The eyes do not see and the ears do not hear, etc., independently, but they combine to perform a single function of attention through the mind, so that it is the mind that sees and hears, not the eyes and ears. It is a supernormal perception, and the intellect talks from logical deliberations. The intellect ceases from argumentative activity and merges itself in this central function which is the head of all the senses, the mind as well as the intellect. When such unison takes place—*yatendriya-mano-buddhir munir moksha-pāryaṇaḥ*—one becomes a real *muni*, a really silent person. The silence of the mind is real *mouna*, where the mind ceases to think of objects, whereas in ordinary verbal *mouna* the mind may think of objects; though the speech may not express objects through language, but the mind does think of objects. But the mind has to stop thinking of objects—that is yoga, and that is real *mouna*. One becomes a real *muni* when this state is attained; one becomes *yatendriya-mano-buddhir munir*, restrained in the senses, the mind and the intellect.

*Moksha-parāyaṇaḥ*—here is another glorious message for us. You have to be yearning for liberation. Your aspiration for *moksha* is the masterstroke. It is the *forte* before you in yoga which dissolves the senses, the mind and the intellect at one stroke. As mist dissolves before the sun, the senses, the mind and the intellect dissolve, as it were, in a flow of *moksha*-consciousness. In this state your soul is surging forth into infinity. Your heart is yearning to attain union with the Absolute, like the calf running to the mother cow that it had lost, like a river rushing towards the ocean, not resting quiet until it reaches the ocean. As you gasp for breath when you are being drowned in water, so is the soul to surge forth to that great destination called *moksha*, or liberation of the spirit, in the absolute Brahman. This longing is the panacea for all ills of human life. This desire for *moksha* is the destruction of all desires. It is the self-consummation of oneself, and the consuming of oneself in the fire of longing for that state where all longing ceases. To desire the *atman* is to end all desires. It burns up every longing which is extraneous. *Vigatecchā-bhaya-krodho yaḥ sadā mukta eva saḥ*: Such a person is automatically freed from likes and dislikes. There is no need of any comment on this subject; it follows spontaneously. Such a person is already liberated even while alive in this world. These two verses are so grand and magnificent before us, occurring towards the end of the Fifth Chapter of the *Gītā*, introducing us into the larger exposition of the

Sixth Chapter where *dhyana* yoga or meditation is described.

What is meditation? It is the centring of oneself in one's Self, the transferring of the object into the Self and the Self into the object, so that the two become one. Sometimes this state is called *samadhi*. A proper balancing of the subject and the object is *samadhi*; a complete equilibrium is *samadhi*. This is attained through meditation, *dhyana*. For this purpose you have to understand what is the object of *dhyana*—what meditation is. On what are you going to concentrate? People are very enthusiastic about meditation; they want to meditate, but on what? That is not clear because there are umpteen things in the world on which you can concentrate and absorb yourself. Here, in the language of yoga at least, meditation means meditation on the ultimate reality of things; not on the forms which are passing, not on the shapes of things which come and go, not on the illusory presentation of the phenomena of the world, but on that which lies as the background of phenomena. The noumenon is the object of meditation, not the phenomenon. What is this noumenon? In the language of the Bhagavadgītā, the noumenon is referred to as the *atman* of things. The selfhood or the being that is at the root of all things is called the *atman*. The contemplation or the meditation prescribed in the Sixth Chapter of the Gītā is on the *atman* of things, as was mentioned in the earlier verse in the Fifth Chapter that we spoke about.

Self-knowledge leads to all knowledge. Meditation on the Self does not mean meditation on one's own self; such a thing is not, because it has been mentioned already that one who has become the Self of one's own self has also become the Self of all—*sarvabhūtātmarshūtmā*. So, to meditate on one's Self is to meditate on all selves—the totality of selves. But one has to understand what this 'Self' is before one can embark on this great adventure of meditation.

*Yadā hi nendriyārtheṣu na karmasv anuṣajjate, sarva-saṅkalpa-sannyāsī yogārūdhastadochyate.* In one sense, without going into much detail, the Bhagavadgītā tells us in this verse in the Sixth Chapter that one can be regarded as established in yoga, *yogārūdhastadochyate*, when certain conditions are fulfilled. A very few but very important of these are mentioned. When one is not attached to or is not clinging to any object of sense or even to the action that one performs, and abandons all initiative whatsoever, either internally or externally—that person can be regarded as having established himself in yoga. So you can imagine what yoga is from this verse, which can be considered as a psychological definition of yoga. The more advanced metaphysical and spiritual definitions will come afterwards. Here we have a purely psychological definition: not to be clinging to objects, not to cling even to *karma* or the action that one performs, and to also abandon the volition that is behind the mental activity of clinging, whether to objects or to actions.

There are two types of attachments—attachment to objects and attachment to actions. Both of these are taken into consideration here. One is not to be attached to either of these—either to the object or to the action. We have the feeling that a particular object is desirable and a particular action is desirable. Now, this desirability of the object or the action arises on account of a sense of agency in oneself, doership, which is the root ill of the whole of human life. The consciousness of agency or doership is the fear of suffering, because whether it is attachment to objects or attachment to actions, it stands as an attachment, which means to say, a movement of the mind towards some external location other than the Self that is non-externalised. In this externalisation of the mind

by way of attachment to objects and actions, there is an automatic reaction set up, because reaction to action is nothing but the corollary that follows from interference with the law of the cosmos. Just as a DC current of electricity can give us a kick when we touch it because there is a repulsion automatically created on account of our contact with the flow of electric energy, for reasons which electrical engineers know very well—the law of electricity is such—likewise, there is a system that is operating in the cosmos, a system which is known as *rita*, in the language of the Vedas. The *dharma* which we usually speak of, the great righteousness of the cosmos, the virtue that we are acquainted with, the goodness that we are speaking of, whatever it is—the great principle of rectitude which operates in an equilibrated manner throughout the universe is interfered with when there is self-affirmation by way of consciousness of agency in action and consciousness of a desire for objects outside. This interference is paid back in its own coin by the *karmaphala*, or the nemesis, as we call it.

So when this ceases, one becomes a super-individual person. No individual can escape the consequence of action, inasmuch as to be conscious of individuality is also to be conscious of agency of action. So to withdraw oneself from the consciousness of agency in action is to rise above the consciousness of individuality itself. It follows that when there is no individual volition, *sarva-saṅkalpa-sannyāsī* takes place. Such a person is established in yoga—*yogārūḍhas tadochyate*. Here is the initial instruction on the practice of meditation in the Sixth Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE ART OF MEDITATION

*Dhyana* yoga, or the art of meditation, is the subject of the Sixth Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā. The subject of the collecting of the forces of one's personality into a centre is the great theme of this Chapter. The dissipated energies of one's individual personality, which channelise themselves through the senses in the direction of objects, are conserved and raised to a higher level of potency for the purpose of an ascent in a vertical direction, we may say, towards the realisation of the highest Self of the cosmos. So at the very beginning of the Chapter we are asked to raise ourselves by our own selves—*uddhared ātmanātmānaṁ*. The self has to be raised by the Self, uplifted by the Self. We ourselves are to lift our own selves. The difficulty in the practice of this yoga is precisely in this interesting feature, namely, that the manipulator and that which is manipulated are one and the same. The meditator and that which is meditated upon do not stand apart as two principles or elements cut off from one another, but they combine to constitute a power by which the higher level has to be reached through the transcendence of the lower level. *Uddhared ātmanātmānaṁ nātmānam avasādayet*. We should not deprecate or create despondency in ourselves. We should not condemn ourselves; we should not regard ourselves as weaklings, as nobodies, as sinners, as helpless victims, etc. This is not the attitude that we have to develop in regard to ourselves. We are none of these things—we are not helpless, we are not sinners, and we are not victims. All these are erroneous fabrications of the false personality, which is the obstacle to a clear perception of the truth of the universe.

We are always to tread the path of positivity and never the path of negativity. The whole art of yoga is a question of absorption of values and not of negation or repulsion. The more we are able to assume the attitude of absorption, comprehension, collaboration, cooperation, etc., the less we will find the necessity to repel, reject or to condemn things. The so-called objects, the so-called things of the world and circumstances which are regarded mostly as outside the self of one's own being, are to be brought into our own selves from the objects and the various environments outside. *Uddhared ātmanātmānaṁ nātmānam avasādayet, ātmaiva hy ātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanah*: We have no enemies except our own selves and we have no friends except our own selves. *Ātmaiva hy ātmano bandhur*: The Self is the friend of the self, and the Self is also the enemy of the self.

Now, the word 'Self', or *atman*, is used in two different senses. The higher Self and the lower self are both indicated by the common denomination of the word 'self'—we may say the self with a small 's' and the Self with a capital 'S'. The higher Self is the friend of the lower self, and it is also the enemy of the lower self under different conditions. Just as the law is a friend of the citizen of a country, it also is an enemy of the citizen of a country, for different reasons. When one obeys the law of an atmosphere, that atmosphere becomes friendly. When one disobeys the law of the atmosphere in which one is placed, that law becomes a punishing medium. So, the higher Self becomes a friend of the lower self when the lower self abides by the law of the higher Self. The higher Self becomes the enemy of the lower self when the lower self asserts its own

independent, egoistic attitude, contradicting the requirements of the law of the higher Self.

What is the higher Self, we may be wondering, whose law we have to abide by and whose law we have not to contradict? The higher Self is not some different thing; it is not another person. It is a larger degree of our own personality. It is a wider dimension of what we are in our own selves. It is, to give an example, an adult in comparison with a small baby. Very crudely, in a physical sense, we may say the mature mind and consciousness of a wise adult is the higher self of the baby that knows nothing. But the higher Self here is used in a more significant manner than this analogy would indicate. It is a qualitatively more intense consciousness and a quantitatively larger dimension at the same time. We may also give an example of waking and dream, to make the matter clear. The waking consciousness may be regarded as the higher Self in comparison with the consciousness of the dream subject, which can be regarded as the lower self in comparison with the waking, because the waking consciousness comprehends all that is in dream and determines all the values that go as realities in dream. We should regard that as the higher Self which exceeds the limits of our present personality.

The more unselfish we become, the more we are tending towards the higher Self; and meditation is nothing but the focusing of the consciousness of the lower self in the direction of this higher Self or, we may say, the intention of the selfish individual to become more unselfish in various ways. There are hundreds and hundreds of ways of becoming unselfish, and we know very well what it means. To regard the values which exceed the limits of our physical personality would be a tendency towards unselfishness. But we cling to this body and consider only the physical values of this body as the be-all and end-all of this life. To disregard the lives of others would be a life of selfishness. A person who has a consideration for values which are outside of and transcending his own individual self would be regarded as an unselfish individual.

But the unselfishness that is indicated here, in the art of meditation, is not merely the social definition of unselfishness. Well, a person who has a desire to take care of his family—wife, children, brothers, sisters, etc.—and who does not cling very much to his own bodily individuality would be regarded as an unselfish man. And a person who has love for the whole nation rather than merely his own family, can be regarded as an unselfish man. And a person who has love for the whole of humanity and works for the good of mankind, rather than clinging to the ideals of one's own nationality, can also be regarded as an unselfish person. But here the word 'unselfishness' is used in a more profound sense, not in the social sense of unselfishness—which of course is good in its own way. There is a qualitative enhancement in the realisation of the higher Self in the movement the individual towards the family, or from the family to the nation, or from the nation to the whole of mankind. There is not much of a qualitative transformation, though there is a quantitative increase in the outlook of life. But the higher Self is not merely a quantitative largeness; it is also a qualitative enhancement.

Likewise, we have the example of the waking consciousness, to come to the analogy once again. The waking consciousness is not merely quantitatively larger than the dream consciousness, it is also qualitatively higher. So it is that we are happier in waking life

than in dream. We may be emperors in dream and beggars in waking, but a person would be happier to be a beggar in waking than an emperor in dream. That is because the emperorship, or wealth, or whatever value that we may have in dream is a qualitative deprecation; it is inferior in quality, and therefore the beggarhood in waking is superior to the kingship in dream. Though we may say the king is superior to the beggar in economic value, but what of that quality of consciousness? This example is only to give an idea of what the higher Self can be. The higher Self is not merely a physical expansion in the society of people; and so the movement towards God is a little different from becoming unselfish in the purely social sense, though social values, as I said, are preparatory steps for self-purification. All this I am mentioning in connection with the implication of a single verse of the Sixth Chapter: *Uddhared ātmanātmānaṁ nātmānam avasādayet, ātmaiva hy ātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanah.*

*Bandhur ātmātmanas tasya yenātmaivātmā jitaḥ, anātmanas tu śatrutve vartetātmaiva śatruvat.* He is the friend, the higher Self is our friend only in the case of that person who has overcome the lower self by means of the higher Self. But if the lower self has taken hold of the whole personality, and there is a complete oblivion of even the existence of the higher Self, that higher Self will be an enemy of the lower self. It will come like a thunderbolt, because nobody can violate existing laws; 'ignorance of the law is no excuse' is a saying not merely applicable to man-made laws but also to divine laws. Merely because we do not know the existence of divine law, it does not mean that we can be exempted from the operation of that law. So God Himself acts as an enemy, as it were. Of course, we cannot say that God is an enemy of anybody, but the reaction that is set up by the higher law of God is something like an automatic action of a computer system that has no friends or foes. A computer has no enemies; it has no friends. It depends on how we feed the matter into it. If we wrongly feed it, a wrong result comes, and we cannot say that it is an enemy because a wrong result came—we have fed it wrongly. But if it is properly fed, the correct result comes. As with electricity—we cannot say electricity is a friend or an enemy. If we are able to control it, it is a great harnesser of power, but if we do not know how to manipulate it, it can kick us and finish us off. All laws are of this nature. Every law is impersonal and unprejudiced—there is no friend or foe for it. So it depends upon the extent to which we are in harmony with the regulations and the regulatory laws of the higher Self—to that extent we are successful. All success is a consequence of our alignment with the requirements and laws of the higher Self, and all failure is contrary to it.

Thus is a great dictum that is placed before us by Bhagavan Sri Krishna at the very beginning of the Sixth Chapter, which is going to describe to us the method of meditation. With this interesting introduction and a very important foundation of values, the practical techniques are described. Yoga is meditation finally, and meditation is a fixing of attention on consciousness. Consciousness pervades the whole body, and our consciousness, secondarily, pervades even our society. This peculiar relationship of ours with human values and things of the world creates a peculiar self outside us, which is known in Sanskrit Vedantic terminology as the *gaunatman*. A father regards his son as his self; he has so much love for the son that anything that happens to the son appears to happen to his own self, and the same is true in regard to many other things.

So, there is a social self. Social self means the particular person or object with which the

consciousness of a person has become identified for a peculiar reason, which varies from person to person. When consciousness identifies itself with any object, that object becomes the self, because consciousness is the self. What we call 'self' is nothing but self-consciousness. But if we are able to transfer our consciousness so intensely and vehemently in respect of a person or an object outside, that person or object becomes the self, and then becomes a centre of attraction and love. That is the so-called artificial self that is created by the identification of consciousness externally with the secondary self, or the *gaunatman*. There is the bodily self, called the *vichataman*. We identify ourselves with this body, we identify ourselves with the mind, and we identify ourselves with emotions and with various internal mechanisms. These are all our 'selves'.

And so, yoga being the attention on the Self, it means that all these so-called selves have to be put together in harmony, one with the other. That is why great teachers of yoga, such as Patanjali, have instituted the methods of regulating our consciousness through all these layers of the self, beginning with the social self. The *yama* and *niyama* of Patanjali's yoga system are only the methods of organising the social self for the purpose of withdrawing it into the personal self, from which it has emanated as a ray, as it were. From the personal self we go higher up, gradually into the universal Self by the technique of *asanas*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana*, etc. The entire system of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras is compressed into a few *slokas* in the Sixth Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā. *Yogī yuñjīta satatam ātmānam rahasi sthitaḥ, ekākī yata-cittātmā nirāśīr aparigrahaḥ*. In a secluded place one must seat oneself and concentrate one's whole being. Yoga is the concentration of the totality of our being on the great objective of our lives.

What is this objective? It is the higher self. The higher self also has degrees; we cannot suddenly jump to the highest Self. It is impossible to have even a conception of what the highest Self is. So we have various techniques of meditation wherein we are asked to regard a conceptual self as higher than our present self. The *devatas*, the deities, the *bhagavans* of *bhakti* yoga, the various angels and the *digdevatas*, the guardians of cosmos, the various gods that we worship in the religions of the world, are all the higher selves, tentatively accepted as necessary objects of meditation, because we have to move from the present state of our self to the immediately succeeding higher self. We cannot have the consciousness of what is beyond that.

For this purpose one has to regulate oneself with a sort of self-discipline, and yoga is self-discipline. Therefore it is necessary to put an end to all distractions, and a distraction is nothing but an agitation of the senses with respect to the objects outside, together with the similar and sympathetic attitude of the mind and the intellect. The mind, intellect and senses have all to be brought under control at one strike. For this, a little hint has been given also in the Third Chapter where, in connection with the control of the emotions of the mind, the suggestion given was that: *Indriyāṇi parāṇy āhur indriyebhyaḥ paraṁ manaḥ, manasas tu parā buddhir yo buddheḥ paratas tu saḥ*—something comparable to a similar verse occurring in the Katha Upanishad. "Above the senses is the mind, above the mind is the intellect, and above intellect is the higher Self." So, one can control the senses by the mind, and control the mind by the intellect, and control the intellect by the Self. While there is some sort of a similarity of structure and function among the intellect, the mind and the senses, the Self stands apart from all these. The similarity of the intellect, mind and senses in their structure and function is this: they

somehow or other acquiesce in their relationship with objects outside. But the Self has no object outside. That is the important distinction that we have to draw between the Self and the intellect, the mind and the senses. So, the intellect, the mind and the senses can be subdued only by resort to the consciousness of the Self. What is the Self? The Self on which we have to meditate is that which includes the object towards which the senses are moving, and the direction in which the mind also is contemplating.

For the purpose of the achievement of this great success in yoga, one has to carefully regulate one's daily activity. Various types of advice are given to us—we are to be socially free and free from family engagements, we should not have harassment of any kind outside, and emotionally we should be calm. We should not have tension in the nerves, not even in the muscles; all tension should cease. When we are seated in an atmosphere of distraction, we are automatically in a state of tension, and therefore we are asked to move away from human society and be in a secluded place for some time, at least, until we are masters of our own selves. Gradually, says the Bhagavadgītā, the senses have to be brought back to their own source. *Śanaih śanaiv uparamed buddhyā dhṛiti-grihītayā, ātma-samsthānī manah kṛtvā na kiñcid api cintayet.*

Gradually, slowly we have to educate the senses, the mind and the intellect, just as a father and a mother educate their children. The children should not be spanked, or threatened, or given unpleasant advice, even if they are going to school. So, a Montessori method or a psychological method, whatever we may call it, may have to be applied in educating the senses. We are like parents, and the senses are like children. Children are very unwieldy. We know very well that all children are naughty; they have their own ways, and it is very difficult to educate them unless, in the earlier stages, we are able to understand the emotions that work in their minds and their idiosyncrasies. So the senses, the mind and the intellect have to be gradually subdued very slowly, just as when we chew our food, slowly from gross condition it becomes a little pulpy, and then from the pulpy condition it becomes liquid, and from the liquid condition it becomes very subtly adjustable to the alimentary canal of the whole body, then it is digested. If we suddenly gulp solid food into the stomach, it cannot be digested.

Likewise, we have to understand our weaknesses and also our strengths. One of the important things that a yogi or a meditator should do is to investigate into his own self. He has to become his own teacher; he is his own psychologist; he is even a doctor and physician. We have some strength of our own, it is true, but we also have weaknesses. The weaknesses are many a time known to us, and sometimes now known to us. But it is not difficult to know our weaknesses, because when we are absolutely alone we are free, to a large extent, to think in an impartial manner. We are not able to think in an impartial manner when we are in a public place or with a huge group of people, where our minds are diverted in a different direction altogether. When we are absolutely alone for a protracted period, we will be able to know our own subconscious, our desires which are vehemently troubling us—and we have to know how to deal with these desires.

Desires are the impulses of consciousness in the direction of objects outside, and these impulses are like torrents of flood that bursts the bounds and damages villages and cities. Likewise can be the state of the meditator if he builds a dam across a river which is in flood. He has to have an outlet, a little gate through which the flooding water can escape and the dam may not burst. But if we block the water completely, under the

impression that we can control it, there will be devastation and catastrophe. We are a dynamo and a magazine of power, like a river which had been dammed by the building up of a barrage. Hence, it is necessary to know where we have to exercise control, in what measure, to what extent, in what manner, etc. Like a physician treating a patient, we know that we cannot give the same medicine always. We check the patient's temperature every day, whether it is high or low or normal, and look for possible complications. Many methods are involved in treating diseases, so there is no stereotyped treatment along a beaten path in medical psychology.

So is yoga. It is not a beaten track that we are running on directly, as if it is an open highway, but it is a zigzag path where at every moment of time we should exercise caution. We have to know where our emotions stand, and where our intellect and mind are directing themselves; what are our achievements and what are our problems. Many a time this will be a hard affair, because it is easy to control others, but it is not so easy to control one's own self. Therefore, a Guru is necessary. In the earlier stages, when we are just chanting a few mantras or rolling a few beads, it may look as if everything is fine—everything is milk and honey. But if we are sincere and honest and really go deep into our own selves, we will find wonder, to our surprise, and we will be unraveling mysteries of our own self of which we had no prior awareness. We will become a miracle to our own self. We will be surprised. "I am this person. I never knew that." When we are confronted with our real personality that is placed before our eyes, we will not know how to face it. At that time we require a teacher, as in the case of psychoanalysis there is a well-versed guide who knows how to manipulate the mind of a person who is diseased mentally, and in which case the true personality has been projected out by various mechanisms of psychology. This is exactly psychoanalysis, which one does for one's own self, where all that is inside us is brought to the conscious level.

What is called psychoanalysis is nothing but the simple process of bringing the subconscious and unconscious to the conscious level. We are not aware of what we are inside us. Therefore many a time we have moods; we have whims and fancies; we think differently on different days. Suddenly some thought comes, and we do not know why this thought has come. We say, "Well, I thought differently. Yesterday's thought was different; now I give up that idea." Why did we give up that idea? We do not know what we are inside. Something that has been working and trying to get matured has suddenly come up to the conscious level. A deliberate process of bringing out the inner residue of the subconscious to the conscious level is to be attempted, and this is done by concentration. This process cannot be achieved by diversification of thought. Whenever we concentrate our minds, it is like hitting the subconscious with a hammer—it bursts. Otherwise it is like a hard nut which does not let out all its secrets. Concentration is a death blow that is dealt at the very root of the subconscious and the unconscious levels; that is why the mind resents concentration. Nobody likes concentration; they get fed up. Ask anybody to concentrate continuously. They get tired and run away from that place for a long walk, because the mind is very unhappy, as if it is a thief who is going to be detected. A thief is very uncomfortable in a public assembly; he wants to escape, somehow or other, if he is going to be pinpointed and interrogated. So if we go on attacking this subconscious by concentration, again and again, thinking only that, it resents, and the resentment of the subconscious creates various complications. We become unhappy and give up the practice itself.

All this is very difficult to practice, says Arjuna—*cañcalam hi manaḥ kṛṣṇa pramāthi balavad dṛḍham*. The mind is very fickle and impetuous, we don't know how to control it, just as we cannot control the clouds. But, *abhyāseṇa tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa ca gṛhyate*—by a real dispassionate attitude towards all externals and a persistent tenacity in the daily practice of concentration, we can subdue the mind. And finally, the great love that we have for the higher Self is itself a potent method of subduing the lower self. Towards the end of the Sixth Chapter there is a beautiful message for us, by which we are given solace that things are not as difficult as they appear to be. *Sarva-bhūte-stham ātmānaṁ sarva-bhūtāni cātmani, ikṣate yoga-yukta-ātmā sarvatra sama-darśanaḥ*: One who is in the state of the Self perceives the higher Self in such a manner that it is recognized in other persons also. All beings are seen in the Self, and the Self is seen in all beings. The vehemence exerted by the objects upon the senses decreases in its intensity when they are meditated upon as parts of one's own Self. But if we reject them by force of renunciation, not having any positive attitude towards them, then they may do harm by retaliating or wrecking vengeance.

Therefore, the advice here is that the higher Self has to be recognized not merely in one's own personality, but also in other beings—*sarva-bhūta-stham atmanam, sarvatra sama-darśanaḥ. Yo māṁ paśyati sarvatra sarvaṁ ca mayi paśyati, tasyāhaṁ na praṇaśyāmi sa ca me na praṇaśyati*: “He who seems Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, to him I am never lost, and he is never lost to Me,” says the Great Lord. God is every with us as the supreme Guru and Guide, provided that we wholeheartedly surrender ourselves to Him. He is the highest Self, and when we are able to gravitate the mind and the intellect towards this highest Self, force descends automatically from there. In the same way as we touch a high voltage wire and draw energy, and we feel charged with that energy because we have touched a live wire, so it is, as it were, God is the highest live wire. The moment we contact Him inwardly, energy flows. But, it is not easy to contact that highest Self. So the layers of self are to be regarded as higher selves, by degrees. For this purpose the answer given by Bhagavan Sri Krishna to Arjuna's query is that though all this may appear so difficult, it will become easy by daily practice.

When we were babies we could not even walk; we fell down many a time and injured our knees. When we learned bicycling we fell down many times, and so on. Swimming, cycling, walking—all these are difficult things, but once we master the technique, we can run without even being aware of our legs. Those who are master swimmers do not become conscious of the water in which they are swimming. People who are masters in cycling do not think of the cycle on which they are sitting, and when we walk, we do not even know that we have legs. But when we were babies we were very conscious, and therefore we fell. So, practice makes perfect.

Gradual, honest desire to move away from distractive atmospheres and to concentrate the mind on the higher Being is *mumukshutva*, and is itself a potent aid. And finally, surrender of self to God. The surrender of the lower self to the higher Self is again, to reiterate, done by stages, by gradual isolation in the beginning—socially, physically, and finally even psychologically. We must find ourselves in a psychological sequestration, not merely physical isolation. We find ourselves alone even mentally, and then the mind comes down on an emotional level and a perceptual level—and then it is that we can be said to be in a state of proper concentration. *Ātma-samsthāṁ manaḥ kṛtvā na kiñcid api cintayet*: After the mind has established itself in its own root, which is the *atman*, there is

no necessity to think anything. All thought is external and is lodged in objects outside, but when it has been weaned from objects and centred in the inner selfhood of non-objectivity, no thought is permitted, *na kiñcid api cintayet*, and an unknown joy bursts from within like the sun shining in the midst of dark clouds when the mind returns to its own source. All happiness, whatever be its nature, is only a modicum of the tendency of the mind to return to the Self within. The more we go inside, the more are we happy, so that when we are perfectly established in our Self, we are in the state of highest happiness. The seer establishes himself in himself when consciousness rests in its own Self; *chit* becomes *sat* and when *cit* becomes *sat*, it becomes *ananda*, and one exists in a state of the highest divinity.

## CHAPTER 8

### IN HARMONY WITH THE WHOLE UNIVERSE

The Bhagavadgītā is in Eighteen Chapters, and the first six chapters devote themselves to an exposition of the various methods of the integration of personality, the bringing together of the various parts of oneself into a concentration, and the transforming of oneself into a complete being rather than a dissipated individuality. We are not whole beings even now. We are psychological wrecks, distracted to the core, ruined in nerves and muscles and drooping in our psychic spirit. We are like a river that is rushing in various directions in the form of rivulets and streams, dashing against various objects and things of the world and thus losing ourselves in the dreary desert or the wilderness of this complicated existence called human life. None of us can be regarded as a whole personality in the true sense of the term, and that is why we are restless and never find peace of mind even for a few minutes continuously. We are agitated every moment of time, and even a wisp of wind can disturb our peace.

All this has been taken into consideration by the great Teacher of the Bhagavadgītā. The great Master who propounds this gospel entirely devotes His attention in the first six chapters of the teachings to the techniques of individual integration. From the First Chapter until we reach the Sixth, which forms one-third of the whole work, we have a graduated teaching, imparted in a systematic manner, for the purpose of bringing into the conscious level the submerged layers of our personality—the emotions, the sentiments, the personal and racial prejudices, whatever it is. There are various kinds of complexes, and adepts in psychology tell us there are personal complexes which get accentuated by cultural complexes, the collective unconscious—whatever the name we give to it. All these are our problem; they are our sorrows, and these sorrows, when they are considered as an ocean inundating us from all sides, are called by the name of *samsara*.

Now Bhagavan Sri Krishna, the great Teacher of this gospel, taking Arjuna as a specimen of human individuality, gives an eternal gospel for all mankind, for all times, applicable to all conditions of life. In an outline of these teachings from the First Chapter onwards until the Sixth, we have probed into this a little. The Sixth Chapter, which sums up this teaching of concentration of the individual for a higher purpose by means of *dhyana* or meditation, concludes by saying that the aim of this concentrated, integrated person is the visualisation of the great reality in all things. *Sarva-bhūta-stham ātmānaṁ sarva-bhūtāni cātmani, ikṣate yoga-yukta-ātmā sarvatra sama-darśanaḥ*. Everything is seen everywhere—that is the great vision towards which we are moving. With this solacing as well as cautious admonition towards the end of the Sixth Chapter, we are lifted further up into a wider vision of things and introduced to a new vista of life in its depths, not visible outwardly on the surface.

The Teacher tells us, at the commencement of the Seventh Chapter, that the integration of the personality is not the goal of life. It is the goal as far as our empirical life is concerned; it is a great purpose and a great achievement indeed, but it is an achievement for the purpose of another higher achievement, so that there are layers and layers of ascent from the lower to the higher. The various dissipated energies are

collected by way of focusing and concentration in the process of the integration of personality. It is true that by this process we become wholesome individuals, perfectly sane, bright with understanding and reason, humane and very healthy in every sense of the term. Yes, but for what purpose is this achievement of humaneness, total humanity, utter goodness and great charitable feeling? What is the intention behind it? The intention is still further on, and it is not enough if we are merely tuned up in our path to the togetherness of our personality. This concentrated togetherness of ours has to be further tuned up to a larger dimension. The world, the universe, the whole creation is before us. We have to be united not only within ourselves, but also we have to be united further in the direction of our harmony that is to be established with the universe of creation.

This is the subject of the next six chapters, which takes us by surprise, chapter by chapter. We are introduced into greater and greater profundities—truths which are unthinkable, surprising and stirring. To such wonders as these we are introduced, gradually, from the Seventh Chapter. The great Master tells us, at the commencement of the Seventh Chapter, that this is not an ordinary job. This is not a practicable affair for the ordinary man of straw, as we call him, or the man on the street, the commercial man, the give-and-take man, the profiteering man, the black-marketing man, the selfish man, the animal man—for him, this is not intended. This is intended for the free man who has left the heritage of his lower status, the vegetable and the animal layers, and becomes really a saint. It is only a truly human that can be regarded as fit for the art of uniting the self with the divine; it is not the animal that suddenly becomes divine. It has to pass through the saint, and each one of us can know to what extent we are saints.

Now, difficult is this path, hard is this task. “The razor’s edge is this,” says the Upanishads. Among millions of people, one may strive to reach perfection in this manner—*manuṣhyāṇām sahasreṣu kaścid yatati siddhaye*. How many millions of people are there in the world? And how many are interested in thinking of and attempting to rise above the human level to the diviner realm of experience? Millions are there, but among millions, a mere handful will be really aspiring wholeheartedly, from the bottom of their souls, for perfection. Not merely this, there is a greater diminishment of this percentage. Even among those few souls who are honestly striving for perfection, a very small percentage will really succeed. Most of them will fail on account of the retardation of their attempt by the powers that have been ignored due to the neglect of certain types of personalities, social and individual combined. Certain errors have been committed while encountering the various limits of our body in the assessment of the values of our individuality. We have ignored certain layers of our personalities as if they were unwanted children; we have cast them away, and they are the obstacles. They stand in ambush, jump on us with gorilla warfare and attack us—these are the retarding forces.

So even among those who are really, honestly striving, many may have committed the mistake of not being comprehensive in their approach. Despite their sincerity and enthusiasm, a little error might have crept in. They may have jumped too far, etc. Endless are the reasons that can be given. The reason for this difficulty may be due to some cause from a previous birth or to some other equally obscure reason. Various reasons are there because of these complicated atmospheres in which one finds oneself. So even among the sincerely aspiring souls for perfection, very few will really succeed. *Yatatām api siddhānām kaścin mām vetti tattvataḥ*: God can be known in reality and truth

only by very few. We have only concocted gods in our minds—we have a Hindu God, a Christian God, a Hebrew God, and so on. We have created God; we have manufactured God for our own purposes. These ‘Gods’ can help us to some extent, but ultimately they will leave us in the lurch because they have been manufactured by us; they are our instruments, an effect produced by us. So while our instruments are helpful to us up to a certain limit and measure, they cannot take us to the ultimate aspired goal. In reality, very few can know what to do.

With this very interesting and necessary introductory remark, the great Master proceeds to expound His thesis in the Seventh Chapter, where we are lifted up from the individual realm of the first six chapters to the universal level of creation and the relationship of the creation to the Creator. We have always a necessity to admit the existence of a Creator, on account of our perceiving such a thing called creation. The Teacher of the Bhagavadgītā is a tremendous psychologist. Even a hundred Socrates put together cannot equal this Teacher, so clever in understanding the difficulties of the teaching and the thought of the individual that receives them. The best teacher is that individual or person who starts from the level of the student, and not from his own standpoint. When the teacher speaks, he does not speak what he knows—he speaks what the student needs. That is the proper teacher. Otherwise he vomits what he knows and does not help the students. So the great Teacher of the Bhagavadgītā is a master of psychology, and He knows what is to be told at a particular given moment of time. He takes the student step by step, by the hand, from the level of the student’s understanding, and not from the topmost level of the teacher’s experience or realisation.

So, what is our level? It is taken for granted that we have become perfectly human beings, and conceding that we have undergone the training that is required of us in the first six chapters, what is our understanding of the world? It is a simple answer: we see a world outside ourselves, and we are obliged to ask for a Creator of this world. Every scripture speaks of creation. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” says the Bible. The Vedas, Upanishads, and other scriptures tell us that creation is the miraculous performance of God the Creator. Now, our mind is made in such a manner that it can accept truth only in a certain way and not in certain other ways. Our minds are conditioned to certain ways of thinking and understanding, and the knowledge that is to be given to us has to be cast into the mould of these manners of thinking into which we are born. So we have a mould, and everything has to be cast in that mould. Whatever we know is of the character and shape of that mould of our mind and reason.

What is this mould? The mould is there as a world, and there is no doubt about it. Who can deny that there is a world? No one; so that is one mould. We are cast into the mould of accepting, without any argument, that the world exists. And so many other corollaries of mould follow from this central mould of the acceptance of the fact that there is a world outside. If a world is there, it must have been created—it follows. It could not have suddenly jumped in from nowhere. Why should there be a Creator? Why should we accept that the world should have a Creator? Because of the fact that we have a certain mould of thinking that everything has a cause. We are accustomed to the observation of effects proceeding from causes. Everybody has come from somewhere; everything comes from something. We never see something suddenly popping up out of nowhere. Such a thing is unthinkable. Everything has to come from something, and not something

coming from nothing—such thinking is illogical. So our trait of logicity can again require us to demand a cause for an effect, inasmuch as the world has come and it exhibits characteristics of transformation. Everything changes in the world, that is what is called evolution. Because of the transient and evolutionary character of things in the world, we have to logically require, call for a cause thereof—an ultimate cause, not merely an immediate cause.

There are many immediate causes. Hydrogen, when combined with oxygen in a certain proportion makes water, but while hydrogen and oxygen are the immediate causes of water, they are not the ultimate causes, because a question be asked as to the cause of hydrogen, and so on. In the same way, we require an ultimate cause, beyond which we cannot think. A causeless cause has to be demanded—that is what we call the Creator. It is a cosmological argument, as we call it in philosophy. For this there is a Creator, and if the Creator is not to be there, we cannot explain this world. Inasmuch as an explanation is necessary, and the mind cannot be quiet without receiving a logical answer to this question of the creation of the world, the Creator has to be accepted. So the Teacher of the Bhagavadgītā, who has taken this stand for the psychology of the student, says the world consists of five elements. *Bhūmir āpo'nalo vāyuḥ kham mano buddhir eva ca, ahaṅkāra itīyaṁ me bhinnā prakṛtir aṣṭadhā. Apareyam itas tv anyāṁ prakṛtīm viddhi me parām, jīva-bhūtaṁ māha-bāho yayedam dhāryate jagat.* Earth, water, fire, air and ether—these are the five gross elements which constitute the physical universe. Beyond these five elements there is the psychic or the intellectual universe, corresponding to the mind, intellect and ego of the individual—*manas, buddhi, and ahamkara*—mind, intellect and ego. These constitute the eightfold lower field called *aparaprakṛiti*, the lower matrix of things. It is called lower because it is subject to transformation. All the five elements change, and so do the mind, intellect and ego—they are all subject to transformation at different moments of time.

But there is a higher *prakṛiti*, beyond the phenomenal, transient, changing forms of the lower *prakṛiti*. *Apareyam itas tv anyāṁ prakṛtīm viddhi me parām*: “By My own force of an all-including comprehensiveness and of My integrated Being of universal character, I sustain the lower *prakṛiti* as the whole universe.” Everything has come from these forces. *Etad yonīni bhūtāni sarvāṅīty upadhāraya*: “Whatever you see in this world anywhere, in all directions, are modifications, combinations, permutations of these eight things mentioned, or particularly speaking, only five things—earth, water, fire, air and ether. There is nothing but this.”

*Ahaṁ kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayas tathā*: God is the Creator, the Preserver and the Destroyer of all things. This is a great subject in theology, whether it is Hindu theology or Christian theology, whatever it is. The great relationship of the universe to the Creator and the attribution to the Creator of the great functions of creation, preservation and dissolution are great interesting subjects in theological studies. God is all things—Creator, Preserver and Destroyer. These are the usual attributes that we assign to the supreme Creator of the universe. What are the characteristics of God? They are creation, preservation, destruction. Now these are the primary attributes, together with the great attributes of omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence. God creates, God preserves and God destroys. But this theological concept of God being the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer has many subtle implications which have created the huge science of

theology, which also creates the subtle differences in theological doctrines of the various religions of the world. If we read the theological dogmas of various religions, we will find they differ, one from the other. Every religion describes the process of creation in a peculiar manner of its own.

Why are there these differences in the theological doctrines of creation? The reason is the variegated concepts of the relationship of the universe to the Creator. We have our own ideas about the relationship of the creation to the Creator, and these variations in the concept are the products of the various theological precepts. What are these implications that have given rise to these differences? The implications are very subtle, very deep and difficult to probe into. How God is related to this world is a question that cannot easily be answered. A child's concept of God's relation to the world is simple, and we are also thinking in a child-like manner. We cannot escape the subtle prejudice of the imagination that God is somehow or other outside the world.

Logically, by mathematical arguments, we may accept that God cannot really be outside the world. But sentimentally, emotionally and by social gospels into which we have been introduced from childhood, we persist in the imagination that God is somewhere outside the world. So we always speak of reaching God—"I have to reach God", "I have to go to God", "I have to attain God", etc. There are lengthy descriptions in various scriptures of even the passages through which we have to pass to reach God.

Now, we do not know how God is related to this world. Is God outside the world, or is God inside the world? If He is outside the world, what is the connection between Him and the world? Is there a gap of emptiness between the world and God? If so, then He cannot be regarded as omnipresent, all-pervading; He is only somewhere, like a large personality. To remove all these misconceptions at one stroke the Teacher of the Bhagavadgītā says: *Mattaḥ parataram nānyat kiñcid asti dhanañjaya*—"Nothing outside Me can exist. So don't argue glibly that the world is outside Me."

This answer is not a final answer; it is a tentative answer, but a very important answer. The final answer comes later on in another chapter; it has not come yet. To remove the doubt at the very outset, to nip the doubt in the bud, the Teacher says: *Mattaḥ parataram nānyat kiñcid asti dhanañjaya*—"Outside Me nothing can be, and higher than Me, nothing is." *Mayi sarvam idam protam sūtre mani-gaṇā iva*. How can we describe the relationship of God to His creation, when He says that nothing outside Him can exist? If outside Him nothing exists, creation is not outside Him. If creation is not outside Him, where is it? The answer is given in various stages. We cannot say where it is, if it is not outside Him. We will be surprised that we are given an answer which raises further questions of a more difficult character. So, an initial answer is given to an initial question that may arise in the mind of a student. As beads are sewn on a thread, and all the beads are connected by a single thread that passes through all of them in a necklace or garland, whatever it is, so is God present continuously through all the various particulars of the world. Just as a thread passes through all the beads and is continuously present without any break in the middle, it is indivisibly present throughout, entering into every bead throughout, so also God, the great Creator of the universe, is present in every particle of creation. It is like beads which are strung on this cosmic thread—the *sutratman*.

These answers, given by the Teacher, raise further questions of the relationship between

the thread and the beads and so on, because the thread is not the beads, and the beads are not the thread. Again a doubt will come that God is not the world, and the world is not God. So we are not going into these details now in this chapter—it will be taken up further on. For the time being we are told to satisfy our initial curiosity that God is present in all things, and we need not be under the impression that He is far away, unreachable as a so-called transcendent. Yet, when God is taken as a Creator and as a thread passing through all the beads of things in the universe, the subtle misgivings of the transcendence of God persists, inadvertently, willy-nilly.

However, keeping this question aside for the time being to be answered later on, we are told that everything in this world, whatever be the variety that we see, is constituted of a single divine creative will. *Ye caiva sāttvikā bhāvā rājasās tāmasās ca ye, matta eveti tān viddhi na tv ahaṁ teṣu te mayi.* Good things, bad things, pleasant things, unpleasant things, beautiful things, ugly things, right things and wrong things—whatever it be, the things that exist in this world are somehow or other included in this cosmic comprehensiveness of the Creator. They are arranged in such a pattern in the cosmic set-up that there seems to be the *sattvica*, *rajasa* and *tamasa*, as they appear before our eyes. This is another great revelation here. Before the eyes of God the world stands transfigured, and it does not stand as it stands before us. Before God, the world does not exist as an object to be confronted every day, as it does with people. We have to confront the world; we have to face it; we have to attack it. Sometimes we are subjugated by it, and those are our sorrows, because our minds accept certain characteristics of the world according to the capacities of comprehension with which the mind is endowed, and what it cannot accept is rejected by the mind, just as a certain spectrum of colour in the leaves of a tree absorb a particular ray of the sun, and appear to us as green color. The green colour of the leaf, for instance, is the effect of an abstraction. All colours have this feature—everything is of this character.

So, when this selectiveness in perception is overcome by the intuitive character of comprehension which is the vision of God, it is not a sensory perception. God does not see the world with eyes as we see, but He has an intuitive, instantaneous, transcendental comprehension, at one grasp, at the totality of creation. And here, the distinctions that appear to our minds do not exist at all—they get transmuted into a single wholeness of indivisibility. When the great Creator is said to be inclusive of all things in the world, of every character, desirable or undesirable, necessary or unnecessary, pleasant or otherwise, we cannot understand. We cannot think as God thinks, because we have no intuitive comprehension of things. We have only sensory organs. We see, hear, taste, smell, and touch—but God is not like that. His existence is His Self; His perception is inseparable from His Being. His existence is His Knowledge, whereas our existence is not our knowledge—there is a difference. All things are existent in some form or the other, ultimately, in their archetypal Creator, in God the Almighty. This is the way in which we are introduced to teachings of the next six chapters of Bhagavadgītā, from the Seventh to the Twelfth, for the purpose of giving us a complete knowledge of the cosmology of creation with the intention of introducing us into the Being of God Himself.

These difficulties that we made reference to, which we have to face in the study of these divine and sublime subjects, are because of the persistence of certain weaknesses in our individualities. The weaknesses are nothing but the affirmations of our own selves.

There is an inveterate impulse in every one of us to assert ourselves, and the biblical story of the fall of Satan, Lucifer, is a commonly accepted doctrine of the original fall of man. That is the original fall, and the eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree is the assertion of individuality by a sudden awareness of good and bad, good and evil. We are told that Adam and Eve had no idea of good and evil—they did not even know that they were naked. This idea itself was not there; there was no consciousness of it, because they were communed to the whole creation. The eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree is the desire to grab objects of sense for the satisfaction of the appetites that manifest themselves to the senses. These assertive forces persist until the day of doom, and they do not leave us; they go on whispering something into our ears.

The terrible encounter had to be faced even by a great man like Buddha. “You have chosen this path in error; you are wrong. Your *sadhana*, the meditation that you are attempting, are false attempts,” Mara says to Buddha. Christ’s temptations that are spoken of in the New Testament are the mystical stages through which everyone has to pass. Everyone is a Buddha and everyone is a Christ, one day or the other—if not today, tomorrow. Everybody has to pass through the same series of stages, and all have to undergo the same torture of carrying the cross on our backs. None can be exempted from this sorrow. The sorrow of the ego, which is inflicted with pain of self-annihilation, is asking for God. When we ask for God, we are asking for death, and who likes death? There is a terror which makes the ego shudder at the very thought of the immersion of the soul in God. These difficulties appear like mountains later on, and therefore, at the beginning, we have to go through all the various chapters of the Gītā, and not suddenly jump to the later chapters.

There are many students who think that the sixty-sixth verse of the Eighteenth Chapter is the sum and substance of Gītā—*Sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja, ahaṁ tvām sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayisyāmi mā śucaḥ*. Well, this is the sixty-sixth verse of the Eighteenth Chapter, and it has been told only towards the conclusion of the entire teaching which has passed through various stages. We too have to pass through the emotional turmoil through which Arjuna passed in the First Chapter, and we will also find ourselves in the same condition of utter misery and helplessness in which he found himself emotionally. We will have to find ourselves in this condition, if we have not already done so. The spiritual seeker has to face a fire in which he has to be burnt and burnt. The demands that God makes upon us are hard indeed, harder and more inconceivable than the demands of a hard-boiled creditor. It is as if God is a creditor; we owe something to Him and He will take the last farthing. This word ‘farthing’ actually occurs in the New Testament—you have to pay the last farthing, and you cannot go scot-free.

But this religious, spiritual or mystical requirement on our part will take us beyond religion itself. As long as we are dogmatic in our adherence to a fanatical theological doctrine of this ‘ism’ or that ‘ism’, as long as we fight over languages and kin, and stick to our prejudices of nationalities and various cultures, to that extent we are far from God. The Bhagavadgītā, in a super-national gospel, gives us this great caution, asking us to transmute ourselves into super-national individuals not belonging to any nation. In our spirit we are super and exist above these limiting shackles of wealth and power, of distinctions of umpteen types and, in a sentence, we may say that the Bhagavadgītā’s gospel is a gospel of the universalisation of the individual. Towards this great goal the

Teacher takes us in the further chapters.

## CHAPTER 9

### THE UNITY OF THE LOVER AND THE BELOVED

The Seventh Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā introduces us into the great doctrine of God and creation—something very stimulating and thrilling as the subject develops through the chapters that follow, one after another. The cosmology of the Gītā has been stated in a very few succinct verses at the very beginning of the Seventh Chapter, to which we made reference in the previous chapter. The relationship between God and the world is the crucial point in cosmological doctrines and theological principles. In fact, the explanation behind the existence of many religions in the world is here, namely, the relationship between God and the world, and consequently the relationship between the world and humanity. There are systems which have taken a stand that emphasises one aspect or the other—the transcendent aspect of God, the immanent aspect of God, or the total difference between God and the world.

There has been another difficulty in coming to a conclusion as to the actual state of affairs. God's relationship to the world includes His relationship with everything, because all things are contained in what we call the world or creation. The points of the different theologies are taken into consideration in the various chapters of the Bhagavadgītā, right from the Seventh Chapter onwards. In the analogy of the thread passing through the numerous beads in a garland, it was told to us that God exists as a connecting link amidst all the particulars and diversities. This is the first answer to the question of the relationship among things. Is there any vital or immanent connection between one thing and another in this world—between a tree and a stone, or a man and a beast? In this analogy of the thread passing through the beads of a garland, the initial answer is given. There is a connecting link even between apparently irreconcilable particulars, just as the initial bead is connected with a distant bead because of the uniformity of the thread that passes through all the beads in a necklace or garland. This answer is good enough, because it establishes the internal connection of things amidst the apparent diversity of objects. While bodies differ because of their placement in space and time, their souls are united because of the thread-soul that passes through all these beads of individuals—the *sutratman*, or the cosmic thread, which connects all these bodies, right from the angels in heaven down to the lowest atoms of inanimate nature.

The answer is good enough, but it raises questions of a philosophical nature. For a devotee of faith or a practitioner of yoga the answer that God pervades all things is quite adequate, but the philosopher or the scientist questions that point of pervading everywhere and immanency. When we dip a cloth in a bucketful of water and leave it there for some time, we find that water pervades the whole of the cloth. Every fibre is saturated and is dripping with water, so that we may say there is an immanence of water in the cloth. There is a presence of water in every bit of the cloth, in every fibre, but the water is not the cloth. This is something very clear, and everyone knows the distinction between the two. The philosophical doubts are of this nature. Does God pervade the world? Is God the same as the world, or is there some sort of distinction?

This doubt is cleared up by another aphoristic verse. *Ye caiva sāttvikā bhāvā rājasās tāmāsāś ca ye, matta eveti tān vidधि na tv ahaṁ teṣu te mayi.* An answer with a subtle

question implied is given in this verse. This is a good answer, but it raises a further question later on. That which we call *sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic*—all these are emanations from God only—*matta eveti tān viddhi*. Not only are the objects through which the thread passes *tamasic* constitutes, anything that is objective is *tamasic* in nature. So *tamas* and objects can be equated with each other. The inertia of the objects is the same as this *tamasic* element that we speak of in Samkhya or any other philosophy. So, to refute the doubt that the *sattvic* soul that passes through all the objects may perhaps be qualitatively different from the objects themselves, the great Teacher of the Gītā tells us that even the objects emanate from the being of God. That means to say, the divine soul which permeates the object is also the soul of the object. The objects are *tamasic*; the forces that distinguish the seer from the seen, the object from the subject is *rajasic*; and the consciousness that enlivens us in the process of perception is *sattvic*. All these proceed from God.

*Na tv ahaṁ teṣu te mayi*—this statement of this fragment of *śloka* injects another doubt in the mind. While it is true that some of our misgivings are quietened by the great gospel of the presence of God in all things—*sattvica*, *rajasica* and *tamasica*—even in the grossest of objects, while it is wonderful indeed, the great Master adds one appendix to this great verse. *Na tv ahaṁ teṣu te mayi*: “They are in Me, but I am not in them.” This is a great surprise given to us. But this doubt also arises on account of a wrong comparison that we make, and a comparison that is befitting only in empirical experiences and not the ultimate Truth. Why does the great Master tell us that everything is in Him but He is not in things? And He is going to tell something even more surprising later on.

The drop is in the ocean, but can we say that the ocean is in the drop? We may say yes; we may say no. Likewise is this teaching. From one point of view at least, the whole cannot be regarded as present in the part, while from another point of view—a highly metaphysical and spiritual point of view—the whole can be said to be present in the part. It is true that the whole ocean is present in every drop, because it is enlivened by the power of the ocean. Its existence is the ocean; it cannot be separated from this ocean, and the impulses within the bosom of the ocean are conveyed to every drop in the ocean. So the ocean is in the drop, yet the very fact that we utter two words, ‘ocean’ and ‘drop’, should make out that there is a distinction drawn between the ocean and the drop. The ocean is not in the drop, because the ocean contains all drops and not merely one drop, so it cannot be said to be entirely present in only one drop. The drop is there, but the ocean is not there in the drop— *Na tv ahaṁ teṣu te mayi*. This enigma will come later on, in the Ninth Chapter of the Gītā. When we come to it, we shall see. A similar statement is being made: *Paśya me yogam aiśvaram*. “Look at the miracle of My being,” says the Lord. “I am there, and I am also not there.” Both are true. *Mat-sthāni sarva-bhūtāni na cāhaṁ teṣv avasthitaḥ*—this is said in the Ninth Chapter, to which we will refer later on.

So, the viewpoints of religious consciousness are the subjects of treatment in the chapters of the Gītā, from the Seventh to the Eleventh at least, and all the theological questions are answered here, traditionally. So we are in the first step now where we are struggling through all the various questions that arise in our minds in regard to the relationship between God and the world, and consequently the relationship between ourselves and God. The very same chapter tells us that there are varieties of seeking souls. All seekers are not on the same level of evolution, and therefore a common answer cannot be given to all people. In a public audience a simple answer to a question of

creation cannot be propounded, on account of the difference in the receptive capacities of people—students, the audience, the aspirants, the seekers.

Among the many kinds of seekers that we can think of, four at least are mentioned in this chapter. There is the lowest type of seeking souls—lovers of God indeed, devotees, religious people—but they are in the lowest category. So even among devotees of God there can be categories, which means to say there can be levels of devotion, again which means there can be levels in the comprehension of God. The levels in the comprehension of God create levels of devotion, even levels in philosophy, and levels in social life, the personality within us, and our day-to-day activities. All these are influenced by our ultimate comprehensive capacity of the reality of things. *Catur-vidhā bhajante mām janāḥ sukṛtino'ṛjuna, āṛto jijñāsur arthārthī jñanī ca bhārataṛṣabha*: “Four kinds of devotees worship Me.”

The distressed souls seeking God are of one type. One who is baked in the fire of *samsara*, who is tortured in this hell of earth, suffering through various sorrows, seeks riddance from the grief of the world by resort to God under the impression that God is like a parent—a father or a mother or a supreme saviour. The intention behind this devotion is redress—freedom from sorrow, the inability to bear suffering. This is the reason here behind the devotion to God. Whether this could be an adequate reason, anyone can contemplate independently for oneself. Can we love God merely because He is the only source of redemption from our sorrows? Do we want freedom from sorrow, or do we want God? That is a different question that will come up later on.

Another type of devotee is those who seek expansion in their possessions (*artha*). The exponents of the Bhagavadgītā vary in their opinion as to the true meaning of this word *artha*. Usually *artha* means material possession or empirical gain of some kind or other. One who seeks material wealth or prosperity of a temporal character, and for this purpose resorts to God and devotion to divinities, such a devotee is regarded as an *arthartha*. But others who study the Gītā tell us that an *arthartha* need not be equated with a person who seeks material prosperity, for a reason which they deduce in this manner. There is a sequence in the placement of the words in this half-verse: *ārto jijñāsur arthārthī jñanī*. It appears as if the words go on rising from the lower to the higher categories, until one reaches *jnana*, which is the wisdom of God. In this verse, *artha* is placed at the lowest level, the *jigjnasu* at the next, the *arthartha* at the third and *jñanī* as last. Can it be said that one who seeks knowledge is inferior to one who seeks material possessions? It looks very odd that we should think that the seeker of knowledge is in any way inferior to one who seeks material prosperity. It cannot be. The seeker of wisdom should be regarded as superior to one who seeks material prosperity, and therefore we have to understand by the word *artha* something different from mere material possessions, enjoyment or acquisition. So the opinion of these students of the Bhagavadgītā is that *artha* should be regarded here as the summum bonum of *purushartha*—they who seek *moksha*, the highest *purushartha*—and therefore they are certainly to be considered superior even to the seekers of knowledge or wisdom. They are seekers of dissolution of themselves in God—*mokshartha*.

Well, this is an opinion; the word by itself can be interpreted either way. Anyway, there seems to be, in the opinion of the great Master of the Bhagavadgītā, degrees in devotion and levels of approach to God. *Jigjnasu*, as I mentioned, is one who seeks knowledge of

reality. He is a devotee of the Supreme Being with the intention of seeking omniscience ultimately, and there are such devotees who ask nothing from God. They request the blessing or the grace of enlightenment, and nothing else. That should be regarded as the highest type of devotion where one prays to God, not for anything that is temporary, transient or physical, but for enlightenment, the divine flash of the supreme wisdom of divinity.

The last-mentioned is *jnani*, one who has become totally united with That which is. *Udārāḥ sarva evaite*: “All these are good people,” says the Lord. He does not condemn any devotee, saying that he is the lowest type. “All these are wonderful. They are dear to Me; they are good. But the *jnani*, the knower who has established a conscious identity between his being and the Supreme Being, is verily My own Soul. He has become My Soul; he has become the Universal Soul.” *Vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ*: Rare indeed is that soul, blessed indeed is that person who realises that God is all—not that God is merely pervading things or is immanent in a theoretical sense, not that God is merely a Creator as a carpenter who is a creator of a chair or table, but that He is the All. Such a great soul is rare to find. We will find many devotees of God, perhaps, but we will not find many who are convinced, from the bottom of their hearts, that God alone is and nothing else can be. The possibility of the existence of anything external to God creates an endless variety of questions and problems and sorrows. We rush from one trouble to another trouble from the initial mistake of imagining even the least distinction between God and His created universe.

We have been told that God did not create the universe out of some substance like wood or bricks or mortar. In some scriptures it is said that God created the universe out of nothing. To say that He created the world out of nothing is another way of saying that He created it out of Himself, because ‘nothing’ is a word which connotes no thing. There is no substance behind the word ‘nothing’. So if nothingness is the material cause of this world, the world would also be nothing. It would be like a balloon, looking like a huge, bloated something but with no substance inside. If God created the world out of nothing, taking the word ‘nothing’ in its literal sense and accepting the logical conclusion that the effect is of the same nature as the cause, the world would be nothing in the same way as its cause is nothing. So what we see in front of us as the vast universe is nothing, hollowness, zero, an insubstantial phantom, a delirium of spirit, if God has created the world out of nothing. But if the world has been created out of God Himself, then also a similar conclusion follows—we are not seeing the world in front of us, we are seeing only God. We may say that the world does not exist, or that only God exists; both mean the same thing. So to say that God created the world out of nothing, or to say that God created everything out of Himself are two ways of stating one reality, one fact, one conclusion that there cannot be anything external to God—*vāsudevaḥ sarvam*.

This is the height of devotion, which the mind cannot ordinarily contain, because devotion here melts into experience. Where there is a lover and a beloved, there can be love, devotion, affection and longing. There can be yearning and an agony and anguish within because of the consciousness of having lost the beloved, being in a state of bereavement of the beloved, and longing for proximity to the beloved, the devotion getting intensified as the devotee moves nearer and nearer to the great object of his devotion. The four stages mentioned here—*ārto jijñāsur arthārthī jñānī*—explain subtly the various stages of *bhakti*, *gaunabhakti*, *vaidhibhakti*, culminating in *parabhakti*.

Ritualistic devotion is called *vaidhibhakti*. The well known devotions of the world, where devotees cry to God in prayers of various types, as inculcated in the various religions, is *gaunabhakti*; but *parabhakti* is the inability to exist without God.

In the Bhakti Shastras, various *rasas* are mentioned—various tastes, as they are called. The subjects treated of in the Alankara Shastras are rhetoric. We pass through various stages of emotion in devotion to God, right from the social level, the physical level, the vital, the mental, the intellectual and the spiritual levels. We find that we are shaken up gradually as we proceed onwards, stage by stage, to the Being of God. It is as if the river is straining towards the ocean—it is sensing the very presence of the flood that is dashing in front of it at the delta. The river has not yet touched the ocean, but it can sense it. It can feel the atmosphere of the ocean which is there to swallow it. The *rasa bhakti*, the various experiences, is the impact of the Soul upon the various vestures of our personality, God touching us in different degrees of intensity. Devotion to God is the connection that we establish between ourselves and God, and this connection increases in its intensity and strength as the devotion goes on developing gradually by daily practice. In the beginning it may be true that we are expecting something from God. Yes, we cannot deny this fact. Who can say that we do not expect something from God—at least ‘peace of mind’, as we say. It is the least harmful of things that we are asking; even then it is something that we ask from God. Well, everyone asks for something from God, a redress from some kind of difficulty—psychological, intellectual, social, political, and what not. So, He is the resource-filled and abundant reservoir of bounty to bestow all that we need, and we seek God for this purpose.

We seek God for enlightenment, that is true, and devotion takes a new turn when the soul asks for God only. Not that it has obtained God, not that it has even comprehended the infinitude of God, but it has come to a definite conclusion that God is the goal of life. Even to come to this conclusion is a hard thing for normal people. The comprehension of the infinitude of God and the philosophical, mystical, spiritual meaning hidden behind the relationship between us and God—they are a different thing altogether. But even apart from these profundities, the deepest conviction that can charge our feelings is that we can accept nothing as our aim of life except God’s Being. If our deepest essence convinces itself that what we need is God’s Being and nothing else—not favours from people, not satisfaction from objects, not status in society, not a long life in space and time—but only That, and nothing but That, even this conviction, driven into the heart, should be regarded as one of the greatest achievements of spiritual life. It is not an ordinary feeling. Among the millions and millions that live in this world, how many can be so very deeply convinced that this is the truth of life? We have many tentacles to distract our attention and we bargain with God; we establish a commercial relationship with God, even if it may be in a philosophical manner.

So the Seventh Chapter of Gītā tells us that *jnana* is the highest type of devotion. In the earlier stages of devotion, our hair may stand on end. There may be perspiration; there may be chocking of the throat; there may be trembling of the voice and a shutter of the whole system, a feeling of melting, as it were, into nothingness. A kind of swooning also takes place in ecstasy of devotion. These are the *bhavas* of *bhakti*. But the swooning is not a morbid psychological swooning of a patient who is bereft of consciousness—it is the shock that is injected into the soul by the presence of God. When God touches us, we may become unconscious, and this unconsciousness is not a disease, like an ordinary

unconsciousness that comes to us when we fall from a tree, for instance, and get hit on the head. How is it possible that we can be in a swoon when God touches us? Yes, it is possible, on account of a particular situation in which the individual soul finds itself when it is bordering upon merger into God. The impact of God upon the individual soul creates an unconsciousness of a spiritual type, which is not an unconsciousness of the *tamasic* character.

It is the last fear that the ego of the individual has to shed. If everything is going to be lost and you are not going to have even a farthing left in your life, you are going to be deprived of your kingdom, your profession, your land and house, your relations, everything—even the raiment you put on your body will be snatched away from you and the very ground that you are standing on is going to be cut from under your feet—you will be shocked indeed to hear all these things. But the shock that you get at the moment you feel that you yourself are going to be lost will be much greater than the other shocks. At the time of losing possession—even the last thing that you can think of—the fear of losing oneself is the greatest of all fears, greater than the fear of losing all property and even status in life. So the last sorrow of the ego is this touch of God, and that is why the great mystics have said that no one can see God and live afterwards. You cease to be. Can you ever imagine what it is to cease to be? Can there be a greater shock than the expectation that you will cease to be?

This is the divine madness of the great mystics, the sages and saints who were God-intoxicated. We have words which demonstrate the incapacity to express the depth of this reality that we are trying to convey. Otherwise, why do we say “God-mad”, “God-intoxicated”, etc? These words ‘intoxication’, ‘madness’, etc. have extreme meanings, which alone seem to be able to convey this extreme experience that is going to take place. We will be surprised to read the expositions on the mystical revelations of saints and sages in mystical texts, in language which is not normal. All these superb poets, who established themselves in God-experience, tried to express their feelings and experiences in terms which is not the ordinary language of the world, and that is why when we read this poetry we feel shaken up—we are disturbed in a very profound manner. The greatest art is that which disturbs our feelings the moment we look at it or hear it. If we walk away unaffected after seeing a painting, it is not a good painting. But, if the moment we see it we are disturbed, transported and thrown out of our personality, and we have lost ourself in one second—that is art, that is poetry, that is mystical experience. This is the great culmination, the apotheosis to which the Bhagavadgītā will lead us from the Seventh Chapter, as we proceed further.

## CHAPTER 10

### THE IMPERISHABLE AMONG ALL THAT IS IMPERISHABLE

The Seventh Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā concludes with a message that leads on gradually to the commencement of the Eighth Chapter. This message is that in our devotion to God we have to so tune our consciousness that the various aspects in which God manifests Himself are taken into consideration at one stroke, and God is not conceived partially. Many of the religious attitudes of the devout take God as a transcendent, other-worldly Being, and religion has often been identified with a kind of neglect of the world and apathy towards human society. A religious attitude is made synonymous with an ascetic attitude of a denial of worldly values and all social significance, amounting to the conclusion, almost, that God is not in this world, and to attain God one must reject this world, reject any social concourse. This is the feature into which religions get driven, almost as a universal characteristic. A religious man is not a man of this world; he belongs to another world altogether. This is a commonly accepted definition of a religious devotee, a hermit, a mendicant, etc.

But this is an erroneous attitude, because it does not take God in His Truth. There is a conceptual transcendence attributed to God by the religious devotion. While the materialist denies God and affirms the world, religion affirms God but denies the world. Anyhow there is a kind of denial, which is not the gospel of Bhagavadgītā. Any kind of extreme is cautiously avoided, because yoga is *samatva*, or balance of attitude. It is not a swinging of the balance on one side exclusively. So, towards this end, the last verse of the Seventh Chapter tells you—*sādhibhūtādhidaivam mām sādhiyajnam ca ye viduḥ, prayāṇa-kāle'pi ca mām te vidur yukta-cetasah*. The Lord of the Gītā speaks: “I have to be known as *adhibhuta*, *adhidaiva* and *adhiyajna*, and not merely any one of these to the exclusion of the others.” The whole universe is *adhibhuta*, and the directing principle hidden beneath all phenomena is *adhidaiva*. The entire administration of the cosmos in its various facets may be regarded as *adhiyajna*. We are told in the Puranas that Narayana or Vishnu takes incarnations for the preservation of creation. Vishnu is regarded as *yajna* itself. It is the highest sacrifice—God sacrificing himself every moment of time for the sustenance of His creation. As *adhiyajna* He is the administrative power and the methodology of the working of the cosmos. All activity is comprehended under this *yajna* of the cosmos. Therefore God is present in all activity when it is considered as a passage to God, when it is regarded as a manifestation of God as rays emanating from the sun.

Those wise souls who envisage God as *adhibhuta*, *adhidaiva* and *adhiyajna*, which means to say, who encounter God as a comprehensive Absolute and not merely existing only here or there, such devotees are true knowers. They can entertain or maintain this consciousness even at the time of passing from this world—they are not deprived of this consciousness even when death overtakes them. Generally when a person is at the point of passing away from this body, one is supposed to be in a state of delirium—a kind of swoon, unconscious and a loss of awareness of all things. But those blessed ones who are devoted to this practice of the yoga of devotion to God as a completeness in itself

maintain this awareness even at the point of doom, even when they are about to leave this body. *Prayāṇa-kāle'pi ca mām te vidur yukta-cetasaḥ*: “They know Me because they are *yukta-cetasaḥ*; they have been united with Me perpetually throughout their lives.”

The comprehensive philosophy of the Gītā is presented in a single verse here again, as in several other places. We should not be excessively religious, or excessively anything, because any kind of excess, even if it be devotion, so-called, entails a kind of dislike and hatred which unwittingly enters into the field of our consciousness. We are made in such a way that we cannot exist without hating something. We may be high class devotees of God, yogis par excellence, but the mind is made in such a way that it cannot escape this predicament of condemning something, deriding something, looking down upon something and contrasting something with another thing. This attitude is unfortunate and is not a positive component of true yoga. This is a message that is given in a seed form at the end of the Seventh Chapter, which recounts in passing the cosmology of the Bhagavadgītā.

This cosmology is detailed further at the very commencement of the Eighth Chapter as an answer to the queries raised by Arjuna, the questions that were stirred in his mind by the last verse itself. What is this *adhiyajna*, what is *adhibhuta*, what is *adhidaiva*, and what is this thing that one is expected to enshrine in one's own mind at the time of passing? These are the questions with which the Eighth Chapter begins. *Kim tad-brahma kim adhyātmam kim karma puruṣottama, adhibhūtaṁ ca kim proktaṁ adhidaivaṁ kim ucyate. Adhiyajñāḥ katham ko'tra dehe'smin madhūsudana, prayāṇa-kāle ca katham jñeyo'si niyatātmabhiḥ*. These questions of Arjuna at the beginning of the Eighth Chapter emanate spontaneously from the words of Sri Krishna at the end of the Seventh Chapter.

The answer is again a concise statement of cosmology, the whole structure of the universe in its relationship to God. We have been discussing it in some detail in connection with a few of the verses of the Seventh Chapter. The Supreme Being is the indestructible Absolute; It is the eternal. The language of the Bhagavadgītā introduces these technical terms. The supreme Brahman or the Absolute is called the *aksharam*. It is the imperishable amidst all that is perishable, the eternal among the transient, the changeless among all things that change in this world and the perpetual witness of the varying phenomena of nature. It continuously maintains the awareness of creation, preservation and dissolution of the whole cosmos, and nothing else anywhere can be regarded as eternal or imperishable.

Nowhere in this world do we see anything or come across anything that is imperishable. Whatever we see with our eyes, hear with our ears, or think with our minds is subject to destruction. But there is something on the basis of which even this consciousness of change and destruction can be possible. The very possibility and awareness of change and transience posits a non-transient, imperishable Absolute. The supreme Brahman is the Absolute—that is the imperishable Eternal. The terms that are used further on refer to the other manifestations, or we may say appearances, of the supreme Absolute. The one all-comprehensive Being appears to our visualisation or vision as an objective universe, as subjective individuality, as the cosmic Absolute, and as the force behind the ejection of creation. All these, whatever we can think of in our mind, is the drama played by the Absolute within Its own bosom.

The internal self of man, the hidden soul of all things, is called *adhyatma*. The deepest

essence of anything, for the matter of that, is *prakritiatman* or *adhyatma*; the essential nature of a thing is *adhyatma*. Our essential nature, our irreducible minimum characteristic of Being—that is *adhyatma*. It is the basic essence of all things, the Selfhood that is at the basis of even phenomena. The individual is not the body; it is not the mind. These cannot be called *adhyatma*, because they are not *svabhava*, our essential nature. Our basic characteristic is not exhausted in this bodily manifestation. What we think in our mind is not ourself, because our thoughts vary from day to day, from moment to moment. There is a non-varying, permanent feature in us—that which enables us to identify ourselves as a continuity of individuality. While thoughts change and ideas differ, we do not change. Right from childhood onwards, up to the age we have attained now, we have been maintaining an identity of individuality. This identity of ours is not because of the thoughts that we think, or the body in which we are encased. The bodily self changes, thoughts differ, as I mentioned, but we do not change. Therefore we are the same thing today that we were many years back as a child, for instance.

There is an inherent essentiality, the basic minimum of our being, consciousness in its substance, and that is *adhyatma*. This *svabhava* is the determining factor of our character and conduct in life. Our behaviour outwardly is conditioned by what we are inwardly as manifest through the vesture of the various layers, the *pancha-koshas*, as they are called—the mind and body complex. *Bhūta-bhāvodbhava-karo visargaḥ karma-saṁjñitaḥ*. This is a very difficult and hard saying. The meaning of *karma* is defined here, in this half-verse, which gives the definition of a peculiar type of *karma*—it is called *bhūta-bhāvodbhava-karo visargaḥ*. In the Bhagavadgītā, *karma* has a large dimension and a vast sweep. It is on account of this majestic conception of *karma*, that *karma* becomes almost the gospel of the Gītā. People wonder many a time whether the Gītā can be teaching only action. Yes, we may say it is so, because of a unique concept of action that it teaches, right from the beginning to the end.

*Karma* or action, according to the Bhagavadgītā gospel, is a mysterious, comprehensive law which no doubt includes the ordinary actions that we perform in daily life, but does not exhaust itself merely in these actions. The *karmanas* are actions of the various individuals—psychological as well as physical, and also social. They are the reverberations, sympathetic reactions, as it were, of a cosmic pulsation which has been set into motion by the ideation of the Supreme Being. God's will is operating behind your activity. Your actions therefore are not your actions. This one sentence can be said to be the whole of the Gītā. *Your actions are not your actions*. They are the actions of that principle which sustains, manifests and withdraws this entire cosmos. This universal impulse towards the creation of this universe is the first *karma* that you can think of, the great *yajna* that the *purusha* performed originally, according to the Purusha-Sukta of the Veda. The original *karma* is this *yajna* of God. The act of creation is the first *karma*; it is the real action, and all other actions are merely replicas—they are only copies, photostats, ramifications, reflections, distortions, vehicles of this original activity which can be called the only activity anywhere. There are not many actions or many activities; there is only one action and one activity. There is only one actor and not many actors; this is another important thing that the Gītā tells us. With this tremendous message it strikes at the root of our selfishness and individuality. We cease to be at one stroke. The gospel of the Bhagavadgītā melts us completely, and we vanish into thin air,

as it were, if we are in a position to absorb into our daily life this life-giving message of the cosmic activity, which is God's activity.

But, in our stupidity, we are not prepared to accept that God is the only actor. We do not wish to be so charitable even in respect of God Himself. "Why should He do all things? I shall also do something. I am also doing something; it is not true that God only does everything." What can we speak of man when he has such notions as these? As Shakespeare puts it somewhere, "Man, puny man, plays such fantastic tricks as make the angels weep." Angels are weeping at our fantastic tricks in the form of our glories on earth. We are not prepared to accept that God is the sole doer, because we think a little of our greatness goes if this concession is given. Such is the wonder of man's wisdom. The Gītā tells us, "Do not be unwise, because this unwisdom is not going to be for your good." The great *karma* is God's *karma*; it is that activity of God, that action, that very will of God which projected—*visargaḥ* is projection, emanation, ejection, bringing forth. This act of bringing forth the whole universe on the part of God, which is *bhūta-bhāvodbhava-karo*, which is the origin of all beings, that is *karma*, and you can call only that as *karma*—nothing else can be called *karma*. What we do with our little egos cannot be called action. The real *karma* is That. To the question, "What is *karma*?" this is the answer *Bhūta-bhāvodbhava-karo visargaḥ karma-samjñitaḥ*.

*Adhibhūtam kṣaro bhāvaḥ*: The objective universe which is perishable is *adhibhuta*—all material things, everything external. All that is in space and time is *adhibhuta*. The object of consciousness is *adhibhuta*. Anything that we regard as external to our consciousness, or external to consciousness as such, is *adhibhuta*. Anything that is so conceived as external to consciousness is perishable *adhibhūtam kṣaro bhāvaḥ*. The perishable character that we observe in things is the externality of things, so the perishable character that we see in our own self is also the so-called externality of our true being. As individuals, as bodies, as minds even, as social units we are objects because we can be seen—we see our own selves. With our own senses we can see our bodies and also the bodies of other people. This aspect of ours, which brings us down to the level of objects, is the *adhibhuta* aspect. That is the perishable aspect, and therefore our bodies are subject to death and our individuality is subject to destruction. All that is subjectively or objectively spatial or temporal is subject to destruction, transience, and therefore it is *adhibhuta*.

*Puruṣaś cādhidaivatam*: The *puruṣa* that the verse speaks of here is the presiding divinity behind all individuals. Sometimes in modern language it is called the Overself, or in Sanskrit terminology it is called the *kutasthachaitanya*. Our deepest essence, which presides over us, is the *puruṣa*, God speaking through man and enlivening even our intellects and enabling us to exist, to be conscious and be happy. *Adhiyajño'ham evātra*: The incarnate God speaks, "I am the *adhiyajna*." When God incarnates Himself, not necessarily or merely as Krishna or Christ or such incarnations, but any kind of incarnation, the whole universe is filled with the powers of God, which are all capable of being regarded as incarnations in their own ways. What else can be there in the world but God, and who can be doing anything here but He? In that sense, how can we say that He is not present here even today as an incarnation? So, "I as the incarnation," says Sri Krishna in the Bhagavadgītā, "stand here as the *adhiyajna*, the receiver of all the fruits of action." *Sarva-deva-namaskaram keshavam pratiga chhati*: Any prostration offered to anyone goes ultimately to that Supreme Being, as all rivers go to the ocean.

Thus any action, being God's action, all fruits of action go to Him. He is the supreme *bhokta*—enjoyer of the fruits of all actions. Any sacrament is an offering to Him. Any charitable act that we perform with the goodness of our heart is a consecration done to God. God is pleased even with the smallest of our charitable deeds. So, here is a wonderful concept of the Bhagavadgītā cosmology, mentioned in some manner in the Seventh Chapter and stated in a different form in the Eighth Chapter.

What I have told you now is very little. These little verses contain a world of meaning, and all the aspects of every school of philosophy is embedded in these two verses. The cosmic, the individual, the social and the Absolute—everything is there, explained in a few words, not even sentences which are pithy in their own way. Contemplating this God throughout one's life, one is enabled to retain this memory even at the time of passing—*antakal*, the end of this time. When we are about to leave this body it should be possible for us to entertain God-thought.

But many a stupid person, under the impression that God-thought is to be entertained at the time of death, thinks, "Well, that time has not yet come. If our liberation is determined by the thought of God that we entertain at the time of physical death, that time has not come because we are not going to die today. We have to think of God as the last thought when the time for departure comes." This is a futile idea of an immature mind, firstly because the last thought cannot be God-thought if the thoughts that you entertain throughout your life have been extraneous or irrelevant to God's thought. You cannot sow the seeds of thistles and expect mangoes or apples to come out of the plant of thistles. What you have sown, that you shall reap. If you have sown God-thought throughout your life, the last thought which will come to you there as the fruit of the tree of your life will be God-thought, no doubt. The last thought is not an isolated thought—we have to remember this very well. It is not one thought among many thoughts. The last thought is the cumulative effect of all the thoughts that we have been thinking throughout our lives, just as the fruit of a tree is the culmination of the maturity or the fructification of the growth of the tree for years together, right from the seed onwards. So you should not say that the tree will yield a beautiful, sweet fruit. The tree will yield a sweet fruit after some time, whatever be the seeds that you have sown. So brush aside the idea that you will have God-thought at the last moment merely as a gift that has been bestowed upon you irrespective of what you have been thinking throughout your life. Only a godly life led will yield the fruit of God-thought at the end.

You may be wondering why it is that the last thought should determine the future. It is because it is at that point that our personality gets concentrated automatically and the mind converges into a single point. The various energies of our body-mind complex become concentrated spontaneously at the time of death. The senses are withdrawn—you need not put forth great effort at the time of death to withdraw your senses. You will not see, you will not hear, and you will not speak. The senses cease to operate. When a man is about to die, people come and ask, "Do you see me? Do you know who I am? Who am I?" He cannot say who they are. He has ceased to see, he cannot hear what is spoken, and he cannot utter a word. At that time, this state of affairs supervenes because of the withdrawal of the power of the senses. The scripture tells us that the deities depart and cease to control the sense organs. The sun operating in the eyes and the other *devatas* of the senses withdraw themselves and allow this bodily vehicle to go to putrefaction. The powers of the senses therefore get converged in the mind and the

mind enters the *prana*. All this is told in the Upanishads and Brahma Sutras, etc.

We exist there, the 'I' exists there as a spark of consciousness, like the small flame of a match, or something smaller than that—like a star, or something inconceivable. It is said that at that time the whole personality gets fixed up in a point, like a star, like a dot that is luminous. That is what you may call the 'soul', if you like, wherein merge the *pranas*, the senses, and the mind. So you become automatically a yogi, in one sense, forcefully driven into it even without your will. At the time of death you become a yogi by compulsion, but unfortunately you become unconscious because of the desires that you have not fulfilled in life. The unfulfilled desires prevent the awareness of this concentratedness of the personality. A person who has been a fool throughout his life, dies a fool and is reborn a fool. He will not be reborn as an angel. So the last thought has to be a conscious awareness, an awakening into a point which is bestowed upon you automatically by the laws of things. If you have been a true and honest devotee of the highest values of things, if you have been a true devotee of the Bhagavadgītā, a follower the yoga of the Bhagavadgītā and a practitioner of it, what happens? You maintain an awareness; you do not go deluded—undeluded you pass. There are many cases where people passed away having good thoughts, uttering a divine name and giving a blessed message. There have been cases like these.

An honestly led life of divinity and charitableness, of devotion to God, purity and dedication of spirit to the highest aim of life, *purushartha moksha*, will take care of itself. When your whole personality is that concentrated, you can be a yogi in a moment. *Anta-kāle ca mām eva smaran muktvā kalevaram, yaḥ prayati sa mad-bhāvaṁ yāti nāsty atra saṁsayah.* The Eighth Chapter gives a little description of the yoga that one practices at the last moment, the *anta-kle* yoga. Bhishma was supposed to have practiced this when he was on a bed of arrows. He withdrew himself from all external awareness after the long gospel that he delivered to Yudhishtira in the Shantiparva of the Mahābhārata. He withdrew himself after a magnificent prayer that he offered, which goes by the name of Vishnuswaraja in the Shantiparva. So do all yogis depart, and so can you also depart from this world, and so can anyone depart from this world.

As a matter of fact, it cannot be called a departure at all. We are not going anywhere by plane, or helicopter, or any kind of vehicle. The idea of going has given rise to the doctrine of *moksha* by gradual stages. We always imagine that there is a passage to God, there is a movement of the soul towards liberation or *moksha*. The Upanishads speak of it, and the Bhagavadgītā also speaks of it in this very chapter. The stages of the ascent usually go by the names 'the Northern Path' or 'the Southern Path', as you all very well know—the *uttara marga* or the *dakshina marga*, the path of light and the path of darkness. The path of light is supposed to be the path of liberation which the soul pursues on account of the yoga that it has practiced in this life, and which is practiced even at the moment of passing. The Bhagavadgītā says, "Concentrating oneself on the point between the eyebrows, chanting the mantra Om with deepest feelings welling from the heart, devote oneself entirely to the supreme *purusha*." *Kaviṁ purāṇam anuśāsītāram aṅor aṇiyāṁsam anusmared yaḥ, sarvasya dhātāram achintya-rūpam āditya-varṇam tamasah parastāt,* says the Bhagavadgītā—beyond the darkness of the ignorance of the universe, It shines like a brilliant sun. One who concentrates on the Supreme Being at the time of death by a whole-souled devotion to It is in a state of yoga, and such a person departs by the Northern Path.

## CHAPTER 11

### GOD PRESENT WITHIN US

There is a system of thinking known as ‘field theory’ in science, which attempts to bring together the various perspectives of observation of any given object, whereby the observation is supposed to be complete. If the field of operation in the process of observation is partial, then the result is not expected to be a correct picture of the object of observation. The most difficult thing in the process of perception is to make this perceptual process a comprehensive method of the acquisition of true knowledge. Our observations and perceptions are mostly partial, one-sided; and this defect or limitation that is imposed upon the process of perception gives us a wrong picture of the object—even if it be God Himself, the supreme object of knowledge. The Bhagavadgītā, towards the end of Seventh Chapter, takes up the point of what we may call the field of comprehension. The thought of God has to be entertained in the mind of the individual concerned at the time of the passing of the soul from this body, and the future of the soul is decided by the nature of the thought that one entertains at the time of passing. If the thought is partial, one cannot expect a comprehensive result.

The limitation that is imposed upon the knowledge process by the interference of spatial extension and temporal succession tells upon our concept of God also, so that we think of God as we think of a cow, an empirical object, notwithstanding the fact that we try our best to make this idea of God as vast as possible and as inclusive as practicable. But whatever be our endeavour in making our concept of God comprehensive, the limitations that interfere with the knowledge process also affect our concept of God. The Bhagavadgītā warns us about this in a few words in two verses at the end of Seventh Chapter. These terms are well known phrases in the philosophy of the Vedānta and Sāṃkhya, but their connotation and significance is hard to comprehend unless we go deep into their interrelationship. *Jarā-maraṇa-mokṣāya mām āśritya yatanti ye, te brahma tad viduḥ kṛtsnam adhyātmaṃ karma cākhilam. Sādhībhūtādhidaivaṃ mām sadhiyajñam ca ye viduḥ, prayāṇa-kāle’pi ca mām te vidur yukta-cetasaḥ.* These are the last two verses of the Seventh Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā.

The important terms that we are referring to in this context in these verses are *adhyātma*, *adhibuta*, *adhidaiva*, and *adhiyajna*. These four terms occur in these one and a half verses: *Te brahma tad viduḥ kṛtsnam adhyātmaṃ karma cākhilam. Sādhībhūtādhidaivaṃ mām sadhiyajñam ca ye viduḥ.* We read the Gītā, repeating these verses and understanding their grammatical meaning, but grammar is not the only way of scriptural interpretation. There is a philosophical and metaphysical aspect in the wisdom that the scripture gives us, apart from the linguistic surface in which it is cloaked, and to confine our knowledge of scripture only to its linguistic aspect or grammatical dictionary meaning would be to partially understand its profundity. The thought of God is the most difficult thought. As a matter of fact, any thought is difficult when it is attempted to be made comprehensive. The difficulty is not in the fact that the object here is God—the difficulty is in the structure of the mind itself. The defect of the mind is uniformly present as operative in the entire knowledge field—whether the object of the concept in the mind is a particle of sand or the supreme Absolute Itself, it makes no difference. There is a common defect present in all perception. The defect is that the

mind works through certain blinkers, as it were, and it can look at the object from one point of view. The object is looked upon as an object only and bereft of any other implication in its existence.

Every object has infinite relationships, but this infinitude of relationship is incomprehensible to the mind of the observer of the object. The object is taken as an isolated, localised something, cut off from all other objects, and this idea that the object is absolutely independent of all other objects, especially independent of the observer himself, is the basic defect in the knowledge process. This is usually called 'the fallacy of simple location'. That objects are simply located in a particular place is a fallacy, and this fallacy is at the root of all our knowledge. While we extend our knowledge to the supreme object, God, who is supposed to be the object of our contemplation and meditational processes, we no doubt try our best to free this object, which is God, from the common defects of the usual empirical perceptual process—but still God stands before us as a tremendous object.

The Bhagavadgītā endeavours to free our minds from this obsession that God is an object, because the term 'object' has certain implications. It stands outside the subject. The *adhibhuta* is outside the *adhyatma*. The *adhyatma* is the subject; the *adhibhuta* is the object. But as these terms in these verses of the Bhagavadgītā would point out, God is not merely the *adhibhuta*. He is not an object, though He may be the supreme object, transcending all other limited objects. Still He stands before us as an object. But the Gītā tells us that this *adhibhuta*, the supreme object, is inwardly related to the *adhyatma*, the subject. So the field of operation of the object extends beyond its conceived location and permeates the very subject itself, which endeavours to conceive this object. So much so, it is impossible to raise the mind to the status of the concept of God unless there is an equal rising up of the status of the subject himself. Not merely this, there are other aspects also mentioned in these verses. It is not merely the *adhibhuta* or the object, or the *adhyatma* or the subject that is the concern here. The other terms used are *adhidaiva* and *adhiyajna*. *Adhiyajna* is the field of action, activity, operation, relationship and any kind of external dealing in human society in general, to put it in plain terms.

The whole field of sociological relationships is comprehended within the Being of God, so that social existence is not outside God's existence. Many of us, theologians and spiritual seekers, are prone to commit the mistake that society is different from God, or at least isolated in its character from God-being, so that social workers, social welfare thinkers and humanists are likely to ignore the principle called 'God' as an irrelevant interference with the human concern called 'social activity' or 'welfare'. Not so is the truth. The *adhiyajna* or the field of activity, service and relationship of any kind is one of the manifestations of God Himself, so that the concept of God includes the concept of human society, and it cannot exclude it. So social welfare, social thinking, the humanistic approach is incomplete without the introduction of the divine element into it. Also, vice versa—the concept of God in a purely theological form is also incomplete if it is to be divested from all empirical experience.

There are two kinds of extremes in thinking—the empirical and the transcendent. While we emphasise the transcendent aspect of God, we are likely to ignore the world and human society and become austere monks, desert fathers, cave dwellers and monastic

hermits with an absorption of consciousness into a transcendence of values, which may border upon a complete bifurcation of oneself from the external experiences in the form of the world—*adhibhuta*, and society—*adhiyajna*. This is something very important to remember. The Supreme Being is no doubt the eternal object—*adhibhuta*, but inclusive of the thinker, the subject—*adhyatma*, inclusive also of the whole of society—*adhiyajna*, and inclusive of all the gods that one can imagine—*adhidaiva*. All the gods of religion are included in this Supreme Godhead. The angels and the divinities that we speak of in religious parlance, the dwellers in the higher heavens, paradise, the ethereal beings—all these angelic existences, the divinities and gods of religion—are also comprehended within this supreme God. The concept of God is fairly difficult to entertain. We cannot think God. Our minds are not so made as to enable us to contemplate God as He is in Himself. But the Bhagavadgītā insists that liberation is impossible until and unless meditation becomes practicable on the true God. And who is this true God? Towards this end we are driven by the various chapters of the Gītā, right from the Seventh onwards.

So, to come to the point again, these one and a half verses towards the end of the Seventh Chapter tell us how we have to build our personality, which has to be integral and not partial. We are to be supermen ultimately and not remain merely as men, mortals, individuals—one among the many. We are empirically individuals, one isolated from the other, but we also have an element within us which brings us together. We have a super-social personality in us, transcending our social individuality. We are units of human society, no doubt, but we are not merely that. We are not just single units or individual citizens of a nation—an Indian citizen, a British citizen, an American citizen, etc. This is a poor definition of a human being. We are that, no doubt—we are passport holders, we have visas, we are fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, we are this and that. This is the lowest concept of individuality of a person. But we have a superhuman element within us, and this is the deepest *adhyatma* in us. That is God present within us.

God is present as the superhuman element in the human individual, and minus that, the human individuality vanishes into an airy nothing. The root of our personality is God Himself, and the root of anything, for the matter of that, is this Being. The gods in heaven, the angels in all the superior realms, all human beings, everything created in this universe, all objects and all subjects, everything blended together gives us a picture of the supreme unity of Godhood. If this idea could be entertained, if it could be practicable for any human being to think like this at the time of passing, liberation is certain. *Prayana-kale'pi ca mam te vidur yukta-cetasah*: The mind has to be united with God—this is called yoga. Ultimately yoga means union with God. It can be union with anything from the point of view of the vision of God. It is ultimately a union with the essential essence of any particular thing in the world. You can get united with anything in the world and it can be equivalent to uniting with God, provided this unity is not merely with the empirical form and name of the visible object, but with the internal essence or content of the object.

Such is the profundity of meaning that is hidden in these simple terms that we generally pass by them when we study or read the Bhagavadgītā. *Te brahma tad viduh krtsnam*: Brahman, or the Absolute, has to be understood in its entirety, not in its partiality. *Krtsna* is completeness; integrality is *krisattva*. So the Absolute or Brahman has to be

comprehended in its integrality, totality, unity, in its blendedness and completeness—not merely in transcendence, but also in immanence and inclusiveness of everything. This concept of God is difficult for the simple reason that the thinker also is involved in this thought. The *adhyatma* is not isolated from the *adhibhuta* or the *adhiyajna* or the *adhidaiva*. The thinker being involved in the very process of the thinking of God, such a thinking becomes difficult, because we are usually accustomed to think of things as externals, outside objects which we have to judge in a particular manner. Here is an object which we cannot judge, because any kind of judgment involves an isolation of the subject and predicate in logic.

So the thought of God is not a logical concept. It is something superior to ordinary understanding. It is super-logical indivisibility of comprehension that is the *krisattva brahmatva* mentioned in this verse. When Arjuna listens to this tremendous message injected into his mind towards the end of the Seventh Chapter, he is bewildered, as perhaps every one of us is. We are unable to understand what all this means. It amounts to saying that we cannot think at all. Our minds are put to a stop when we are asked to think in this comprehensive manner, because comprehensiveness is unknown to us. We are always partial beings. We have likes and dislikes; we are either this or that—but not both. Doubt arises in the mind of Arjuna and he puts questions, which are recorded at the beginning of the Eighth Chapter. What is this Brahman? What is this imperishable Being? What is *adhyatma*? What is *adhibhuta*? What is *adhiyajna*? These questions arise naturally in the mind of anyone. *Kiṁ tad-brahma kiṁ adhyatmam kiṁ karma puruṣottama, adhibhūtaṁ ca kiṁ proktam adhidaivaṁ kim ucyate. Adhiyajñāḥ katharṁ ko'tra dehe'smin madhusūdana, prayāṇa-kāle ca katharṁ jñeyo'si niyatātmabhiḥ.* “How are we to contemplate You, the Supreme Being, at the time of passing? What do You mean by these words that You have used in Your lecture?”

The great Teacher of the Bhagavadgītā answers in reply to these queries. Every term is explained beautifully. The imperishable, eternal is called the Absolute—*akṣaraṁ brahma paramaṁ*. There is only one imperishable reality anywhere, and this world of perception does not contain anything imperishable—everything is passing in this world. Even this will pass away. Everything will pass away in this world, because in finitude is hidden a tendency to move on into larger experiences. No finite object can rest contented with itself. Finitude is a name for restlessness and an eagerness to transcend oneself into a larger dimension. So every finite object dies, perishes to its present form and assumes a new form in the process of the evolution of finitude towards larger finitudes, into greater forms of synthesis, until the supreme synthesis is reached, which is the supreme Brahman, the Absolute. Inasmuch as everything is perishable, the tendency of the whole universe is to overcome this perishable character of itself and attain the imperishable Brahma—*akṣaraṁ brahma paramaṁ*. The *adhyatma* is the essential nature of an individual—*svabhāvo'dhyātmam ucyate*. Your essential nature is called *adhyatma*. Your essential nature is naturally not what appears on the surface of your personality. Your body, your social conduct, the words that you speak, the ideas that you think usually—these are not your personality. These are temporary expressions of various layers of your personality at different moments of time. They are like the movement of a river, or the burning of the flame of a lamp—a continuity but not an indivisibility.

But in spite of this continuity and a procession which forms the empirical personality of the individual, there is a basic indivisibility. That essential content is the *adhyatma*—

*atman* as it is usually called. Sometimes it is known as the *kutastachaitanya* in Vedantic language. The innermost essence and the basic rock bottom of the individual is *adhyatma*, and it is inseparable from the imperishable Brahman. The *atman* is Brahman; *kutasta* is the same as the Absolute. Just as the root of the wave in the ocean is the ocean itself, the root of personality, the Overself, the *kutastachaitanya*, is Brahman, the Imperishable. *Akṣaram brahma paramam svabhāvo 'dhyātmam ucyate, bhūta-bhāvodbhava-karo visargaḥ karma-samjñitaḥ*. All activity which forms part of the field of *adhiyajna* is called *karma* in a cosmical sense. There is only one activity ultimately, and that is the movement of the cosmos towards its ultimate end. The purpose of the universe is the impulse behind activity, and therefore there can be only one action anywhere and not many actions, such as my action or your action. All actions, the so-called activities of individuals, are facets of cosmic activity. This is the supreme *yajna* and is called *adhiyajna*—the transcendent purpose behind all activities.

The whole gospel of the Bhagavadgītā herein is imbedded—the principle of *karma* getting transformed into yoga, known as *karma* yoga, when all actions are realised as expressions of cosmic activity. There is no such thing as my activity or your activity. They are only outer manifestations, through the individualities of persons, of that supreme impulse of universal action, and therefore there is only one agent behind action—God Himself—and neither are you the doer, nor am I the doer. If the agent is the Supreme Being in any form of action, all results of actions also accrue to Him. That is why the Gītā again insists upon our abandonment of the fruits of action. If the actions do not belong to you, the fruits thereof also cannot belong to you. If, by any kind of egotistic affirmation of yourself, you assert your agency in any kind of action, there would be a nemesis following from this false notion of action—a reaction set up by this individual notion of activity or personal agency. This nemesis or reaction is what is known as *karma bandhana*, or the bondage of *karma*, which becomes the source of sorrows of various types, including transmigration. So the creative impulse, which is the source of all forms of action in this world, is the ultimate *karma*. This alone can be called real *karma*, and all other *karmas* are included in this supreme *karma*.

The perishable form of the world is called *adhibhuta*, the objectness that is present in objects. Externality is the clothing in which the essence of the object is rooted. Every object has an eternal element present in it. But, when it is looked upon as something present somewhere as a name and a form, it becomes a temporal, perishable appearance. There is a reality hidden in appearances, and the appearance aspect is called *adhibhuta*, while the reality that is responsible even for the appearance is the imperishable Brahman. The transitoriness that is the characteristic of objects is not their essential nature. Their essential nature is eternity and infinitude, but their name-form complex, which is in space and time, is the perishable aspect—this is called *adhibhuta*. *Adhibhūtaṁ kṣaro bhāvaḥ puruṣaś cādhidaivatam*. What we usually call today the Overself in man is the *atman* in the individual—the *kutastachaitanya* that I referred to just now. The *adhidaiva* is the presiding principle behind all individuals, the supreme consciousness that is at the base of all individualities—not the mind, but consciousness.

There is an angel inside you, ruling your destiny, guarding you, protecting you, directing you in the proper way. This angelic element within you, the superhuman principle, the divinity implanted in the heart of all individuals is the *adhidaiva*. *Puruṣaś cādhidaivatam, adhiyajño'ham evātra dehe deha-bhṛtām vara*. Here the incarnate God, Sri Krishna, speaks

of the *adhiyajna* as Himself. This is something very interesting and novel for us to contemplate. The divine incarnation is the *adhiyajna*. It is the unifying principle in human society. The blessedness of humanity rests in the extent to which it is able to be guided by the divinity that is immanent in human society. Human individuals cannot achieve ultimate success merely with the power of their hands and feet. Success is a name that we give to an achievement which is of a permanent nature. That which is today, but shall pass away tomorrow, cannot be called a victory. Human achievements in the process of human history have been passing phenomena—they have not been ultimate victories. We have won nothing in this world; we always have been defeated in the process of history.

Today we are looking up with dazed eyes as to what is going to happen to us in the future, because we are always depending on the strength of our arms, the power of our understanding or intellect, the ratiocinating faculty minus the divine element in us. Man minus God is a corpse, and a corpse cannot be expected to win any victory or achieve success. So the divine incarnation here, symbolised in the form of Krishna or any form that God may take as an incarnation at any time in the history of the cosmos, not merely in the history of the earth, can be regarded as the finger of God operating in individual societies. God creates the world and also takes care of it. He is the Creator and also the Preserver, and He preserves the world that He has created by means of His incarnations. The supreme excellences which you see manifested as great genius in this world can be also called divine incarnations, as we shall be told in the Tenth Chapter, for instance. Anything in this world that is superb, magnificent and beyond the ordinary in power, in knowledge and in capacity of any kind should be regarded as a divine manifestation.

God incarnates Himself from time to time, for the solidarity of mankind, for the establishment of righteousness and the abolition of unrighteousness. *Dharma-samsthapanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge*. At every juncture or crucial moment of time, God's incarnation takes place. It does not mean that God takes incarnation only some times, in some centuries, and not always. There is an eternal manifestation of God. As God is eternity, His manifestation also is timeless. It is not only merely a historical occurrence that takes place some time in history. It is a timeless advent of an eternal reality, and therefore it can be regarded as a perpetual support in this world of mortality. God is the only friend of man, truly speaking, because perishable individuals cannot be regarded as true friends—they pass away. How can you live in this world by relying upon that which passes away? *Suḥṛdam sarva-bhūtānām jñātvā mām śāntim rcchati*, says the Gītā. "Knowing Me as the true friend of all beings, people shall attain peace." We have to realise that God is our true friend. He is a friend who shall not forsake us at any time. He shall stand by us at the hour of doom. We must realise God as the true friend, as incarnate divinity, as a presence which is perpetually before us, guarding us and taking care of us in every respect, providing us with everything that is required at any moment of time. Contemplating God in this manner, we realise His presence even in society.

So here, in these two verses at the beginning of the Eighth Chapter, the great Master of the Gītā gives a reply to the queries of Arjuna, all amounting to this sum and substance with which I began today, namely, the necessity to conceive God as a totality and comprehensiveness and not merely as an external object bereft of relationship with the

subject and human society. Such yoga is supposed to be the means of the liberation of the spirit from this mortal tabernacle, and the Eighth Chapter busies itself with the eschatology of the processes through which the soul passes in its journey through the layers of the cosmos.

## CHAPTER 12

### THE ENTRY OF THE SOUL INTO THE SUPREME BEING

If we can recollect the procedure that we have been following in our studies, we will remember that the sociological situation in which the individual finds himself becomes the foremost subject for study and consideration. The very First Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā places us in a sociological complex with which the human being is confronted in many ways. The involvement of the individual in society is so complete that our thoughts are practically sociological, and the aims and objectives of the individual get merged in the complexity of sociological demands. It happened to Arjuna. His personality was lost completely in the tremendous panorama of social conflict that was presented before him, and whatever he spoke was from the point of view of society and the relationship of individuals in light of what we call human society. There is no mention of the higher type of welfare of the individual as such. We have dealt with this subject in some detail in our earlier studies, and I am mentioning it only as a kind of recapitulation of this theme for the purpose of following the thread of the argument of the Eighteen Chapters of the Bhagavadgītā.

From the immense involvement of the individual in the requirements of the social structure, portrayed before us in a picturesque manner in the First Chapter of the Gītā, we are led along the other chapters, beginning from the second onwards, where the emphasis is on the individual rather than society, because the confrontation of the individual in respect of society has much to do with the internal structure of the individual himself. What we call human society is a kind of mutual individualistic reactions among human units, and these reactions are nothing else but projections of the human psyche in different ways. The study of society cannot be independent of the study of the human individual in its internal characteristics or components. So the emphasis, right up from society in the First Chapter, is towards the individual essence known as the *atman*, which is taken into consideration for discussion from the Second Chapter onwards. But the *atman* is not brought to the light of day at the very commencement. There is a gradual extrication of the individual from the clutches of society. It is not done immediately and at once, as a sort of wrenching of the individual from the atmosphere of social relationship; there is no question of 'wrenching' in the practice of yoga. Everything is a very harmonious, gradational and healthy movement, as in the growth of an individual from babyhood into adulthood, etc. We do not jump to the sky in the practice of yoga. There is no revolution of any kind. There is an imperceptible, gradational, organismic rise from the lower stage to the higher stage.

So even in the Second Chapter of the Gītā, where we are led away from the social complex mentioned in the First Chapter, an aroma of society is present, by which the argument which was to counteract the misgivings of Arjuna takes into consideration the reaction of the individual upon society once again—such as prestige, one's own duty in society, etc. This theme was touched upon in the Second Chapter also, notwithstanding the fact that the intention of the Second Chapter is to raise the individual from externalised relationships of every kind to the internal structure of the individual. We have now gradually moved onwards from the First Chapter, wherein we have followed

the method of the great Teacher of the Bhagavadgītā for the purpose of a complete integration of the individual, which is the highlight of the Sixth Chapter. The meditation or *dhyana*, which is the subject of the Sixth Chapter, is nothing but the theme of the mustering in of all the forces constituting the individual, so that they form one whole compound and not a complex of diverse constituents. There is no mention of the Creator or God up to the Sixth Chapter. It is all society and the individual—nothing but that. A great psychologist indeed is the Teacher of the Gītā, and no better psychologist can be found. We should not thrust God into the minds of people when they are not ready for it. The great Master knows the needs of the various layers of the human personality, and so layer after layer has to be peeled off until the internal kernel is reached. We have to find out, gradually, what that kernel is, as we proceed further.

While it is true that society is constituted of individuals, and there is an inviolable and inextricable relationship of the individual with what is known as society, the individual is not complete and is not the apex of creation. Man is not the final end result in the chain of the development of the cosmos known as evolution, and many a time we make the mistake of imagining that we have reached the end of evolution—man is the crowning edifice of the whole of this universe. It is a mistaken notion of man. The individual is related to the cosmos in a more tangible and meaningful manner than the individual is related to society. This subject has to be taken up for discussion when the individual is ready for it, and not before that. To say anything at the wrong hour, even if it is the right thing, becomes the wrong thing. Even the right thing cannot be said at the wrong hour—that is not the proper way of teaching.

It is true that God exists and the universe is a vast field of completion, but this cannot be told at a wrong moment when there is no receptive capacity in the individual. Now the individual will be ready to receive the lesson on account of the collectedness of the various ingredients of the personality, which has been effected by the practice of yoga, known as *dhyana*, meditation, that has been propounded, elucidated in the Sixth Chapter. The cosmological principles, the creational process are discussed in the Seventh Chapter. The very idea of creation implies the idea of a Creator. There cannot be a creation without a maker of the creation, and therefore we are told that the Creator projected the universe of the five elements by the power of His own Being. The idea of the Creator is the beginning of religion. Devotion to God is the immediate consequence of the very recognition of the existence of a Creator above the whole of creation. While up to this time it was all psychology and psychoanalysis, if we would like to call it so, now we are entering into cosmology and the deeper implications of philosophy, metaphysics, or what nowadays people call ontology, etc. The Creator cannot be regarded as identical with creation, on account of the concept involved in the confrontation of the universe by the individual. We always imagine that the cause is different from the effect. The very term 'cause' implies its distinctiveness from the effect which it produces.

When we speak of God as the Creator of the universe we do not imagine, even with the farthest stretch of our minds, that God does not retain His transcendentalness. So in the Seventh Chapter, and even in the Eighth Chapter, and to some extent in the Ninth Chapter, the transcendent aspect of God is maintained—God is above the universe. He is an unreachable magnificence, a tremendous force that attracts our awe and admiration,

and frightens us with its might and greatness. We are afraid of God in the beginning. The very idea of God frightens us because of the force, the power and the immensity that is associated with God's existence. There are two kinds of devotion—*aishwarya pradhana bhakti* and *madhurya pradhana bhakti*. Devotion that is associated with a sense of awe, admiration and fear is known as *aishwarya pradhana bhakti*. We admire God, we fear God, and we adore God because of His largeness, His greatness, His magnificence, His transcendentalness, and the tremendous difference between Him and ourselves, which is automatically accepted by our finitude and His infinitude. If this is the case, how can we reach God? Here is the central theme of the Eighth Chapter, which we have been discussing for some time. The cosmology is continued in the Eighth Chapter also, in the earlier verses, which we have discussed previously. God created the world and He is immensely present in the various facets of creation—as *adhyatma*, as *adhibhuta*, as *adhyajna*, as *adhidaiva*, and everything connected with these concepts. The destiny of the soul seems to be very precarious and awe-inspiring. There is a fear in us—what will happen to us after we shed this body?

It is very clear to every finite human being that God is unreachable for all practical purposes, because of the transcendentalness which is implied in His existence. He is far above the whole of creation. The arms of man cannot touch His Being. But, if this is the circumstance in which the finite individual is placed, it is really a matter of concern for everyone. So the Eighth Chapter retains the transcendentalness of God, but does not discourage us with any kind of negative philosophy or theology, as if we are damned forever. There is a hope for even the finite individual. God can be reached after the shedding of this body by deep concentration, and the last thought is supposed to be the force that decides the nature of the experiences of the soul in the hereafter.

Now, the passage of the soul after the disassociation of itself from this body is the subject of various branches in philosophy. "One who is wholly absorbed in the thought of God reaches God," says the Eighth Chapter. *Anta-kāle ca mām eva smaran muktvā kalevaram, yaḥ prayāti sa mad-bhāvaṁ yāti nāsty atra saṁśayaḥ. Om ity ekākṣaram brahma-vyāharan mām anusmaran, yaḥ prayāti tyajan dehaṁ sa yāti paramām gatim.* The supreme stage is reached by that individual or soul who is enabled to entertain the thought of the Supreme Being. *Kaviṁ purāṇam anuśāsītāram aṅor aṅīyaṁsam anusmared yaḥ, sarvasya dhātāram achintya-rūpam āditya-varṇam tamasah parastāt.* A glorious description of the Supreme Being, shining like the sun beyond the darkness of ignorance. If such meditations would be possible at the last moment, as the result of our devout life that we have led in this sojourn on earth, the attainment of God is certain. There is no doubt about this. If that is not to be attained, if there is any obstacle, if for some reason or the other it has not become possible for an individual to retain the thought of God, because it is not possible for everyone to retain the thought of God at the moment of passing—what happens to such a person? Such a person will be involved in the lower planes of existence, from which there is a reversion into the level from which one has risen. There is temporality infecting every layer of the cosmos. There is only one timeless existence, the supreme Absolute, and whoever finds it difficult to reach this state of timeless eternity, which is God-Being, finds himself in the process of time. *Ābrahma-bhuvanāl lokāḥ punar āvartino'ṛjuna, mām upetya tu kaunteya punar janma na vidyate:* One may reach any plane of existence, even if it be higher than the earthly one—that cannot be regarded as the salvation of the soul. Wherever there is a compulsion exerted upon us by a

procession of powers or forces, where the evolutionary urge pulls and pushes us in the direction in which it moves, we remain not a master of ourself. One who is not a master of himself is not an independent person, and one who is not independent has not attained freedom, and freedom is salvation. So whoever is involved in the process of the universe cannot be regarded as a liberated spirit.

There are various layers of the cosmos, just as there are layers of the individual inside. We call them five *koshas*—*annamaya*, *pranamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijnanamaya*, *anandamaya*—the physical sheath, the vital sheath, the mental sheath, the intellectual sheath and the casual sheath. Corresponding to these sheaths there are the planes of existence—outwardly, cosmically, universally—and these are the *lokas* or the regions into which the soul enters as a denizen thereof. Rebirth need not necessarily mean coming back to this world. Rebirth is a compulsion to take a form and the inability to exist as the formless Absolute. The necessity to enter into a form arises on account of the impulses of desire which are the forces that constitute the individuality of a person. A desire is a power or force which asserts the need to retain individuality in some manner or other. The individuality need not necessarily be of a physical type. There are various degrees of individuality—nevertheless they are individualities, and the degrees vary according to the degree of the particular plane of existence into which the individual is thrown by the power of the evolutionary process itself, which is called rebirth. So rebirth is not necessarily a coming back to this world. It may be that, or it may not be that. It can be a higher ascent also, but even then it is rebirth. Anything is rebirth if it is short of God-realisation, and so the verse of the Bhagavadgītā here says: *Ābrahma-bhuvanāi lokāḥ punar āvartino'rajuna*. Even if one reaches the highest seventh plane of the cosmos, which here is called the region of the Creator, there is a necessity to come back.

Theological interpreters and exponents have many things to say about these passages of the soul, especially in connection with the status of the soul in *brahma-loka*. Is there a possibility of coming back, or is it only a penultimate step to reach the supreme Absolute? The Bhagavadgītā does not throw any light on this difficulty. It is very short and pithy; it merely makes a statement of this kind and leaves us to consider its meaning in any way we like. But great thinkers, scholars, saints and sages who have pondered over this subject tell us that the region called *brahma-loka*, or the region of the Creator, is to be distinguished from the nature of the Absolute. Generally we do not make this distinction when we speak of God the Creator. In ordinary religious parlance the two are identified. When we speak of God as the Creator of the universe, we do not imagine or imply thereby that there is something superior to this concept of Creator. For the purposes of popular religion, they are the same.

But a distinction is drawn. Metaphysical and philosophical definitions are given in respect of these stages, into the details of which we need not enter here. The sum and substance of the opinions of these exponents is that there are two kinds of people who reside in *brahma-loka*, just as there can be two kinds of people living in a country—citizens and visa holders, for instance. Citizens of a country are of one kind, and visa holders are of a different type. Both live in the same country, and perhaps they have all the facilities that are available in this country—they can travel in the same coach, they can eat the same food, they can breathe the same air—they are practically the same in every respect. But their visas can expire, whereas citizens have no such problem of expiry of their tenure of stay in the country.

This distinction is drawn by exponents of this particular subject of the status of souls in *brahma-loka*. Commentators on the Gītā, like Madhusudan Saraswati for instance, tell us that *upasakas* or worshippers who perform meditation unselfishly, without any kind of desire, do not come back, though they may reach *brahma-loka* and pass through that stage as a necessary condition of the further attainment of utter immortality, about which we shall speak a little later. But there are residents in *brahma-loka* like Sanaka, Sanatana, Santakumara, Narada, etc.—they are not visa holders. They have not migrated from one country to another and they have not risen from one level to another. They were there right from the time of creation itself and they have no such fear of coming back.

Also there is no fear of coming back in respect of those souls who have unselfishly meditated or performed *upasana*, even with the acceptance of the transcendentalness of God. The whole difficulty arises on account of this peculiar thought in our minds, namely, the transcendentalness of God, the other-worldliness of God and the immensity of God as contradistinguished from the finitude of the individual who performs the worship or devotion. This difficulty is overcome in the coming chapters—in the Tenth and Eleventh especially, about which we will speak later on.

The departure of the soul is the main subject of the Eighth Chapter, and the Eighth Chapter does not tell us that it is possible to attain God in this life, because it does not want to tell us everything at the same time. It wants to go stage by stage, taking us by the hand from one level to the other without frightening us in any manner. The soul's departure is immediately decided when there is disassociation of consciousness from the material body, and in a way we may say it is decided even now. Teachers like Patanjali tell us that even when we are born, what will happen to us in the future is already written on our souls. Even the time of our death is already decided when we are still in the womb of our mother. The conditions through which we have to pass in our life also are already stated and decided, and the circumstances into which we are born in this world are also decided. *Jati, ayu, bhoga*—these three things have already been decided even when we are inside the womb of the mother. This means to say that the termination of our life has also been decided, which indirectly implies that what will happen to us later on has already been decided. Everything seems to be contained in the Will of God in a cosmical manner. Wonderful it is to think of.

The departure of the soul, therefore, is through various passages. Particular mention is made in the Eighth Chapter of what are commonly known as the *devayana* and the *pitriyana margas*, the Northern Path as it is called, or the Southern Path—the path of light, and the path of smoke or the path of darkness. There is departure, which means to say there is movement. The necessity for movement of the soul arises on account of the distance that exists between itself and the destination that it has to reach. If we accept that there is such a thing called distance, space and time, we also have to accept the necessity for travel. We already take for granted that there is such a thing called space, and therefore we have to also accept what is called distance. Space is distance, dimension, and measure, and all of us here perhaps have faith and the need to accept the distance of God from us in some way. It may differ from one person to another person, as far as the nature of the concept is concerned, but we accept that there is some sort of a difference and distance between ourselves and the Supreme Being, whether it is a qualitative distance or difference, or it is a quantitative one—sometimes it is both. Our

conviction and acceptance of the fact that there is a distance between us and God is the reason for the departure of the soul from the body in some direction, and the direction that it takes depends upon the thoughts it entertained in this life. Generally, the deciding factor is the nature of the desire. *Yam̐ yam̐ vāpi smaran bhāvaṁ tyajaty ante kalevaram, taṁ taṁ evaiti kaunteya sadā tad-bhāva-bhāvitaḥ.*

No desire can go unfulfilled—that is the law of desire. Strong or weak, it does not matter. Whatever form you contemplate in your mind as the objective of your desire, that you shall reach, attain, enjoy and possess—if not in this life then in the next life. No desire can be destroyed. It is an energy, and the principle of conservation of energy will tell you that desire cannot be destroyed. If desires and hopes cannot be destroyed, they should be regarded as immortal, at least in a relative sense. They are immortal as long as they are not fulfilled. Just as the creditor is always there as long as you cannot pay your debts, the desires pursue you wherever you go. You may reach the seventh heaven, but before you reach there the desire is already waiting for you. “What do you say about me,” it will ask you. And so you are gravitated automatically, by the pull of this catapult of your desires, to the point or place where alone it is possible for you to fulfil your desires. There is no dearth of resources in the universe. It is immensely rich and can fulfil any desire of any person. It will never say ‘no’ to any individual. It will not say, “I am sorry, I have not got it.” Whatever you ask for is present in the universe. As a matter of fact, you cannot think of anything that is not in the universe. So all your desires concern what is present in the universe somewhere or the other—it may be in this plane or in another plane.

So you will be suddenly taken like a rocket, as it were—a tremendous force, and the energy that drives that rocket is desire itself. The rocket is your own subtle body, and you are driven to that place where you will fulfil your desire, either fully or partially, according to the intensity of the desire. If the desire is intense—positive or negative—sometimes the fulfilment is seen in this very birth. In this very life you can fulfil your desires, provided the desire is terrific, uncontrollable, immense and it has overwhelmed you and inundated you. If the desire is so intense, whether it is virtuous or otherwise, you will see the consequence of it in this very birth. But if it is not so strong, you will reap the fruit thereof later on, in some other plane of existence, some other kind of circumstance where the conditions will be favourable for the fructification of this desire. Great souls, pious persons, devotees of God who have retained the concepts of the transcendence of God, the other-worldliness of God in one sense, to put it more precisely, will reach God through the various stages of the ascent which are described in the scriptures such as the Upanishads and expounded in the Brahma Sutras, etc. They go from one light to another light, from dimmer light to brighter light, until the brightest light of the highest heaven is reached.

Unselfish devotees do not come back, but those who have desires of some type or other will have to be retained in that condition until their desires are fulfilled. Often our devotions to God are connected with some ulterior desires. Many of us will be finding it difficult to imagine what unselfish devotion to God can be. We may accept theoretically that unselfish devotion to God is the only real and true devotion. But our mind is so made that it cannot understand what unselfishness is, because there cannot be any kind of effort without an intention behind it, and this intention decides whether it is unselfish or otherwise. To seek something from God is the essence of the principle of selfishness

that enters into the devotion to God. All prayers to God in all the religions have something to tell God. We convey a message to God. The necessity to convey a message to God again implies our suspicion that He is away from us, distant and transcendent still, and He requires to be told that something has to be done. That is the meaning of prayer.

But that need not necessarily be the meaning of prayer. Prayer can be an overwhelming, indwelling of God Himself in our soul—the soul getting invaded by the presence of God. The soul getting possessed by the omnipresence of God can also be devotion, and there one cannot expect anything from God other than the presence of God Himself. We are used to expecting things, and therefore we are also used to utilising persons and things as means for the fulfilment of our expectations. So the very defect in which the human mind is involved transfers its usual ways of the envisagement of values even to God Himself, and while it asks for small things from small persons, it asks for large things from God. The highest devotion is not an asking of anything from God. Then, any kind of ulterior asking ceases in the processes of the mind—it becomes totally selfless. The abolition of individual selfhood in gradual stages is the rise of devotion from the lower level to the higher level, called *parabhakti* or supreme devotion to God, which is identical with the wisdom of God—inseparable ultimately from the realisation of God Himself.

So the Bhagavadgītā here tells us that there are two passages of the soul—the light and the smoke. There is a possibility of going up gradually with no return, and there is also an ascent for the purpose of returning. The soul reaches regions higher and higher until it becomes impossible for it to retain its individuality. That is the way to *moksha* or salvation by the progressive method of ascent, known as *kramamukti*. But those souls who are involved in a life of activity for the purpose of profit of one kind or the other, who are not devotees in a truly religious sense but participants in religion for the purpose of attaining earthly goods and recognition of some type or other, will have this desire fulfilled and they will revert to the place from where they started. The Upanishads have given us more details about these paths than we find in the Bhagavadgītā, and there are possibilities of the soul getting into different kinds of involvement even after the shedding of this body. There need not be only two paths; there can be many other wanderings of the soul in various other fields of experience due to the complexity of desires. All desires have to end if God is to be reached finally.

That ending of desire is the immediate salvation of the soul. This is what is known as *sadyomukti* or the entry of the soul into the Supreme Being at once, here itself. There is no travel, no passage of the soul after death, and no reincarnation, nothing of this kind—no rebirth because the soul is immortal and is not conditioned by the process of the material evolution. The power of the universe does not affect it any more, because its experience is not involved in space, time and causation. There is no externalisation of the consciousness of the spirit; there is only a universalisation of it and not externalisation. This attainment of the universality of spirit is known as *sadyomukti* or immediate salvation. It is immediate because the Universal is present everywhere. There is no need to travel to the Universal, because no concepts of space and time are there. Even the concepts of space and time are involved in Universality, and are swallowed by it. Those who have attuned themselves to the Universal, whose lives are in harmony with the requirements of the law of the Universal, are liberated here itself. One need not

wait for liberation after death.

This point will be taken up for consideration in the coming chapters—Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh. In the Eighth Chapter we are only taken up to the level of the transcendence of God and the possibility of the departure of the soul in the fields to come, above the earth. It is only in the Ninth Chapter that we will receive a greater consolation by being told that God is not so far away as we were told earlier. His hands operate in this world just now, and devotion becomes an immediate activity of our day-to-day existence, and not merely a performance in a temple or church. Our whole life gets transformed into religion and spirituality when we are told that the law of God rules even this material earth. Towards this end we shall be taken in the coming chapters.

## CHAPTER 13

### CENTRING THE MIND IN THE HEART

The yoga of the rise of the soul from this world is the main subject of the Eighth Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā. Usually the soul reverts to this world on account of the pull that the world atmosphere exerts upon it, as the power of gravitation can pull everything towards the earth. All our desires connected with the world are the forces that drag the soul back to the world, and any kind of impulsion to which the soul gets subjected becomes its bondage. Liberation of the spirit is freedom from such subjection. How can this be achieved? This is answered in a few verses of the Eighth Chapter. *Sarva-dvārāṇi saṁyamya mano hṛdi-nirudhya ca, mūrdhny ādhāyātmanaḥ prāṇam āsthito yoga-dhāraṇām. Om ity ekākṣaraṁ brahma-vyāharan mām anusmaran, yaḥ prayāti tyajan dehaṁ sa yāti paramām gatim.* The whole of the yoga that one has to engage oneself at the time of the departure from this world is described in these two verses. All the doors of the senses have to be closed; that is the *samyama* or the restraint of all the gates by which the senses move towards their objects. It is not easy to shut out the senses from their activity in connection with their objects, because this is not a physical doorway which we can close at our will. This is an impulse which is hard to restrain, in the way that we cannot control the movement of wind, for instance, by any amount of effort.

The methodology of sense restraint is described in various places in the Bhagavadgītā, in different contexts. The control of the senses is not easy, if we are to confine ourselves merely to the area or the field of sense activity. We have to apply a higher power in order to restrain a lower urge, and unless we resort to a higher resource that is within us, we will not be able to draw enough strength in order to handle these impetuous sense organs. If we were to think of the senses and then merely by the power of thought attempt to control them, we would not be entirely successful because the lower mind, which is the sense mind, is in collaboration with the senses, and it is the mind that approves the requirements or demands of the sense organs. Thus, the lower mind is not going to be of help. The higher mind, which is the superior reason within us, has to be employed in order to harness a greater power for dealing with the senses, which move of their own accord towards the objects. For that, a prescription is given in this very verse—*mano hṛdi-nirudhya ca*. The mind has to be centred in the heart, and this instruction follows the other, whereby we are told that the gates of the senses have to be closed—*sarva-dvārāṇi saṁyamya mano hṛdi-nirudhya ca*.

The centring of the mind in the heart is an art by itself. It is to locate the mind in its own centre, where its own roots are to be found. We hear in the studies of psychology, for instance, that there are layers of mind beneath the conscious level, and the conscious operations are mostly a surface activity of our consciousness. There are deeper layers which are buried beneath the conscious activities, and they are the impulsions which propel the mind to approve the activities of the senses. The centring of the mind in the heart is, in a way, the directing of the mind to pure subjectivity of feeling. The heart is the centre of all feelings which are the immediate expressions of our true being. Our essential nature reveals itself in the psychic expressions which we know as feelings. They are very powerful—everything is controlled by feeling, finally. The mind has to be

centred in the root of feeling, the very base of all emotions and sentiments, and this has to be done by an effort of mind itself. Usually, whenever we are wakeful and conscious of external objects, we think through the brain. We have to apply an inward technique of driving the mind inwardly to the heart, which is not necessarily the physical heart, but a state of feeling which is inseparable from the location of what we call the heart centre. We have a subtle body, inward to the physical body, and a psychic heart. Though it is not identical with the physical heart, it can be regarded as an inwardised counterpart of the physical heart. So the yoga practice mentioned here is not a physical activity. It is an effort of consciousness, whereby the whole of the arena of the senses and of the mind is restrained by a superior consciousness which centres itself in its own self—*sarva-dvārāṇi samyamya mano hṛdi-nirudhya ca, mūrdhny ādhāyātmanaḥ prāṇam āsthito yoga-dhāraṇām*.

There is another instruction which makes out that the *pranas* should not be allowed to move in the way in which they are moving at present. There should be an automatic restraint exerted upon their activities by an act of the concentration of the mind. The technique especially mentioned here is the concentration on the centre between the eyebrows, the *bhṛumadhya*, as it is called. This is not the only method of yoga, there are other methods also, but this is one specific technique that is precisely mentioned here in these two verses, apart from the various other instructions that we find in different places elsewhere in the very same scripture. Perhaps the intention of this admonition is that our reason and feeling should go together in the act of concentration on God. We should not be purely rationalistic individuals, minus feeling; nor should we be merely emotional, sentimental, feelingful people, without understanding. The two have to go together, and this again is a very difficult feat. We are driven by emotions or dry logic, with a preponderance of this or that at different times, and rarely do we become integrated personalities where our rationality combines with feeling, which is the deepest essence in us, psychologically. Intuition, in a way, may be said to be a blend of understanding or reason, and feeling. If you feel what you understand, and understand what you feel, you become a complete being.

But normally this is not done. We generally keep these two apart, with no intimate relationship between them, so that it is not necessarily true that we feel what we understand or even understand what we feel. There are irrational instincts, as we call them—our deepest feelings, which, like a cyclone, blow over us and drag us in the direction they move, like a tempest or a tornado, and the rationality behind them is beyond us. We always say, “Well, we did it somehow, by an impulsion, without understanding.” On the other hand, there is also the logician’s brain, which is bereft of human feelings. The mathematical approach to the personal and social existence of people cannot be regarded as the whole of life. Mathematical logic cannot be always humane. It may be a precise instrument, like a machine, but a machine has no feelings. It does not understand the sentiments or requirements of people. To be a true human being, in the complete sense of the term, there has to be a coming together of understanding and feeling.

When this is carried to its limits, the farthest end of this combination, we are on the borderland of the flash of intuition. Intuition is a total approach of the subject in respect of the object. Here we are discussing the supreme object of meditation, God Himself, and not merely an ordinary object. This method can also be applied in respect of lower things. We are told of various techniques of *samyama* which are the themes in some of

the *sutras* of Patanjali, for instance, where it is mentioned that this directing of the being in concentration can be done in respect of anything in this world. But at present, in the context of these verses of the Bhagavadgītā, we are speaking of the salvation of the soul, the liberation of the spirit, and are not speaking merely of *samyama*, or powers or *siddhis*, in respect of the temporal things of the world. In concentration on God, the whole of the personality is gathered up and focused. Every cell of the body unites in collaboration with every other, and every thought combines with every other thought, as a whole nation can voluntarily offer itself for conscription if there is a tremendous danger which threatens the entire country. There is a uniting of powers on account of the necessity felt due to the exigency of the occasion.

What can be a more serious occasion than the departure of the soul from this world? It is the most consequent event that can ever take place in our lives, where our future is decided, where the last judgment is to be declared in respect of the destiny of the soul that has to leave this world for its future career. So the great Teacher of the Gītā tells us that we have to gather ourselves up into a soul and not merely a psyche. The psyche melts into the soul. The mind and the reason become one with the Self within us, the *atman* or the consciousness, when *buddhi* and *manas*, reason and feeling, come together. The head and the heart go hand in hand and not as two divided powers—*mūrdhny ādhāyātmanaḥ prāṇam āsthito yoga-dhāraṇām*.

Now, towards this end, another advice is given here. All this is not easy to practice. Whatever be the details of the instruction we may listen to in respect of this great yoga, when we actually come to it, we will find that it is beyond us. The mind will revolt and the senses will clamour for satisfaction. Even at the point of death, desires do not cease—they become more acute. Oftentimes it is said that when the desires sense the destructive stroke that is going to be dealt at their very root by the phenomenon of death that is about to take place, they become extremely strong, and even those desires that we would not usually have in normal life will come to the surface when we are about to quit this world. Everything that we have pushed into the subconscious or the unconscious level comes up at the time of the departure from this world. We will be in a miserable condition when they all come up and ask for their dues. Death is the shaking up of the whole of the body and the entire psyche, and all the sheaths of the body. There the concentration of the mind on God is a practical impossibility for an ordinary person. Some advice in the direction of making ourselves ready for this practice is concerned with the chanting of 'Om' or *pranava*. *Om ity ekākṣaram brahma-vyāharan mām anusmaran*—there are two pieces of advice in this half-verse. Reciting the great mantra which is *pranava* or Om, and absorbing the whole of our being in the Being of God, we have to leave this world and depart to the higher realms. The recitation of Om or the chanting of *pranava* is prescribed as a part of this practice of yoga, the *antimayoga* of the Eighth Chapter.

The recitation of Om is a common practice among all religious devotees. The *pranava* is attached to every mantra, and whenever we begin any religious performance or ablution, we repeat the mantra Om. The idea behind this recitation is to gather up our energies into completeness, so that we become filled with a vibration which is to be in sympathy with the vibration that originated this universe itself. The Om mantra that we chant is not merely a word that we utter, it is not a sound that we produce, but a vibration that is generated from every part of our system. Often it is said that the chant

of Om has to rise from the *nadi* or the navel, the root of our body, and not merely from our lips or throat. This means to say that the whole of our being has to be shaken when we chant Om. This word, this letter, this sound symbol Om is recognised as the word of God, the seat of all wisdom and knowledge, the origin of all language ultimately. Any language can be traced to this root of Om, the comprehensive word wherein the entire vocal system begins to operate totally. In the utterance of the letters of the alphabet—ka, kha, ga, gha and so on in Hindi or a, b, c, d and so on in English—only the part of the system that is the vocal chords begins to operate. But here, the whole of the sound box begins to operate. This is perhaps the reason why linguists and philologists have opined that the chanting or the recitation of Om is equivalent to the repeating of every letter or every word, or producing every kind of sound which goes to constitute the letters of any alphabet of any language.

The significance behind this chant is, again, not merely to utter a word or make a sound, but to set up a vibration. And what sort of vibration it will be can be known by each one of you by actually resorting to this practice. The chanting has to be done with a calm and settled mood. The personality has to be felt as if it is melting away into the atmosphere, so that the vibrations that are the sum and substance, or the material of the things of the world, become in tune with the substance of our own body or personality. This means to say, we reduce ourselves to the Ultimate Cause from which the effects have come forth in the form of the various bodies of individuals. All bodies can be reduced to a single vibration, a universal continuum of energy, whether it is the body of a man, the body of an animal, the body of a tree, or the body of a stone—it makes no difference. Any substance, any body, any embodiment can be converted into an energy which reduces itself into the minimum of reality, inseparable from this very same minimum of reality forming the essence of every body in this world. So, psychologically, mentally and by effort of the mind, we dissolve ourselves gradually into this universal energy.

Om is more a vibration than a sound. There is a difference between sound and vibration, just as energy is not the same as sound, because while energy can manifest itself as sound, it can also manifest itself as something else, such as colour, taste, smell, etc. Just as electric energy can manifest itself as locomotion, as heat, as light, etc., the various configurations in the form of bodies or things in this world are expressions locally of this universal vibration which is the cosmic impulse to create, the creativity or the will of God that is identified with a cosmic energy. Om is the symbol of this cosmic force.

*Nada*, *bindu* and *kala* are the terms used in some of the systems of thought to designate the various stages of development of this energy into grosser and grosser forms. From a single point it expands itself into the dimension of this universe in space and time, and from being merely an impersonal, unthinkable, supernatural power, energy or vibration, it becomes visible, tangible, sensible, thinkable and reasonable when it manifests itself as this gross universe and our own bodies. In this yoga practice, we concentrate on the aspect of the dissolution of the physical body in the subtle, the subtle in the casual, and the casual in the cosmic substance. So the chant of Om is not merely a word, but also an effort of the mind in the dissolution of the personality in the causes thereof, and this is what is advised in this verse of the *Gītā*: *Om ity ekksaram brahma*. It is said it is the Absolute itself. It is *saguna* and *nirguna*—it is with form and without form. The vibration can be conceived as identical with the Absolute in its original causative aspect. It can be also conceived as the seed of the cosmos. Therefore it is called *saguna* and

*nirguna* both. It is absolute Brahman because it is all-comprehensive; there is nothing outside it, just as the continuum of energy, the force that is the source of this world, cannot be regarded as having anything outside it or external to it. Brahman is that, outside of which, nothing is. That which comprehends all, which includes everything, into which everything is absorbed, wherein anything can be found, any form, at any time and under any circumstance—that completeness is called Brahman, and Om is the symbol which represents the supreme Absolute.

This yoga is therefore combined with the chanting of Om in this prescribed manner: *Om ity ekākṣaram brahma-vyāharan mām anusmaran*. It is not merely a chant or a recitation in a verbal form that is prescribed, but also an inner attunement of our feeling, mind, reason, and consciousness. The thought of God is essential, together with the recitation of the chant. The mind should not wander. When we chant Om we must also feel what we are chanting, and not merely feel, but also understand what it is. The whole being is there; that is called yoga—the union of the totality of being with the wholeness of the object. Such a person who departs from this world by the practice of yoga in this manner reaches the supreme state. He is not reborn; he does not come back to this world of mortality—*yaḥ prayāti tyajan deham sa yāti paramām gatim*.

All this may look very terrific, almost impractical for people living in this humdrum world of activity and business. “Is this yoga meant for me?” The great Teacher says: “Do not be afraid; I am very easy of approach. I am not a difficult person, as you may imagine Me.” *Ananya-cetāḥ satatam yo mām smarati nityaśaḥ, tasyāham sulabhaḥ pārtha nitya-yuktasya yoginah*. “I am easy of attainment by those who are united with Me, who want Me and want nothing else.” The great qualification that is expected of a devotee or a yogi is the asking for God, and not learning or study of scriptures. We need not hold a degree or be an academic master in theoretical philosophies—no qualification is necessary on the path of God. Even rustics, unknown persons who never went to school or had any field of training could become vehicles of the expression of God, as the history of religion demonstrates to us. The whole soul should require God, and this requiring God is the qualification. The mind should not affiliate itself with anything other than this supreme object. This is called *ananya-cetāḥsa*—the mind not engaging itself in any other thought. There should be one thought.

This one thought is the most difficult thing for many of us, because we have never known what this one thought could be. The difficulty arises because the soul does not ask for God. The reason may be asking, in its logical manner, but the soul is beclouded by the dark longings of the senses which, when they are not fulfilled, remain like a cloud covering the light of the *atman*. We cannot concentrate on one thing, because we do not want that thing, really speaking. Our asking for God is not an asking by the mouth—a prayer that is uttered by the chanting of a song, or a linguistic prayer. It is a surging of our feelings and an impossibility to exist without God. Great saints and sages have passed through this crucial hour and difficult moment when they began to feel that even death is better than the loss of God’s consciousness, because the soul writhes and wriggles to catch That, without which it cannot even breathe. For us who have not been accustomed to this whole-souled devotion, the practice of yoga remains a kind of alien instruction.

*Ananya-cetāḥsa satatam*: Tremendous conditions are laid, though it is said that the whole

attainment is very easy. It appears, if we try to understand the meaning of this *sloka*, that the Teacher, the Master of the Gītā is telling us that He is easy of approach, provided that something is done. This provision is a very difficult one again; the whole mind has to be united—we have to be *ananya-cetāḥ*. This *ananya-cetāḥ* or the unitedness of our thoughts or feelings, the mind and the reason with the Supreme Being should be continuous and not be with remission of effort. *Satataṁ*: The whole day and night we should be thinking of That only. *Ananya-cetāḥsa satataṁ yo māṁ smarati nityaśaḥ*: Daily we should resort to this practice—continuity, daily practice in the unitedness of all our being with God. *Tasyāhaṁ sulabhaḥ pārtha nitya-yuktasya yoginah*: To such a person I am easy. *Nitya-yuktasya yoginah*: To the yogi who is united with me perpetually, I am easy of approach. *Tasyāhaṁ sulabhaḥ pārtha nitya-yuktasya yoginah*.

After attaining God, there is no rebirth. *Mām upetya punar janma duḥkhālayam aśāśvatam, nāpnuvanti mahātmānaḥ saṁsiddhim paramām gatāḥ*: Reaching all the planes of existence lower to God, there can be a reversion of the soul to those conditions where its unfulfilled desires can manifest themselves for fulfillment. When God is the sole object of desire, when desires fulfil themselves entirely at one stroke, there remains no other desire to pull the soul back to the earth or any lower plane of existence. *Punar janma*, rebirth, as I mentioned earlier, is not necessarily a rebirth in this world. It is a rebirth in any condition of being, any plane of existence anywhere in creation, any part of the cosmos—which are supposed to be infinite in number. Any state which is less than the realisation of God is a rebirth; it may be in any lower plane. But the whole process of reincarnation is rent asunder, cut at the root when the cause behind rebirth itself is plucked out from its very roots. The cause of rebirth is the sense of individuality, the isolation of oneself from God, the assertion of the ego and everything that follows from it as a consequence. The whole of *samsara*, the whole drama of life is the affirmation of the ego personality of the *jiva*, as if it is all-in-all and the master of its own self, reigning supreme in this world of mortality, in this world of desires and their fulfillment of the same. This is the sorrow of man.

But no desire can be fulfilled in this manner. The ego is futilely attempting to fulfil its desires by grabbing things in this world. The more it desires, the more are the multitudes of desires that crop up, like the *raktabeeja* we hear of in the story of Devi Mahatmaya. The more we shed the blood of that *rakshas*, the more he multiplies himself into a large army which takes up weapons in the field of battle. This *raktabeeja* in the Devi Mahatmaya is nothing but desire itself. Desire cannot be rooted out completely; its fulfilment is not its destruction. On the other hand, any kind of pampering of a desire by merely satisfying it in an externalised form intensifies it. The *samskaras* or the impression that is created in the mind at the time of the so-called satisfaction or fulfilment of a desire forms a groove in the mind, and that groove becomes a source for further impulse from within to repeat this experience, and desires continue like a chain reaction, without cessation.

Desires cease when their root is pulled out. The root is the affirmation of the ego. The ego cannot absolve itself from attachment to its own being unless it dedicates itself to God. The ego will never turn to God, because it is also an affirmation—an affirmation contrary to the All-being of God. While God is All-being, ego is individual being; that is their difference, so one does not go with the other. The dedication of the ego to God-being becomes difficult, because the ego does not accept the fact that its desires can be

fulfilled by an abolition of itself. The greatest sorrow of the ego is its feeling that its existence is going to be affected by the devotions of religion. People are afraid to turn towards God because of the feeling that they will lose things of this world. Religious devotees sometimes have a subtle suspicion at the back of their minds that the gain of God may imply a loss of things of this world. Now here we are in a difficult situation. Nobody wishes to lose anything that is worthwhile, and who can say that the world does not contain worthwhile things. The world is grandeur, and it contains riches that can entertain anyone in this world indefinitely and infinitely. The individual soul, which recognises the values of the grandeur of the world, feels that the absorption of itself in the Being of God would be not merely be a loss of things, but a loss of its own self.

It is foolish to imagine this, because gaining God is not losing all things, but gaining all things. The things of the world are reflections of reality—they are not originals. God is the origin of all things. The trees that we see, the mountains, the sun, moon, stars, you and I are all reflections. And therefore one shadow is running after another shadow, as it were; there is no reality here in this world. The originals are in a superior realm, and the highest original of all things that are reflected here in the form of perceptions and experiences is God the Absolute. So it would be stupid on the part of anyone to imagine that to move towards God would be to lose things in this world. We are losing only stupidities, unreality, shadows, reflections, imaginations and chimeras. But the mind is not tutored and educated properly in this manner, so it clings to phantoms in spite of instructions repeatedly given to it by the masters, sages and scriptures.

We have to instruct ourselves adequately into the great truth that the movement of our soul to God is our only duty in this world. We have no other duty here. All our duties—family duties, national duties, public duties and private duties—are summed up in this all-consuming duty of the movement of the soul to God. But again, the mind will not accept it. To make it accept and to make it understand is to educate it in the proper manner. The Bhagavadgītā is a great instruction, a great education provided to the soul in the matter of enlivening and illuminating it in the direction of what is truly good for us. *Mām upetya punar janma duḥkhālayam aśāśvatam, nāpnuvanti mahātmānaḥ saṁsiddhim paramām gatāḥ.* Great souls, blessed ones who have realised the truths of life, resort wholeheartedly to this fulfilment and performance of the great duty of all duties—the love of God, devotion to Ishvara and a continuous practice of meditation—whereby the whole of us is consecrated as a sacrament at the altar of God.

This world is full of sorrow, *dukhalayam*. Everyone knows what this world is made of. Whatever we touch becomes pitch and coal. We are frustrated at every step; we are defeated in our endeavours to grab the satisfactions of this world. All the fruits of life which we put into our mouth appear to turn to dust and ashes, which we realise only too late in life. In hot-blooded youth and the energy of jubilant enthusiasm when we are young, we do not realise what is going to be our fate when we grow old. All our desires become emaciated. The things of the world look insipid and tasteless. All that we run after looks ugly and meaningless when life wanes like an evening flower—its beauty goes in a minute. Therefore we are admonished again that it is a world of sorrow, *dukhyalaya*, and it is impermanent—it is not a permanent existence. To this sorrow-ridden world we will not return having attained God through this practice of the unitedness of the entire spirit with the Supreme Being of God.

## CHAPTER 14

### THE ABSOLUTE PERVADING THE UNIVERSE

A direct entry into religion proper is made in the Ninth Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā, where the concept of God assumes a concrete form. A living presence begins to be propounded, over and above the gospel of action and psychological integration which was explained in the earlier chapters, especially up to the Sixth. The rise of the consciousness of the human being to the state of perfection, by gradual stages, passes through a phenomenon known as religion, and the Ninth Chapter devotes itself to the exposition of a universal religion for humanity as a whole. The chapter begins with the words: *Rāja-vidyā rajā-guhyam pavitram idam uttamam, pratyakṣāvagamam dharmyam susukham kartum avyayam*. A royal secret, as it were, is going to be expounded. It is the kingly quintessence of knowledge, which is to be acquired by personal experience, and is not capable of acquisition merely by verbal testimony, sensory perception or logical reasoning. This wisdom, this knowledge which has to be acquired by direct contact of Being with Being, intuition or experience, is the essence of what is known as *dharma—pratyakṣāvagamam dharmyam*. The word *dharma* is now here revealed in its true colours—not as a cult, creed, law, rule, or principle of action in a human world—but a supreme system according to which the whole universe operates. The word *dharma* is interpreted in the most general manner, and comprehensive enough to absorb into its connotation everything that we regard as right, virtuous or righteous.

Now, the great Teacher of the Bhagavadgītā takes us right into the heart of the matter when He directly declares at once what this *dharma* is, on what it is rooted and what it is expected to reveal in the lives of people in the world. *Mayā tatam idam sarvam jagad avyakta-mūrtinā*. This half-verse is the rock bottom of all expressions of law and rule going by the name of *dharma*, in one way or the other. Any rule, law, or principle is a method or manner in which we accommodate ourselves into the existing order of things. This capacity of self-accommodation in respect of the existing order of things is not only obedience to law, abidance by rules, but it is equivalent to righteousness. This is what we call virtue, goodness and so on.

Conformity to reality is *dharma*, and anything opposed to it is *adharmā*. The principle of reality is what determines the nature of *dharma* or virtue, goodness or righteousness, or rectitude in action, conduct, behaviour, thought and feeling. So a person who does not have a correct idea of what reality is cannot be really virtuous or righteous. Our social forms of goodness and virtue, rectitude and legality are relative to the conditions in which we are placed, and inasmuch as they have no reference to the ultimate reality of things, we have to go on changing our colours like chameleons from day to day. But there can be harmony between the relative forms of *dharma* and the ultimate form of it. Our daily conduct may vary according to the needs of the hour. Seasons, social circumstances, the state of one's health and various other requirements of the time may demand a relative expression of conformity, all which has to be in harmony, finally, with a principle motive which cannot change.

So *dharma* or righteousness is of two types, known as *visheshā dharmā* and *samanyā dharmā*. Abidance to law, which is relative to historical, social, or political conditions is

*vishesha dharma*, and abidance to the law that is eternally operating in the whole of the cosmos is known as *samanya dharma*. While the way of living of people in different times and climes may vary according to these times and climes, there is a general regulating principle behind humanity as a whole. Though it is true that one person need not necessarily think identically like another person, there is a basic equality of human ideology and aspiration. So there is a *vishesha dharma*, or a particular requirement of the time, and there is a basic conditioning factor which is the inviolable *dharma*, or what is sometimes called *sanatana dharma*. It is operative eternally and works with impunity with everything throughout the cosmos, and it decides what sort of relative expression this law has to take under historical conditions that change from time to time.

The basic *dharma* is described in this half-verse of the Ninth Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā, which goes as: *mayā tatam idam sarvaṃ jagad avyakta-mūrtinā*. The Absolute Almighty pervades every nook and corner of the universe. Every nook and cranny is permeated by the presence of the Supreme Being. The consciousness of the presence of the Almighty inseparably in every little thing in the whole of creation is the ultimate constitutional *dharma*. It is the central constitution of the cosmos, and all local and provincial laws follow from it. Political laws, social laws, family laws, personal laws, physical laws, psychological laws, and what not—all these are expressions according to the requirement of the particular state of affairs of that eternal deciding factor which is the presence of one common Being everywhere, equally, unanimously, perpetually in everything. The presence of God is defined here as an invisible presence, an unmanifested existence—*avyakta-mūrtinā*. It is not a gross, visible, sensory presence. The presence of God is to be conceived in a manner quite different from our idea of the existence of concrete objects, like a brick wall, a pebble or a stone, or the human beings that we see in the world. Everything that is concrete is capable of isolation from other things that are concrete. The idea of substantiality or concreteness is associated with duality, disassociation, difference, etc.

Therefore it is made out that inasmuch as the Supreme Being is above every dualistic concept, inasmuch as He is present unanimously and uniformly everywhere, He has to be impervious to the ken of the senses. The senses are outer expressions in space and time in terms of objects which are hard and concrete, and therefore, to the senses, the Creator of the cosmos is invisible. It is not that He is invisible under every condition; under the conditions in which we are living today God is invisible, just as high voltage and high frequency light waves may be invisible to the condition under which our eyes operate at present. It need not mean that they are invisible under every condition, because if the frequency of our capacity to perceive through the eyes is raised up to the high level frequencies of light, the eyes may perceive and ears may hear such ultrasonic waves. So, the imperceptibility of God's Being is not a negation of the possibility of experience of God's Being. It is a description of the inadequacy of sense power in respect of God experience.

*Mat-sthāni sarva-bhūtāni na cāham teṣv avasthitaḥ* is another descriptive epithet which is added to this definition of God's invisible presence in all things. All things are rooted in God, but the wholeness of God cannot be comprehended by any finite object. That means to say, though everything is in Him, He cannot be wholly contained in anything. All things can be contained in Him, but He cannot be contained in anything exclusively,

because while the part can be contained by the whole, the whole cannot be contained by the part. So it is a futile attempt on the part of the human reason, for instance, finite faculty as it is, to imagine that it can know the secrets of the world. The scientific adventures and rational philosophies of humanity are incompetent to fathom the depths and the mysteries of the cosmos, because the wholeness of reality is not capable of being contained in the finitude of human understanding, or in anything finite, for the matter of that. There is nothing in this world that is capable of being an instrument in the knowledge of God. Hence, the world is called a relative world. There is nothing absolute here, because the Absolute is only One, while the relative parts can be many. While the entire relative world is contained in God and the relative is in the Absolute, the Absolute is not in the relative, because there is a distracted differentiation of particulars in the world of relativity; and in this distractedness of finitude, the Infinite cannot be wholly present. That is the meaning of this phrase, *na cham tesv avasthitah*.

But there is a more enigmatic declaration yet to come—*na ca mat-sthāni sarva-bhūtāni*. It also cannot be said that the world is in God, though it may be said in one way that it is in God. Inasmuch as an effect has to have a cause, and the world reveals the characteristics of an effect, it has to be based on a cause that is wider than itself, vaster than its expanse, and we posit the existence of a Creator as the cause of this world, this universe. So in this sense we may say that the world is rooted in God—*mat-sthāni sarva-bhūtāni*. But the omnipresence of God excludes the possibility of anything getting rooted in Him, because to imagine the rootedness of one thing in another is to assume the difference of one thing from another, an indirect refutation of the omnipresence of the Supreme Being. Nothing external to God exists, He being the all-comprehensive Infinite, and That, external to which nothing is and nothing can be, cannot be regarded as a cause of an effect which has to be rooted in it as if it is an outside something. So immediately the Teacher of the Gītā assumes a role which is quite different from the one in which He declared that the whole world is rooted in God.

Look at the mystery and majesty of God—*paśya me yogam aiśvaram*—behold the grandeur of the Absolute. We will be stunned even to think of it. The hair will stand on end, the mind will get stupefied, the senses will get blinded, the speech will get hushed and the whole personality will melt even at the thought of this majesty of the supreme Absolute, wherein nothing can be found that is in this world, while everything here is also to be present in the Supreme Being. Everything is there and nothing is there. The sense in which everything is there and the sense in which nothing can be there has also been explained. “Where something is seen outside, something is heard outside and something is understood outside, that state of affairs is to be regarded as finite,” says the great Teacher Santakumara in the Chhandogya Upanishad. The Infinite is described in a different manner: It is that state where nothing is seen outside, nothing is heard outside and nothing is understood outside. “On what is It rooted?” Narada puts this question to the great Teacher, because we are accustomed to think in terms of rootedness of something in something else. “What is the basis for everything?” he asks, because we cannot think except in terms of basis, the relatedness of the effect to the cause. Everything has to be connected to something else, so Narada asks, “On what is this Absolute rooted?” The great Teacher laughs, “You always think of connecting one thing with another thing. A person may be located in some thing, in some status, in some position. But here, on which everything is based, which is the position of everything else,

how can you conceive of a position in respect of It? It is It's own basis. It is neither a cause nor an effect of anything. It is not an effect, because It is not anything finite. It is not a cause, because It does not undergo any modification." Causeless and effectless, superb is that Being—*pasya me yogam aisvaram*. Look at this great yoga of God!

But human beings are frail in their understanding. *Avajānanti mām mūḍhā māmuṣīm tanum āśritam, param bhāvam ajānanto mama bhūta-maheśvaram*. Our God is a human God. Human beings worship a God who looks like a human being, and even when we conceive of God as an all-comprehensive universal Creator, we only magnify His human personality. The anthropomorphic idea does not leave us, because human thought cannot become a superhuman faculty. To regard God as a human being is to apply a derogatory epithet to the supremacy of His infinitude. *Avajānanti mām*—"Insult Me," as it were. "People talk to Me as if I am a human being, not knowing the transcendent infinitude of Mine"—*param bhāvam ajānanto*. So what is available to this finitude of human intellect under the circumstances of this inaccessibility of the infinitude? A humble surrender of oneself—*mahātmanās tu mām pārtha daivīm prakṛitim āśritāḥ, bhajanty ananya-manaso*. The mind, ever united with That, knowing that God is the source of all beings—*jñātvā bhutādim avyayam*—great souls resort to Him only as the ultimate refuge.

We have small refuges everywhere. We have a bank which is our refuge or an office as a refuge, a little land and a house and social relationships—these are all refuges in times of difficulty. But they cannot be called ultimate refuges; they can desert us one day or the other. The props that the world provides to us are unreliable in the end. They cannot be trusted fully; everyone knows this. But there is a refuge which can be trusted wholly. There is a friend who will follow us ever and ever. The great souls resort to this ultimate refuge which will take care of them under any circumstance—*satatam kīrtayanto mām yatantaś ca dṛḍha-vratāḥ, namasyantaś ca mām bhaktyā nitya-yuktā upāsate*. They become restless without the company of God. They feel homeless and homesick on account of their dissociation from God's Being. They are like children who have lost their parents. They are agonised in their hearts and are crying for union with That which they have lost, worshipping Him in various ways.

Here is a psychic knot, in a verse which the Bhagavadgītā gives us, revealing the universality of its approach in the matter of religion. *Jñāna-yajñena cāpy anye yajanto mām upāsate, ekatvena pṛthaktvena bahudhā viśvato-mukham*: By the sacrifice of knowledge people worship God in three ways—as the One, as the all-inclusive, and as the variegated. These central points, mentioned in three words here, perhaps become the seed of what later on develops as the schools of philosophy known as Advaita, Vasishthadvaita and Dvaita - the school that emphasises unity, the school that emphasises all-inclusiveness of variety, and that which emphasises variety alone. We can approach God in any manner, and at any point in the world, in any form and in any attitude, provided that this attitude or approach is exclusive and fully dedicated to the cause.

We live in a sense world, in an intellectual world and also in a spiritual world. We are sensory beings, rational beings and spiritual beings - all things put together. When the sense world is sitting hard on our face as a phenomenon of diversity and differentiated objects, we are likely to admire God as that which is present behind this variety, and worship symbols, isolated forms as channels for our entry into That which is behind

these forms. This is the significance of the worship of symbols, forms, idols, images, etc. Even our concept is only a symbol—an idol or a symbol is not necessarily physical and visible to the eyes. A concept in the mind is also an idol, because it has a form and a shape and is localised. But this localisation, this channelisation and this idealisation are intended to take the mind above itself to That which is transcendent and lies behind it as the principle conditioning it. So these schools of thought, whether it is Advaita, Vasishthadvaita or Dvaita are not self-contradictory—they are complementary, one to the other. One emphasises one aspect; another, another aspect. God manifests Himself as this variety of things—it is true. It is also true that this variety is interrelated in a universal completeness and it is not just a distracted variety. It is an organic completeness, ultimately.

But it is also true that there is no such a thing as relatedness in the Absolute. It is one indivisible mass of being. So the great Teachers are all correct. They emphasise various layers and stages of experience or realisation, and the Bhagavadgītā endorses as correct these approaches as the One, as the interrelated, and the diversified. Further on we will be told, in this very chapter, that every conceivable thing in the world is a direct manifestation of God-Being, whether it is visible to the eyes, tangible to the senses or merely conceivable by the mind.

## CHAPTER 15

### THE RAREST OF DEVOTEES

The Ninth Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā gives us an idea of the universal religion, an approach to the God of all gods, standing above all human concepts of even religious ideals, and yet accessible to everything that is manifest in any form whatsoever. The Supreme Being is all things. *Ahaṁ kratur ahaṁ yajñaḥ svadhāham aham auśadham, mantro'ham aham evājyāham aham agnir ahaṁ hutam. Pitāham asya jagato mātā dhātā pitāmahaḥ, vedyāṁ pavitram omkāra ṛksāma yajur eva ca. Gatir bhartā prabhuḥ sākṣī nivāsaḥ śaraṇaṁ suhṛt, prabhavaḥ pralayaḥ sthānaṁ nidhānaṁ bījam avyayam. Tapāmy ahaṁ ahaṁ varṣaṁ nigrhṇāmy utsṛijāmi ca, amṛtaṁ caiva mṛtyuś ca sad asac cāham arjuna.* God is all things—this is the sum and substance of these immortal passages in the Bhagavadgītā.

There is nothing that is not included in the Being of God. Conceivable or inconceivable, manifest or unmanifest, subtle or gross, holy or unholy, transcendent or immanent, imperishable or perishable, immortality or death—everything is within this tremendous completeness of God the Absolute, the Almighty. *Amṛtaṁ caiva mṛtyuś ca sad asac cāham arjuna:* Even existence and non-existence are comprehended within God. The supremacy of the divine ideal is described in the magnificent, poetic images of these verses. It is hard for the human mind to understand how death, non-existence, negativity, darkness and the powers that we usually consider as belonging to the phenomenal world can be attributed to the Absolute. What we call non-existence is also comprehended there. What we call ugly, unholy and impure—even that is comprehended within the great love that God-being itself is. The great un-understandable mercy, compassion and love which are imbedded in the existence of God takes within its fold even that what we reject as undivine and unholy.

Anything that is conceivable must exist, and therefore to think of the non-existent is an anomaly and a misnomer. There is no such a thing as non-existence, because the moment we think it, it becomes existent. Therefore the so-called 'non-existent' is also included in this existence. The impure, ugly and what is usually considered as undesirable are not so in the eyes of God, because a relative judgment of things and a comparison and contrast of values is impossible in the all-inclusiveness of the indivisibility of Being. The standards of reference with which we judge things, considering one or the other as of this character or the other, are themselves relative, and that which is relative cannot pass an absolute judgment. Hence, our judgments are relative, and thus our ideas of even non-existence, ugliness and the like are not to be regarded as complete in themselves.

Having been given an outline of the idea of what God could be in His supra-essential, quintessential Being, we are admonished as to the path that leads to God. Usually the religious practicante worships and offers prayers with an ulterior motive. The religious enthusiasts look for the delights of heaven and an everlasting existence as happy individuals, for which sake they perform virtuous deeds in this world, accumulate *punya*, merit and the effect of righteousness. But all these meritorious acts—in fact every result that accrues to every act—have an end, and they have to go one day or the other, because nothing that we do in this relative world can touch the non-relative

Absolute. The planes of existence that are above this mortal earth may be the regions of higher satisfaction and enjoyment by the denizens of that region, but all planes of existence are relative to one another. The seven planes above the earth plane mentioned in the Epics and the Puranas, reaching up even to the seventh plane known as *satya-loka*—all these are comprehended within the fold of creation. Even if we reach the highest plane, we may have to revert to the place from which we rose to it, because of the exhaustion of the momentum of the meritorious deeds that were performed for the sake of reaching those celestial delights.

Every finite cause produces a finite result. An infinite result cannot follow from a finite aspiration or action. Everything that we do in this world is infected with finitude and limitation of various types, and hence nothing that we do can produce an infinite result. Thus, infinite realisation or the experience of the Absolute is impossible through any performance of a relative character. *Trai-vidyā mām soma-pāḥ pūta-pāpā*: Those people who worship the deities mentioned in the Vedas, for instance, go to heaven and drink nectar, the ambrosia of the immortals. But—*kṣīṇe puṇye martya-lokaṁ viśanti*—as a person who has exhausted his bank balance becomes a pauper, and he cannot be a rich man forever, so one cannot remain in the regions of heaven perpetually. When the results are exhausted, there is a reversal of values. Therefore religion, in the true sense of the term, is defined in a different manner altogether. In the verse that follows—*ananyāś cintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate, teṣāṁ nityābhiyuktānām yoga-kṣemam vahāmy aham*—God, in His infinitude, protects the devotee when devotion becomes an undivided awareness of the glorious Being of God. To regard God as an object of the senses, to consider Him as an extra-cosmic Creator, to imagine any kind of distance, spatial or even temporal, between ourselves and Him would not be undivided devotion.

The undividedness or *ananyāś* that is mentioned in the verse is the absorption of the consciousness of the devotee, a total saturation of the devout spirit in the magnitude and the immensity of God's existence. The prayer that is offered to God and the worship that is performed here is not intended to receive any boons or benefactions from God. This is *parabkakti* or the supreme form of devotion to God, where offers of any kind, religiously or spiritually, do not become a means to an end. The prayer becomes an awareness rising within oneself of the presence of God everywhere. It is an offer of prayer by the lower self to the higher Self. It is a rise of the lower to the higher and not merely a movement of the individual finite to the so-called imagined distant Infinite. This particular verse is one single magnificent teaching. This particular *sloka*—*ananyāś cintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate, teṣāṁ nityābhiyuktānām yoga-kṣemam vahāmy aham*—may be regarded as the pinnacle of all scriptures on the path of devotion to God. As a child has no fears of any kind as long as it is under the protection of the parents, so the devotee of God has no fear from anywhere. There is no insecurity or dissatisfaction of any kind. There is a perpetual sense of protection coming from all sides due to the undivided consciousness of the presence of God.

How the grace of God works instantaneously in the case of such devotees, how God takes action in a timeless manner is dramatically displayed and demonstrated in the experiences of the great saints and sages of yore. These sages could speak to God more intimately than we speak with one another. Even the so-called inanimate idols could wake up into consciousness and speak to them due to the intensity of their feeling of the presence of God. If we study, with concentration of mind, the lives of such faiths as

those who lived sometime back in Maharashtra, for instance, around the holy place of Pandarpur, the Shaivite saints known as the Nyanars and the Vaishnava saints known as the Alvares, we would simply be wonderstruck as to the sincerity of those saints in their devotion to God and the unimaginable miracles that God automatically worked around them, even without their knowing what was happening. These devotees never asked anything from God. As a matter of fact, one who asks anything from God is a merchant of devotion—he sells his devotion for merchandise of divine grace. The highest devotee seeks nothing temporal, material or visible from the Almighty, because what can be greater than the Almighty? Do we imagine that what He gives is greater than He Himself? The One who gives is greater than what is given, and hence wisdom-charged devotees ask nothing from God but seek God only.

That seeking of God as the ultimate goal of love, devotion and aspiration is the *ananya bhakti* that is mentioned in this verse of the Bhagavadgītā. And in the case of those devotees, who are rare to find in this world, it is God's responsibility to take care of them. The Yoga Vasishtha says that as the solar system is taken care of by powers that are not human, as the planets move in their orbits systematically by the ordinance of a force which is not man made, as the universe is maintaining its balance by a power we cannot think of in our mind, that power shall take care of us also. Why not? If the whole solar system can be sustained in mathematical precision and utter perfection, unthinkable to the human mind, how is it that that power cannot take care of a human being? It shall, and it always does. So the great promise that is divinely bestowed upon us here, in this majestic utterance, is that not only shall we be provided with everything that we need at any moment of time, but such is the grace and kindness of God that He shall also take care of those things with which He has provided us.

Can you imagine a greater loving parent than this mighty Being? He gives you what you need and also sees that it is taken care of on your behalf. Such a friend you cannot see in this world, and therefore you cannot have a friend of that type anywhere. There is only one friend who loves you—not because there is any reciprocal affection expected of you—but because there is an inseparable relationship between you and Him. This devotion is usually unimaginable, unthinkable, and not possible for the minds of human beings which are encrusted with material desires and infected with values that are wholly temporal. Those who love God as the All Being and as the Only Being are themselves rays of God. Their very presence is the presence of God. Their very existence is activity, their very thought is a universal service that they are rendering. Such great heroes are the blessedness of the earth. Their presence cannot be easily recognised, because of their unassuming character. They speak not much and ask not anything from anyone. They are the humblest of people, the last ones that could be recognised as of any importance whatsoever. The least of people, as they appear, are the greatest in the eyes of God. Several births one has to take even to attain this love that can encompass within its fold the Almighty God and nothing else.

Yet the great Teacher of the Bhagavadgītā tells us that the others of a lesser category, who cannot come up to this level of the supreme devotion of self-identity with the Absolute, are also practicing religion in their own manner. *Ye'py anya-devatā-bhaktā yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ*: They also worship God in one way or the other. Because of the faith that they have, they can be regarded as worshippers of God. They worship, not according to the rule of ideal devotion, but deviating from this rule, they meander in

various abysmal regions due to the desires that they have not fulfilled. They are finally seeking God. The images that people worship and idols that they adore in the various religions of the world are temporarily taken as God Ultimate, and the wholeheartedness of divine devotion by these temporal idealists to the gods that are worshipped will justify that devotion. It takes a long time to reach the Supreme God on account of the error that is involved in their devotion, the error being that they consider their god as one among the many and distant or away from them. Hence this universal religion of the Bhagavadgītā includes all faiths, whether they are of a lower degree or a higher degree, and each one is rewarded according to the nearness that characterises that particular devotion in respect of the presence of God. The nearer one's consciousness is to the all-pervading God, the greater is the value of that religion. The more distant we feel God is in the worship of the religion, the lower is that category of this religion.

The absoluteness or supremacy of God is again asserted, in spite of this concession that is made towards lower categories of religions, when it is said that even the least of offerings can satisfy God. God does not ask of us rich presents, gorgeous articles or decorated things. Anything that we offer as a symbol or insignia of our inward feeling is enough to satisfy. What satisfies you is my attitude towards you, and not what I physically or materially hand over to you—that cannot be regarded as a correct demonstration of my feelings. The feelings of people are capable of speaking in a louder language than the words that are uttered through the mouth. Many a time people may be under the impression that they can hide their feelings, and with the veneer of language they can live an apparently social existence in a cooperative manner. But feelings are recorded in realms that are subtler than the physical one, and they shall come to the surface of experience one day or the other. The feelings that one entertains in one's own heart are the real language that one speaks. The language is not necessarily the words that are uttered. The mind is the speaker, and the words are only outer expressions or forms that the thoughts or the feelings of the mind take. If the feelings are there, the words may not be there, yet the feelings shall work when words are uttered. The gestures are performed as visible expressions of the inner attitude that one has towards anything.

God is omniscient and sees all things with millions of eyes. God looks to the feelings rather than the words that are uttered, the prayers that the lips offer and the materials that are placed before the symbol of God as the sacrament, the *prasād* or the gifts. There is nothing material that we can offer to God, because nothing really belongs to us, and what does not belong to us cannot be offered as a gift. And so our offerings to God are a misnomer again, and they have a value only in the sense that they are the expressions of our feelings. As we offer a light or wave a lamp before the brilliance of the sun though the sun is not in need of a candle or an *arti*, and one does not have to perform ablutions with water to the ocean, likewise there is no need of any kind of offering to the Almighty. Yet our feelings shall be recognised. Even a leaf that is offered, even a drop of water that is sanctified in the name of God shall satisfy Him, because it is offered with love. *Tad ahaṁ bhakty-upahṛtam aśnāmi prayātātmanāḥ*. What satisfies reality is reality alone; the unreal cannot satisfy the real, and the greatest reality is God's existence and God's Being. Any kind of counterfeit attitude, whether it is religious or otherwise, cannot touch the reality of the Supreme Being. Hence, the diplomatic adjustments that we make in human society cannot be transferred to the realm of the Absolute, and diplomacy will

not work there. There is a heart-to-Heart communion—the heart speaks to the Heart of the universe. The soul communes with the Soul, and that which is the deepest in us enters into the bosom of That which is deepest in the whole cosmos. This is the consummation of religion. That is why what is interior is respected and regarded as of greater value than anything that is exterior. The deeper we go, the more real we become, and the more valuable is the expression. Hence, feelings are considered to be the greatest expression of devotion. Thus it is that God is considered to be a recogniser of feelings rather than of material offerings.

There is a great ethical point that is made out in this wondrous universal religion of the Bhagavadgītā. There is no sinner in the eye of God. The idea of sin does not occur. The sin that we think of does not exist in the brilliant light of God-perfection. What we call a 'sin' is a dereliction, a deviation, a movement away from the centre. It is a tentative or a temporary mistake that the soul commits on account of its inability to visualise the present state of affairs with the great goal towards which it is moving. It is a blindness of vision that causes the commission of errors which, when they are related to the set-up of all things in the cosmos are called sins, and when they are committed with respect to mere human society are called crimes. But they are all stages that shall be passed, transcended one day or the other. No one can be a criminal or sinner for all time to come.

There are stages and stages of education. There are faltering steps that each one takes. We tumble down and fall into the pit many a time, only to wake up into the awareness that there is a pit and it has to be avoided. In the eyes of the all-seeing God, error is completely obviated, and the soul that commits a sin or error is taken into the fold of God one day or the other, because what God expects of anyone is a longing for Him. This longing may be expressed in many ways. The history of religion is a standing example of the variety that is there in the manner that devotees express their devotion. Many a time a most sincere form of devotion may look very odious in the eyes of polished or aristocratic human society. There were butchers, hunters, carpenters, shoemakers and farmers who knew not the elegancies of modern intelligentsia, but they were more sincere and more devoted to the great Creator than aristocrats.

There is a very touching scene described in the life of a great saint called Kannappam, whose devotion would stun you simply at the crudity in which it was expressed. But the sincerity and the genuineness of it was such that it excelled any other form of conceivable devotion. Usually it is not easy for ordinary human beings to imagine what sincere devotion to God is. We are accustomed to rituals, formalities and outward expressions standing in collaboration with human etiquette, etc. But devotion goes above etiquette and even ordinary social morality, all which was defied completely by the great devotees, to the confounding horror and fear of the society in which they lived. These devotees had to pass through various trials and tribulations. Many a time they were subjected to undeserved pains on account of the incompatibility of the state or stage in which they were in their divine devotion and the prosaic form of ethics which human society respected at those times. Often the saint or the sage suffers on account of the kind of society in which he is placed. The incompatibility is there; we can read about the lives of those great saints and sages who had to bear witness to the devotion that they had to the Supreme God and also to the ordeals of human society.

Such devotion is rare to find, because rarely does the soul express itself. What expressions we demonstrate outside in the form of religion are mostly social in character, and they are conditioned by the formalities of human society. Unconditioned devotion, transcending all limitations, social or otherwise, is rare to find, but it is a state through which everyone has to pass. That supreme form of devotion is called *parabhakti*, where one dances in the ecstasy of God-vision, wherein placed one recognises the magnificence and the beauty of the Eternal in the ugliness of the temporal. Sin and error, whatever be their magnitude, even if they are like mountains in their size, shall be destroyed by the fire of divine devotion. Errors, mistakes and sins that have been committed in past ages or births through which one has passed, innumerable though they may be, will be destroyed like heaps of straw that can be set fire to by the striking of a matchstick. When we wake up into the consciousness of the reality of the world, all the tribulations of the dream world are cancelled at one stroke—so are the values of this world. All rules and regulations, whatever be their nature, get cancelled at the touch of the light of the day of divine consciousness, even as all values of dream get cancelled at one stroke by a mere waking into the consciousness of the world in which we are today.

So there is a transfiguration of values when the soul rises to God-consciousness, and the mortal does not remain mortal anymore. The immortality that is attained is not a length and duration of individual persistence, but an expansion of the soul's consciousness to the infinitude of God's Being. We say sometimes that the river enters the ocean—well, the ocean has become conscious of itself, as it were. Such a magnitude of attainment is unthinkable. "Whoever wholeheartedly concentrates his entire being upon Me, such a person is redeemed by Me," says the great Master.

What we are expected to perform or do in our religion or spirituality is to put together of all the parts of our personality and offer it to God. This is called self-surrender—*atma samarpana* or *saranagati*. Instead of offering a banana or a coconut, one offers oneself to God, because that is the last thing that one would offer. We are prepared to part with what we have, but we cannot part with our own selves, because the dearest thing is not what we possess—the dearest thing is our own self. That we cannot part with, even in the case of God. The ego is never prepared for this painful ordeal, but one realises that dying to the temporal existence is to live in the eternal Being. One knows for certain that *sharanagati* or self surrender, the offering of one's self in *jnana yagna* or *bhakti* or devotion, is no doubt a total annihilation of the local individuality. It is the death of the ego and destruction of everything that we regard as worthwhile in this world. It is terrifying indeed even to imagine, but it is an awakening into the cosmic emperorship of the soul of man—the enthronement of oneself in the supreme infinitude of the Godhead.

So the religion of the Bhagavadgītā, which is concisely presented in the Ninth Chapter, is not a religion that we usually see practiced in this world, but a soul speaking to God, a rousing of the spirit within to the all-comprehensive reality that is present in all religious faiths, cults and creeds, and which far transcends the concepts of God held as supreme by the various religions of the world. The temporal religions of mankind are transmuted into this eternal religion of the Absolute. Here, no distinctions of any kind can count as worthwhile. There is a complete permeation of the universal meaning of religion into the several particularities of forms of worship, prayer, etc. Hence, when the Great Being speaks this immortal gospel of the Bhagavadgītā, He gives us a message of

religion which is consistent with the rule of the universe, the structure of the cosmos and the essential Being of God Himself.

## CHAPTER 16

### THE ESSENCE OF CREATION IS GOD'S GLORY

The creation of the world was referred to in the Seventh Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā, indicating that the whole process of evolution is motivated by the will of God. By creation we have generally an idea of substances, things or objects, persons, etc. Tangible things, visible objects and cognisable contents are usually considered by us as contents in creation. But creation is something vaster and more pervasive than can be comprehended by the tangibility of the sense organs. As the teachings of the Gītā move forward through the ascending chapters, we are taken further on to the greater subtlety involved in the structure of creation to culminate in the most subtle of all concepts—the Being of God Himself. We commenced with the grossest concept, namely, human society, to recapitulate the entire ground that we have traversed throughout the period of our study. When we think of life, we always think of human society, as frogs think only of frogs, as the old adage goes. To think of the cosmos of the five elements is a larger concept, and it requires a greater stretch of imagination than is available to the common man. For him life is only human beings, or perhaps only a family—that is all the life that he can conceive of. When a person refers to life, he refers to his family, and nothing else can be comprehended within the idea of life. Life is miserable; when we speak like this, we mean our family is miserable. Or if we are more sophisticated intelligentsia, we mean humanity is miserable—mankind is in a tragic situation. This is all the view of creation we have with our present stage of understanding.

Further on in the Gītā, we were taken to the more psychological implications, which require a more impersonal outlook than the merely family outlook or even the so-called humanitarian outlook. The psychological outlook is superior to the merely human outlook, and from the Second Chapter onwards we were concerned with the individual propelling constituents that make up what we call the grosser forms of human society. Human beings are psychic entities. They are minds, essentially, and not bodies. They are not fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, as they appear to be, but they are eddies in a psychic ocean. So the springs of action in human society are in the minds of people, and not outwardly in the political governments or in the communities through which people pass and in which they appear to live. Our ideas have to be gradually rarified as we move on further through the ethereal teachings in the chapters of the Bhagavadgītā.

So to come to the point, when we reached the Seventh Chapter, we were taken to a larger concept of creation, above the level of human society and even the individual psyche, namely the cosmos of five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether. Mostly, people cannot imagine these things. Who thinks of five elements every day? We think only of a little bread and jam, and a cup of tea and a little skirmish and a rubbing of shoulders that we have in our little day-to-day life. These are all the little bits of creation that we can have in our minds. But this wondrous expanse of cosmic elements, which stumps the imagination of even the astronomer and the physicist, is beyond the imagination of ordinary human beings. Such was the idea of creation given to us at the beginning of the Seventh Chapter, which implied that there is a Creator transcendent to the created universe, who is the regulator and the dispenser of justice. The destinies of people are

controlled by the will of this Supreme Being, whose will is creation. The whole process of transmigration, the life after death of the individual, is a progression towards contact with God, whether it is consciously regarded as a movement towards this supreme end or it is merely an unconscious bungling and groping in the darkness, as is the case with many of the ignorant souls, due to which they return to lower births or to the same kind of birth from which they rose up, etc.

The idea of God becomes more and more emphasised as the chapters move forward, while in the earlier chapters it was kept aside for later consideration. The higher concepts come later for contemplation—the lower and gross ones come before. When we reach the Ninth Chapter, we are brought almost to the point where we can breathe the breath of the presence of God in all creation. The winds of the ocean of Being begin to blow directly on our face, and we are stumbling almost unconsciously on that stupendous aegis of God's Being. The visualisation has not yet taken place—even an inkling of it seems to be very far away. The mind is kept in tenterhooks; it appears to be catching it but the idea is receding further, as the horizon moves further away as we try to approach it by going in that direction. There appears to be a confidence in the soul of the seeking spirit that God is immanent and capable of approach. But this capability of approach to the Being of God still remains as the ability to catch the horizon—appearing to be there but yet not possible of real contact. There is a spiritual anguish that grows deeper and deeper as the seeker goes higher and higher, and the agony grows more and more incapable of tolerance. The spiritual suffering in a way can be said to be more agonising than the sufferings of the mortal body. The soul's anguish is incapable of experience and explanation. Only one who has trodden the path can know what it is to have spiritual anguish inside. It is not merely the anguish of a suffering hungry stomach or an aching body—but of an aching soul. That is the condition of Arjuna when he rises into a question as to what this miracle could be, and whether is it possible at all for a person of his character to have a comprehension of this mystery.

Now the creation of God is explained in greater detail, with further emphasis, in the Tenth Chapter. Not merely do objects and things, persons and visibles constitute what we call creation, but even the relations that exist between things or subsist among objects are the creation of God. Not merely the things, but even the ideas and the thoughts of people are also part of the creation of God. *Buddhir jñānam asaṁmohaḥ kṣamā satyaṁ damaḥ śamaḥ, sukhaṁ duḥkhaṁ bhavo'bāhvo bhayaṁ cābhayaṁ eva ca. Ahimsā samatā tuṣṭis tapo dānaṁ yaśo'yaśaḥ, bhavanti bhāvā bhūtānām matta eva pṛthag-vidhāḥ.* Unthinkable are these attributes. Good and bad, right and wrong, beautiful and ugly—everything proceeds from God.

Our idea of creation is not like this, generally speaking. We have our own queer notions of the perfection of God's creation. Every blessed thing—every Tom, Dick and Harry—cannot be included in this omnibus of God's creation; that would be a pell-mell idea. We have a system of scientific thinking that acquiesces only to the acceptance of certain particulars which are regarded as necessary to form a perfection we regard as creation. But perfection is not necessarily what we regard as perfect. Our idea of perfection is that which agrees with the present pattern of our mind's thinking. Whatever we regard as good is that which has some relevance to the requirements of the human mind. If there is no relevance to the aegis of mental requirements of the present set-up of human thinking, then it cannot be regarded as good. Therefore the ethical good or even the

metaphysical good, for the matter of that, is a conditional good, and so we expect creation to be of a particular character in order that it may be the creation of God. We do not believe that God creates evil, for instance, but we accept that evil exists. So we have a peculiar dichotomy or duality of philosophical concept in our acceptance of the principle of creation. If evil exists, it must be created by somebody, and if it is not God's creation, it must be our creation, and we are not prepared to say that it is ours.

Then whose creation is it? We cannot say that it is not there; we cannot say it is there—so we jumble up ideas. The difficulty arises because we have a conditional idea of relevance and meaningfulness in things. Whatever is pleasant is regarded as good, and even our idea of evil is a prejudiced idea. It is not really an acceptable notion, because we are phenomenal beings, which means to say we are limited to the present set-up of space-time relations. And there is relevance, as I mentioned, to the present framework of space-time relation. When anything fits into this framework, we regard it as necessary and acceptable. But when it does not fit in, somehow or other, to the present set-up of space-time relations—which implies the fitting into our personal individual existence and also society—we regard it as bad, ugly, undesirable, hellish and evil. But the cosmos is a blend of positive and negative forces, whether we like it or not. Our likes are not the criterion for the perfection that creation has to be.

So in this characterisation of the definition of the various principles that go to constitute creation in these verses that I mentioned—*buddhir jñānam asarṁmohaḥ*, etc.—every blessed thing is mentioned as having a concern with the wholeness of creation. *Etāṁ vibhūtiṁ yogarṁ ca mama yo vetti tattvataḥ, so'vikampa yogena yujyate nātra sarṁśayaḥ*. Only if we are prepared to accept the compatibility of anything and everything into the framework of the totality of creation can our mind be prepared to establish itself in this unshakable yoga, which is called *avikampa* yoga in this verse. Otherwise we will be established in a shakable yoga, not in an unshakable yoga. We are all shakable yogis, because at any moment we can be blown off by a little logic of somebody else. If another person argues with a more forceful logic, it is enough to pound our entire load of knowledge and we run away. The unshakability of the intellect implies the establishment of the whole understanding in a complete acceptance of every aspect of creation. This is possible only when we are able to fit in properly all the conceivable aspects into the framework of completeness. The whole of creation is to be regarded as an orderly arrangement of values.

First of all, as I have mentioned, creation does not consist merely of human beings. This is an idea that we have to give up, gradually. Secondly, it does not consist even of things, objects, substances or even the five elements—it consists of relations. The whole universe is nothing but a set-up of relations, and not of things or objects. There is an interconnectedness of values, so that we may say that the world is a value, finally, and not even a scientific relation. It is not a world of human beings; it is not a world of things, objects and physical elements; not even a world of conceivable physical scientific relationships, but of values. Truth, goodness and beauty are regarded as values these days, but these are all, again, conditional values. They become more and more rarified and ethereal as we go further and further, so that we cannot say what this world is made of finally. It is not made up of anything that we can imagine in our minds.

Here is the masterstroke that the Bhagavadgītā deals when it moves on to the delineation of the glories of God as constituting the essence of creation, which is the subject of the Tenth Chapter. The world consists of the glories of God, and not of physical objects or friends and enemies, etc. As the ocean consists of waves of water, large and small, swirls and eddies, currents and circles, etc., various manifestations of God, in various degrees of intensity, constitute this creation. We are nearing a dangerous border where we shall not be able to breathe satisfactorily because of it becoming necessary for us to accept that creation does not exist at all. Creation is not there, and there seems to be something quite different in the place of that which we regarded as creation, as a world of friends and foes, as a universe of values, of things and relations, pleasurable or otherwise. We will be stunned to be told further on that the magnificent glories of God are the substances of this creation.

The soul of this universe is God—*aham ātmā gudākeśa sarva-bhūtaśaya-sthitaḥ*—the essence of things is God Himself. The substance of things is not atoms and electrons, as scientists tell us, but it is God's glory that is the essence of all things. Electric energy is not the constituent of the universe. Quantum particles or waves of light are not the essence of creation. Space-time coordination and the continuum of energy are not the essence of creation. The spiritual flood of God's Being, manifest in various degrees of intensity as *avatara vibhuti*, is the essence of creation. God Himself is creation, and therefore God has not created the world—He has appeared as this world. This is what we are gradually going to be told, to our consternation. *Aham atma*: "I am the Soul of all beings," says the great Teacher of the Bhagavadgītā. We know what the 'soul' means. The soul is anything and everything that is of meaning in anything. Minus the soul of a thing, the thing does not exist at all. Divest anything of its essence and we are freeing it from its soul, which means to say that we are freeing it from the very existence of it. The very existence of anything is called the 'soul' of that thing, and so when it is said that God is the soul of all things, it means that the very existence of everything is God, and minus God everything is a zero. There is a nihility, a complete vacuum before us, when God is freed from the essence of creation.

There is no world outside God, and therefore the world does not exist outside Him. But this is a difficult concept, so we are given a more particular description which the mind is in a position to understand more conveniently than when it is presented with this stupendous reality of God being the sum and substance, the very existence of all things. We are told that He is the creator, preserver and destroyer—*aham ādiś ca madhyam ca bhūtānām anta eva ca*. So we are a little bit solaced; we are coming down to a lesser definition and a more acceptable description of creation when we are told that God is the creator, the preserver and the transformer of things than when we are told that He is the very existence of everything. In the beginning it is said that God is the soul, the sum and substance, the essence, the being, and the all-in-all of everything—that is the *atmatva* of all things. It is at the same time told that He is the originator, the propeller, the sustainer and the dissolver of all things. Even this is a difficult thing for us to imagine. What this creation is, what this sustenance is and what this dissolution is, in a cosmic sense—our puny brains cannot contain these thoughts.

So we are told particular glories—*ādityānām aham viṣṇur*, etc. All that is of supreme excellence in this world should be regarded as a ray of God. The whole of the Tenth Chapter is a description of this particular glory. Wherever there is an exuberance of

manifestation, whatever be the kind of that manifestation—it may be any cataclysm or even a flood—even that is to be regarded as a superb *vibhuti* of God. This excellence or superiority of manifestation need not necessarily be a beautiful and picturesque scenery before us. Any kind of catastrophic excellence, which can be acceptable or terrifying—either way it should be regarded as God’s manifestation. We will be told also that He is the destroyer of all things. *Kalo’smi loka-kśaya-kṛt pravṛddho*: “I am the world swallowing time.” We will not be prepared to accept this kind of definition of God so easily. “I have come to doom everything and swallow all of you up.” If someone says that, we cannot regard him as God—we will think he is something terrific and most portending.

The excellences of God are gradually described in their varieties of excellence. The most beautiful things, most powerful things, most valourous things, most heroic acts, and anything that surpasses in knowledge and power the comprehensibility of the human mind usually has been regarded as God’s *vibhuti*. While it is true that the glory of God is present in every little thing, and there is nothing where His presence is not felt in some manner or the other, for our satisfaction it is said that that which excels our knowledge and power should be regarded by us as the glories of God for our adoration, worship and regard. We are wonderstruck many a time by occurrences in the world. We are stupefied and taken by consternation; we are flabbergasted. The wonder of creation is not exhausted merely by the rise of the sun or the moon, the existence of the solar system and the creation of the world through nebular dust, etc. It exists even in little things in the day-to-day existence of our own small lives.

If we are cautious enough to probe into the small occurrences of our daily lives, we will find small miracles taking place every day. Little births of divine miracles will be visible in the bubbles of our daily activities. But we are too stupid to have even time to think of these things. We are busybodies to the utmost extent, on account of which the miracles of God present in the daily lives of ordinary people are not usually recognised. Every little event in the world is a miracle by itself. Even that we are able to stand on our two legs should be regarded as a miracle, that we are breathing is a miracle, that our heart is pumping blood is a miracle. Who can say that there can be a greater miracle than the working of the human body, for instance? Why go further than that? Let us confine ourselves merely to this very obvious phenomenon called the human mechanism, the anatomic and the physiological systems. Can we imagine a greater perfection than this, more miraculous than how the five elements combine into this perfection of the human body? Even to think of such a stupendous reality as God’s existence—can we not call this a *vibhuti* of God?

Well, so the Teacher says, “There is no end for the enumeration of my glories.” *Nānto’sti mama divyānām vibhūtīnām*: Endless are the glories—everywhere we can see them, if we have the eyes to see. If we have the ears to hear, if we have the mind to think and the brain to understand, we will find His presence everywhere. In every nook and corner, in every little cranny we will find the splash of this beauty of divine presence. “Well, why should I speak to you more,” says the great Master. “By a little fraction My magnitude of Being, I sustain this whole cosmos—a little fraction of Myself, not the entirety.” *Ekāmśena sthito jagat*: “By a little part of My Being, I am sustaining this entire magnificent cosmos.” We can imagine what could be the magnificence of God Himself!

## CHAPTER 17

### THE VISION OF GOD

We have to retrace the steps of our thinking from where we commenced at the very initial chapter of the Bhagavadgītā, in which was described the great complexity of the social approach to things. From that point there was a gradual withdrawal of consciousness tending towards the integration of the whole individual, with a further purpose of tuning the integrated individual to the set-up of the whole universe. These were practically the stages of the development of thought through the various chapters of the Bhagavadgītā, right from the First Chapter until the commencement of the Seventh. Then there was an intensification of the idea that God indwells the created universe in a transcendent manner—unreachable, inaccessible and capable of attainment only after the shedding of the mortal coil. Thereafter we were told that, together with the transcendence of God, He also maintains an immanence of His presence throughout creation in various degrees of manifestation. These degrees were further explained in the Tenth Chapter, whereby we were given to understand that superb excellences of any kind, genius of any type, or an excess of knowledge or power visible in the world anywhere, at any time, under any condition, may be considered to be a ray of God's glory.

But that God is more than all this is yet to be told. The curiosity of the seeker is stirred up when he is told that, the omnipresence of God notwithstanding, His presence is capable of being recognised and felt only in superior excellences of manifestation. But the character of omnipresence remains to be explained. That which is equanimously present everywhere is certainly existent not merely in the superior manifestations of visible glory, but also in invisible forms which may lie at the background of these particularised manifestations of superior glory. The consciousness of the seeker is yet to be awakened to a height of consternation where it should become impossible for the knowing subject to comprehend this all-inclusive object, namely, the Supreme Godhead. Up to this time God was somehow or other kept at arm's length in spite of the acceptance by the subject of the all-inclusiveness of the Almighty, the omnipresence of God, and the impossibility of anything existing without the background of God's existence. There was a little bit of theoretical acquiescence, together with a practical need felt to keep God at a distance from one's own self, which is mostly the compromise which consciousness makes even in high forms of religious practice. The love of the self is the greatest of loves, and nothing can equal it. Thus, as long as the self is maintained as an isolated reality, the love for it also remains isolated from the love of God—whatever be the extent of our acceptance of the fact of God's all-inclusive omnipresence. It is finally not acceptable to the root of the ego to be told that it should exist no more in order that God may exist. This sort of sermon would be the last thing that the ego of man can accept. Who would be pleased to be told that he is going to be shattered to pieces, even if the destruction of the personality be by a hailstorm of divine grace?

The human element in Arjuna was partially awakened to a curious, inquisitive mood when the glories of God were delineated in the Tenth Chapter. The great Master, as a divine incarnation, said that all glorious elements, wherever present, are to be adored as His manifestations in one form or the other. The curiosity consists in the desire to

visualise this omnipresent form; otherwise it remains merely as a kind of acceptance, and not a vision and an attainment or a possession.

Whereas up to this time the gospel went on along the lines of instruction and enlightenment of the reason and the highest individual faculties available, now the religious consciousness gets roused up, which surpasses the rationality of the individual in many respects. The intuitive faculty is to be splashed forth, wherein the individual faculties of perception, cognition, emotion, volition and the like are to be brought together into a totality and a blend, and made to work in such a way that they cease to be independent faculties. The vision of the One is not possible through means that are distracted or diversified—the intellect working in one direction, the emotions in another direction, the social consciousness in a third direction, the physical appetites in a fourth direction, and so on. The aloneness of the individual alone can confront the aloneness of God. This solitariness of consciousness is to be awakened in order that the solitary Absolute can be encountered. The psychic faculties are to be melted in the stream of the intuitive cognitive faculty.

The vision of God is the intuition of the supreme Absolute. It is not a perception; it is not seen as we see an object. God is not seen with open eyes, and not heard with the ears. These sense organs, which give knowledge of things, diversify the objects and cut off colour from sound and sound from color, smell from taste, and so on, whereas in the vision of God all sense faculties join together, so that it is taste, smell, sound, colour—everything. It is not merely a colour that we see when we see God, not merely a sound that we hear, not merely a taste, not a smell. It is also not merely a total of these perceptions. We are incapable of even imagining what sort of experience it would be, if all the senses simultaneously act at one stroke. That means to say, if we were to be endowed with a faculty which is sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch altogether, what would be the kind of feeling in us? At present our sensations come in succession. We see and hear and smell and taste and touch, one after the other, and they are not commingled in one single act of awareness. Hence, we cannot even imagine what God-consciousness can be.

The awakening of the self to Godhood is not only to be understood in the sense of a total action of all sense perceptions at one instantaneous moment, but also the joining together of the thinking faculty, the rationality, the feeling and the volition all together. Not all together like a multitude of people or an isolated totality of individual particularities, but a blend of a mass of honey wherein the pollen of different flowers cannot be singly perceived or isolated one from the other. We have a condensed mass of sweetness in the honey where we do not know the constituents of which the honey has been manufactured by the bees. Likewise is God-experience. It is not thinking and reasoning and feeling and seeing and hearing, etc., one after the other coming in succession. It is an instantaneous, timeless awakening into a cognition which is the same as the experience of Being.

All this will be only a jumble of words for us, without any meaning and substance, because we are not accustomed to think along these lines. All this remains merely as a theory, a kind of textbook lecture or a scriptural gospel for us. Yet, the awakening has to take place, and everyone is after that. So, the faculties of the individual, Arjuna, were awakened up to the borderline of the perception of the Absolute through the intuition of

the soul. The soul knowing things is called intuition—we do not call it perception or sensation or cognition and the like. The word ‘intuition’ is used in a very special sense and not in a Western psychological sense. It is immediate awareness, or as they sometimes say, non-mediate awareness. No mediation of the senses is necessary there. There is no need of the mediation even of the mind, and no need of the mediation of the intellect or reason—we have not to exert through the faculties of knowledge. All exertion ceases, and the whole personality gets gathered up. This happens at the time of death, in swoon, in deep sleep and in God-vision. At all other times we are distracted.

Having been stirred up into the height of curiosity to know this invisible Almighty, Arjuna, in glorifying Him, requests the great Master of the Bhagavadgītā to bestow upon him this blessing of the vision of That about which so much has been told up to this time. “Am I fit to have the vision of this glorious Almighty? If, O Blessed One, you deem it proper that I be brought face to face with this solacing eternity, I shall regard myself as highly blessed indeed.” Now, this is a condition where the properties of *prakriti*, to which reference was made in earlier chapters of the Gītā, work in a curious manner. The distracting force of *prakriti* known as *rajas*, and the stultifying power known as *tamas* are completely overcome; they are subdued by the force of *sattva*, which is transparent like a clean glass through which light passes in such a way that one cannot even perceive the existence of this reflecting media. Intuition is not the same as identity with the Absolute. The *sattva* of the mind is still supposed to be present. While we can behold the sun through a clean glass, the glass is still there, no doubt, as a kind of obstruction, notwithstanding the fact that it is a transparent medium through which the whole object can be seen as if it is not obstructed in any manner. The whole person is bathed in the light of the object.

Then, at the request of this prepared aspirant in the highly purified individuality of Arjuna, the glorious vision splashes forth—that is the subject of the Eleventh Chapter. The whole description in this chapter is poetic, because there is no other way of explaining this vision. Whatever be the power of our expression, we will fail in our attempt to properly express the significance of this divine vision. Hence there is only an outline or an indication thereof given to us by mighty images and glorious poetic expressions, thrilling feelings conveyed through the vehicle of language, which is mightily done in the Eleventh Chapter by the great author. Suddenly there is a transfiguration, and the Krishna who spoke vanishes, as it were, from the sight of the beholding Arjuna. There is a waking up from dream, as it were; a shaking up of oneself from the sleep of the ego, and Arjuna begins to hear voices from all sides: “Look at me.” This “look at me” expression comes from every nook and corner of all places, and he does not know who is speaking from which side.

Mighty-faced forms reveal themselves in every atom of space. Solar rays, as it were, burst forth through every speck of the atmosphere, and the poet tells us that it is difficult to say what sort of light it was. It was not like the light we have ever seen or can imagine in our minds. Well, the most brilliant light that we can think of in this world is sunlight; we do not know any light which is superior to sunlight. So, to drive home into our minds the infinite superiority of this divine light, the author tells us to imagine the extent of the brilliance of a thousand suns rising at once in the sky. Can we imagine what it could be—thousands of suns rising suddenly in the sky at one stroke? If we can imagine such a glare and brilliance, that perhaps can be an apology of comparison to

this brilliant light that splashed forth before the intuitive perception of Arjuna, the seeker. He is told that with these eyes he cannot behold this. The physical eyes are shut and an integrated vision begins to operate as the blessing of God Himself. *Divyaṁ dādami te cakṣuḥ paśya me yogam aiśvaram*: Look at this glory, the yoga of the mighty Absolute, through the faculty which is of the soul and not merely of the mind or the reason.

The whole universe was there in a comprehensive totality as a minute fraction, as it were, of this immense infinitude. This unthinkable vastness of the cosmos, which can frighten us even by the thought of it, was there to be beheld as a minute fraction of the glorious immensity of the divine. In a few verses the great Lord Himself is made to explain what that magnificence is. But it comes to us in the words of Sanjaya, who tells Dhritarashtra what it was that Arjuna beheld. The poet's intention seems to be to make our hair stand on end, and therefore he uses the best of expressions possible. When he says that faces were everywhere, eyes were everywhere, hands were everywhere, feet were everywhere and everything was everywhere, what else can we say except to describe it in this poetic manner? How could it be possible that eyes are everywhere and legs are everywhere at the same time? Can we imagine two things being at the same place? But here were eyes, and ears, and feet, and hands, and mouths, and teeth and what not—all everywhere. Everything, everywhere, in every form could be visualised, so that one cannot say what is where. The self is possessed and inundated and invaded by the Absolute. It is shaken from its very roots, and the death knell is struck when the Absolute reveals Itself to the ego of the individual. Fear takes possession of the human individual. There is a cry of agony as if one's throat is being choked, or the god of death has caught hold of a person and he is going to be annihilated in a moment. The agony of the possibility of self-annihilation is unthinkable, though it is to be succeeded by a glory that is to pass all human understanding.

At this moment of the vision of the Almighty, the soul is made to sing a hymn, not in the words of human language, but in the surge of the spirit in the language of the soul, which cannot be expressed in words, of course. And yet it had to be told to us in some way or the other, and therefore the poet goes on with the great hymnology of Arjuna, which is not Arjuna speaking any more. He melted away into this omniform, and we do not know who was speaking there, in regard to which object. In a particular place the soul is made to say: *Nāntarṁ na madhyaṁ na punas tavādirṁ paśyāmi*. "I cannot see where this begins, where this ends or where its middle is." That form had no beginning, no end, and no middle. It was a formless manifestation, told to us only in the language of forms. It is the height of mystical vision, not to be attained by any kind of human effort. Oftentimes we are told that only the grace of God is the means to this cognition of the Absolute. No teacher of religion, no spiritual genius has been able to explain to us satisfactorily as to how this vision comes at all. We stumble on this theory and that theory, and finally are forced to come to the conclusion that perhaps it is not the consequence of any effort on our part, though it appears as if we have struggled hard to achieve this great attainment.

We shall be told by the great Lord Himself that this vision cannot be had by any kind of human effort, because the finite cannot manufacture the Infinite. A cause that is finite cannot have an infinite result or effect. If the vision of the Absolute is to be the effect or the consequence of an effort, how could that effort be an emanation from the finite who

is the individual? How could I or you, as finite individuals, be the producers of this vision which is infinite and surpasses the cause? The cause is supposed to be larger than its effect in its comprehension. The effect cannot be more minute, and if the effect is infinitude of experience, how could the cause be finitude? Hence it is said that no activity of any kind, no effort of any sort, nothing that anyone does in any manner whatsoever can be regarded as adequate for the purpose. *Na veda-yajñādhyayanair na dānair na ca kiryābhir na tapobhir ugraiḥ*: Even the highest incalculable intensities of austerity and asceticism cannot be adequate for the purpose. Any mortification of the flesh, in any way whatsoever, cannot be regarded as a means to the attainment of the Absolute. It is God that beholds God—not a man seeing God. Such a thing does not exist.

Wonderful indeed is this vision! How could God see God, and where are we at that moment—we cease to be. We are not even earlier, and we shall not be at the time of the vision. That which was not, will be revealed to be non-existent. Even a semblance of the ego of human individuality will not be there. It was not there even earlier, and even now we do not exist, really speaking. Our non-existence will be revealed in its glory when we are awakened to that higher wakefulness, wherein the whole universe will appear as a dream object. The dream objects do not exist; we know that very well. They are phantasms, but they appear to be hard, concretised objects when we are in the state of dream. They are as hard as stone or flint, but when we wake up, they appear to vaporise into nothingness. So shall be the fate of this universe of hardness, concreteness and substantiality when God-vision is attained. The so-called solidity of the universal will melt away as if it has been cast into a melting crucible. Together with the melting of objects, the perceiver also melts away, so that in this infinitude of object experience, the subject vanishes into the object. This is called *samadhi* in the language of yoga, especially of Patanjali, for instance, where there is a coming together of the subject and the object. The object assumes an infinitude of comprehension, says Patanjali in one of his *sutras*. The infinitude of comprehension or the comprehensiveness of the object is such that the subject cannot be there any more, because the Infinite includes everything and anything. So, even the perceiver or cogniser should be inside the object.

*Jñānasya ānātyāt jñeyam alpam*, says the *sutra* of Patanjali. Knowledge becomes all-inclusive, so that externality ceases totally, together with which the externality of the perceiving individual also goes. Hence, human effort of any kind appears to be a semblance of a necessity at the earlier stages, but later on we are taken away by the current of a higher law which operates in a totally different manner altogether. The gravitational pull of the Absolute takes up the whole matter in its hand, and as stones fall down to the earth automatically on account of the earth's gravitational pull, we are rocketed up, as it were, to the Absolute, by the force with which it draws the soul when it crosses the barrier of the earth's pull due to the melting away of human desires. It is for this reason we are told that all human effort is only an apology finally—it is no more a reality. The reality is Grace. *Bhaktiā tu ananyayā śakya*: Only by utter surrender and devotion can this attainment be possible, and not any kind of effort in the sense of a personal agency in action.

*Sudurdarśam idaṁ rūpaṁ dr̥ṣṭavān asi yan mama*: Most difficult is this form to be perceived. It is hard to attain this vision. Not even the gods or the angels in heaven can perceive this, because they are still individuals though ethereal and fiery in body. What good is it to be in paradise if we are still to maintain our individuality and isolatedness

and enjoy the pleasures of sense in a heightened form? So not even the angels in heaven can have this vision, is the declaration. *Deva apy asya rūpasya nityam darśana-kāṅkṣiṇaḥ*: Even the gods are yearning, as it were, to behold this form. The same thing is told to us in the Katha Upanishad: “Even gods are racking their heads to understand what this can be.” Subtle is this vision, difficult it is to understand, and harder it is to have the attainment of it.

But a whole-souled devotion, which implies an utter dedication of oneself to the last remnant of one’s personality, becomes the means to this attainment. *Jñāturṁ draṣṭurṁ ca tattvena praveṣṭurṁ ca parantapa*: The vision has to be experienced in stages—it has to be known, it has to be seen and it has to be entered into. Arjuna did not enter this vision. He came back, repelled from that Form. He had the glorious vision, no doubt, and he was also given the knowledge thereof. *Jnana* and *darshana* were there, but not *pravesha*—he did not dissolve himself in the Absolute. He was impeded from that melting away of himself into the universal vision.

So there was a terrifying experience where the vision is had but the entry is not permitted, and that strikes like a thunderbolt on the very head of the ego. The soul cries, “Enough of this vision! May I be brought down once again to the level of ordinary knowledge and empirical consciousness.” The fear is such and so awful, so inexplicable and frightening that we have enough of it. We have enough of even God-vision if it is to strike like a thunderbolt on the ego. So the vision is made to vanish, giving a taste of the experience, allowing a remainder of the memory of this experience in the mind of the experiencer with a final message: “One cannot easily have this vision except by a special Grace.” One cannot know how this Grace descends. It is a mystery, it is an *ascharya*, it is a wonder, a miracle by itself. One who works in this world for the sake of God, one who considers God as the supreme aim of life, one who wholly surrenders oneself to God, one who is not attached to anything in this world, one who has no love or hatred for anything—such a person is fit to attain God. This is the culminating message of the Eleventh Chapter.

## CHAPTER 18

### FIX YOUR MIND ON ME ALONE

The vision of the cosmic form was vouchsafed to Arjuna, as portrayed in the majestic words of the Eleventh Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā. Subsequent to this wondrous display of God's glory, which was witnessed with consternation by Arjuna in his mystical rapture, he raises a question before Bhagavan Sri Krishna. "This mighty spirit which was revealed to me just now is capable of approach and attainment, finally, in a whole-souled contemplation of the entire being of the seeker; a merger, as it were, of one's consciousness in the impersonal Absolute. There is the other way of contemplating You as the glorious, mystifying, majestic form. Which of the two approaches can be regarded as preferable?" This is the question.

The answer is a little surprising and, at the same time, very solacing. One would have expected the great Master to give an immediate reply by saying that what is required of the seeker of the liberation of the soul is a complete merger of himself in the Absolute by a contemplation which leaves no trace of personality or externality. On the other hand, the *Yogesvara* tells Arjuna, "Considering the difficulty involved in the contemplation on the impersonal Absolute by people who are located in a physical body, I prefer the other way of devotional surrender to the magnificent form of God, by which approach divine grace will descend upon the devotee." The reason is also explained in a few verses in the Twelfth Chapter. *Kleśo'dhikataras teśām avyaktāsakta-cetasām*: Those who are intent upon the impersonal Brahman will find their way very hard to tread, because of the fact that it is not easy for embodied beings to contemplate the disembodied.

In meditation we set ourselves *en rapport* with that upon which we are meditating. There is a sort of parallel concurrence of consciousness between ourselves and the great object of meditation. If we are far below the level of that on which we are ideally contemplating in ourselves, there would be no proper harmony between the subject meditating and the object of meditation. It is very clear and obvious that people are mostly incapable of raising their consciousness to the status of impersonality wholly, because of the fact that we are 'persons' and not 'impersons'. How many among us, who among mankind, can be sure of overcoming the awareness of a physical body and be certain of one's ability to transport one's mind to the level of the infinitude of God? As it involves, therefore, a tremendous difficulty on the part of the minds of people who are engrossed in body consciousness, Sri Krishna says, "I prefer the devotional or the devout attitude of self-surrender to the Supreme Form of God, rather than straining oneself towards the Impersonal Being." Though the one may appear to be different from the other in the method of approach, the goal is the same. This is a great consolation to every seeker. It does not mean that one is superior or inferior to the other, though many a time it appears to investigative and logical minds that the impersonal approach is superior to the personal. But surprisingly to religious thinkers, the Bhagavadgītā makes no distinction.

The whole point of meditation is the capacity of the mind to absorb itself in the object of meditation, to the exclusion of any other thought. One may be wondering how Bhagavan Sri Krishna regards the personal approach as equal to the impersonal. The reason is

purely psychological, which is the essence of the whole matter in contemplation or meditation. Meditation proper is what usually is known as *ananya chintana*—a thinking deeply, absorption wholly, to the exclusion of any extraneous idea. This is the basic psychological secret in contemplation or meditation. The function of the mind at the time of meditation is very important, not the nature of the object. The purpose of meditation is to so adjust the mind to a particular pattern of thinking, so that it ceases from any distracted attention towards dualistic notions which sustain the ego individuality of a person. The whole point in meditation is transcendence of thought—overcoming of ego and dissolution of personal consciousness in God-Being. This can be achieved only when the mind is freed from its attachments to diversity of thought and the multitudinous attention that it usually bestows upon objects of sense. When the mind is concentrated on any particular ideal - externally a form or internally a concept, whatever it be—what happens is there is a bombarding of the mind by a single thought. Just as we hear of the bombardment of material particles by scientific methods due to which a tremendous energy is released out of particles of matter merely because of the continuous hammering on them by great forces imposed upon them from outside, the energy of the mind gets released by a continuity of thought which presses upon it so hard that it bursts forth, as it were, and overcomes itself. There is a self-transcendence of the mind by a repeated hammering over it by thoughts which are continuously maintained to the exclusion of anything else.

Our personality—the ego, the bodily consciousness - are maintained intact on account of diversity of attention. Just as a cloth is constituted of threads which are the warp and woof thereof, the mind is constituted, as it were, in the form of a fabric made up of the warp and woof of thoughts of likes and dislikes, loves and hatreds, etc. These are nothing but an expression of the mind's attachments and aversions to the diversity of objects. The attention of the mind on one particular concept, internally or externally, is the opposite of the usual function of the mind. Hence, irrespective of the particular character of the object of meditation—form or impersonal, whatever it is—the transformation that takes place within us is common. Whether we contemplate on a Supreme Form or we contemplate on the Formless Infinitude of Being, the transformation that takes place within the mind is similar. It is an attention which is whole-souled and freed from all distraction and diversity. So Bhagavan Sri Krishna points out that the same goal is attained by those who strain themselves towards the impersonal Absolute by meditation thereon, and by those who devote themselves by surrender to the Supreme Form of God.

Now having said this much, a beautiful prescription is given in the very middle of the Twelfth Chapter which sums up what we know as 'the four yogas', in modern terms. Though the names of these yogas are not mentioned there, these are equivalent to what we know as *jnana*, *raja*, *bhakti* and *karma* yoga. "Absorb yourself wholly in Me." *Mayy eva mana ādhatsva* is the first instruction. *Mayi buddhiṃ niveśaya, nivasiṣyasi mayy eva ata ūrdhvam na saṁśayaḥ*. A total absorption on God is the supreme yoga. A whole-souled attention—twenty-four hours a day we are only concerned with That, our mind is thinking only of That, and there is no other interest in life except an entertainment of God thought. This is the greatest achievement that we could conceive, if it could be practicable. But Sri Krishna says that if we find this is hard, if we cannot maintain this thought throughout the day, then—*abhyāsa-yogena tato mām icchāptuṃ dhanañjaya*—try

to practice the art of repeated concentration. Fix your mind again and again on the chosen object, and continue this practice day in and day out. This is *abhyasa* yoga. Today you may find it difficult; tomorrow perhaps it may be a little easier on account of practice done today, and so on and so forth. Every day the difficulty will be lessened and the mind will attain greater and greater composure and concentration.

Even this is difficult for many people; they cannot even sit for practice in this manner. They take to devout adoration of God—singing His names, glorifying His Being and engaging themselves in such ways as would be conducive to the maintenance of devotion to God in their daily routine of practice. By way of worship, by way of listening to God's glories, by singing His names, etc., *mat-karma-paramo bhava*: "Do your duties as worship of Me."

If even this is difficult, then perform your duties unselfishly. Everyone has a duty to perform in the station in which one is placed in human society. No one is free from this obligation—everyone knows this very well. Now, this fulfilment of the obligation that we owe in life, the duty that we are expected to perform, is to be conducted in a most unselfish manner as an instrument in the hands of God. The whole doctrine of the Bhagavadgītā, which goes by the name of *karma* yoga, sums up the principle of the outlook of life that we have to entertain throughout, which is that we are not the agents of action, we are not the performers of duties—we are only instruments in the hands of supernal powers. If this wisdom at least is available to us, certainly it would save us from the folly of imagining that we are the sole agents of action, which mistake will come upon us as *karmaphala*—the nemesis or the reaction of action, on account of which rebirth may be the consequence. To put an end to this transmigratory life and the pains that follow as reactions to actions, we are not to regard ourselves as performers of actions but as participants in a cosmic purpose, which is the operation of the law of God. This much, at least, should be capable of performance for every individual.

So here is the central theme of the Twelfth Chapter before us, after which the characteristics of a real devotee are described. A real devotee is one who hates not or loves not anything in this world in an exclusive manner, but is compassionate, merciful and equanimous in his attitude towards all things; principally one who shrinks not from anything and one who does not conduct oneself in such a way as to be shrunk away from by others. *Yasmān nodvijate loko lokān nodvijate ca yaḥ*: One who does not regard oneself as a proprietor of anything. You have no propriety right over anything—*aniketaḥ sthira-matir*. *Aniketaḥ* is one who has no habitat. Even the house you live in is not your house. You are a trustee, as it were, a caretaker of the so-called property which appears to be invested upon you but of which you are not the owner in any manner whatsoever. Who can say that we are the owners of anything in this world? We are not the owners of even this body. Hence, performing one's duty with this dedicated spirit, not regarding anything as one's property or belonging, thus severing oneself from attachments of every type, one lives a godly life. This is the sum and substance of the Twelfth Chapter.

When we move to the Thirteenth Chapter, we are entering a more philosophical theme. As a matter of fact, from the Thirteenth Chapter onwards, we are entering into deeper and deeper philosophical discussions, which are placed before us as methods of implementing the doctrine of the whole of the Gītā delineated in the earlier chapters, right from the First to the Eleventh. The whole world of experience consists of the dual

action of *purusha* and *prakriti*, consciousness and matter, *kṣetrajñāḥ* and *kṣetra*—thus the Thirteenth Chapter begins. *Kṣetrajñāṁ cāpi māṁ viddhi sarva-kṣetreṣu* is a very important passage at the very commencement of the chapter. The *kṣetrajñāḥ* mentioned here in the Thirteenth Chapter, the consciousness, the *atman*, the *kutastha*, the soul inside us, is not merely the individual light that shines in the heart of a particular person. It is the light that is the light in all beings, *sarva-kṣetreṣu*, and not only in one *kṣetra*. It is not my self or your self or someone's self—it is the Soul of all beings.

Thus, the presence of God in an individual implies, at the same time, the omnipresence of God, and this omnipresent Being is the source of this creation. Along the lines of the Samkhya cosmology, the Thirteenth Chapter mentions the process of the evolution of the various elements in the cosmos. The Supreme Being is God Himself who condenses Himself into the creative will, known in the Samkhya language as *mahat*, mentioned here as *buddhi* in the Thirteenth Chapter, which becomes possible on account of the presence of *avyakta*. Samkhya calls it *mula prakriti*; Vedanta calls it *maya shakti*, and so on. The self-delimitation of God in the form of a Creator is explained as an act which is beyond the intelligence of the human being. This unintelligibility of the manner in which God descends, as it were, into the creative purpose is described as *prakriti* in Samkhya, *maya* in Vedanta, and *avyakta* here in the Thirteenth Chapter.

Through *avyakta* God reveals Himself as *buddhi* or *mahat* and stratifies Himself further down as the cosmic ego, *ahamkara*. In later Vedantic doctrines, these stages are described as *ishwara*, *hiranyagarbha*, and *virat*. The terminology of the Bhagavadgītā is different, but it means almost the same thing. Right from the supreme will of the Creator to the manifestation of cosmic *ahamkara*, there is only paradise reigning in the universe. There is only a garden of Eden, only heaven, and supreme felicity of cosmic perception everywhere. There is no egoism, no hatred, not even an individual consciousness. But then starts the sorrow of the individual. There is the manifestation of the grossened elements, *mahabhutani*—earth, water, fire, air and ether—which look like objects of sense to individuals who are cut off from the outside world. These individuals are again constituted of the five layers—*annamaya*, *pranamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijnaamaya* and *anandamaya koshas*—the physical, vital, mental, intellectual and causal layers, which appear to be outside the universe. Then what happens: *icchā dveṣaḥ sukhaṁ duḥkhaṁ saṅghātaś cetanā dhṛtiḥ*. Well, all trouble arises at once, like the cyclone that blows as soon as the sun is beclouded by a darkened screen in the monsoon season. Desires and hatreds of various types take possession of the individual ego as soon as it is severed from the cosmic fold. This much is the short description, an outline given in the Thirteenth Chapter of the Gītā of the *kshetra* or the field of action, the universe in its material form.

Now, the description goes further down to the nature of the percipient, the subject who aspires for God or the attainment of liberation. What are the characteristics of such a person? What is *jnana*? What is the knowledge that is required of us in order to understand this *kshetra*, and what is the knowable or the supreme object of knowledge? *Amānitvam adambhitvam*, etc. are the various verses, beautiful indeed, which portray not only the ethical characteristics that are required of a seeker, but also the philosophical attitude that we have to maintain and the spiritual qualifications that are required of us. The gradual ascent of aspiration until *tattva-jñānārtha-darśanam* takes place is mentioned in these verses, culminating in the beautiful concept of knowledge of Truth as it is. This

comes to us by the service of the Guru, study of the scriptures, self-investigation, humility, unpretentiousness and such other qualities that are mentioned in these verses, beginning with *amanitvam*, etc. This is knowledge, and everything else is ignorance—*etaj jñānam iti porṅtam ajñānam yad ato'nyathā*.

With this knowledge of our true relationship to the creation of God, with this preparedness of spirit, what are we supposed to know? What is the object of attainment? What is knowable reality? Here is a very grand description of the supreme Brahman, which comes only once in the whole of the Gītā, and that occurs in the Thirteenth Chapter. *Jñeyam yat tat pravakṣyāmi yaj jñātvāmṛtam aśnut*: Knowing which you shall attain immortality. What is that, by knowing which, you shall attain immortality? *Sarvataḥ pāṇi-pādaṁ tat sarvato'kṣi-śiro-mukham, sarvataḥ śrutimal loke sarvam āvṛtya tiṣṭhati*. There is something that is invisible to the eyes but which exists everywhere, with hands and feet and eyes and heads everywhere, as it were, pervading all things inwardly and outwardly; deepest and nearest, inside us and yet most remote and unreachable by any effort of man. *Sarvendriya-guṇābhāsaṁ sarvendriya-vivarjitam, asaktam*: It is free from the limitations of the senses. The Supreme Being does not perceive with eyes and ears as we do, yet It is the illuminator of all the senses. It is not conditioned by the sense organs, but without It the sense organs cannot function.

*Avibhaktam ca bhūteṣu vibhaktam iva ca sthitam, bhūta-bharṭṛ ca tat jñeyam grasiṣṇu prabhaviṣṇu ca. Jyotiṣām api taj jyotis tamasah param uchyate, jñānam jñeyam jñāna-gamyam hṛdi sarvasya viṣṭhitam*. This grand description goes with the declaration that this great Reality is indivisible—it cannot be separated into parts. It cannot be partitioned in any manner, yet it appears as if it is divided among the objects of sense, which are different one from the other. *Avibhaktam ca bhūteṣu*: Like space which is undivided everywhere and yet it may appear to be divided by the various vessels or pots, glasses, etc. which carry little spaces within themselves, though the space is unaffected by these so-called delimitations thereof by the presence of walls and vessels and the like, so is God's Being unaffected by the divisions which we see through the perceptions of the senses. This great Being is within us and not far from us. It is rooted in the deepest recesses of the heart of everyone. It is the Light of all lights—even the sun cannot shine there. Mystics have said that the light of the sun is the shadow of God. Such is the brightness that we can expect in the vision of the Absolute. All these are figurative descriptions to entertain us with the majesty of God's Being. Otherwise, who can explain what this light is? It is superior to anything that we can think of, understand, imagine, perceive or cognise. The philosophical background of the Thirteenth Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā is concluded here, and further ethical and practical implications of it will follow further on.

## CHAPTER 19

### TRUE KNOWLEDGE

The meaning of the Thirteenth Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā is the subject of our discussion now. While all the Eighteen Chapters of the Gītā touch upon almost all themes in the practice of yoga, there is a special emphasis laid on action in the Third Chapter, on meditation in the Sixth Chapter, on devotion in the Eleventh Chapter and on knowledge in the Thirteenth Chapter—corresponding to the faculties of cognition, volition, emotion and reason. There is a special importance attached to the subject of the Thirteenth Chapter, inasmuch as it analyses the Samkhya principles or categories of cosmic evolution in the light of the supremacy of Brahman, the Absolute. The Samkhya philosophy distinguishes between *prakriti* and *purusha*, or the field and the knower of the field, as they are designated here in this chapter. Matter and consciousness are, we may say, the object and the pure subject. In this chapter, at the very outset, we are told that there are two principles—the field and the knower of the field. “Know Me as the knower in all the fields—*sarva-kṣetreṣu*,” says the great Eternity which speaks through the gospel of the Gītā. In this simple hint that is given to the effect that the pure subject or the knower of the field is equally present in all the fields, this particular specialty of teaching here takes us beyond the classical Samkhya, which draws a distinction between *prakriti* and *purusha*, making out thereby that God is transcendent and superior to matter and consciousness as we know it. The Absolute is superior both to the object and the subject.

Now in this connection we have to go into some detail as to the nature of the object, the subject, and that which reigns supreme beyond both—this is the principal subject of this chapter. The so-called object of knowledge is a vast panorama of experience. The whole astronomical universe is constituted of the five gross elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether—which form the entire world of physicality. The causative factor of these five elements, known in the Samkhya language as the *tanmatras*, is on the objective side. From the side of the experiencer there is the *jiva*—the individual with sense organs, mind and intellect—lodged in the body complex, operating through love and hatred and filled with the notion of egoity, cutting itself off from the object, but nevertheless a part of the object world.

It is strange and very interesting to note that in this delineation of the character of the object, even the so-called individual is included. We are all objects in the true sense of the term. We can see our own bodies. This body is an object of sense perception, and it is constituted of the same matter as everything else in this world. The pure subject is invisible—though it is embedded in us, we are unconscious of its existence. We live in a world of objects. We have befriended objects, converted ourselves into objects, and we treat ourselves as objects rather than as pure subjects. Hence the characteristics of objects infect us, and we suffer the pains of life due to the objectivity that is present in us. The sorrows through which we have to pass in our lives are not the consequences of the subjectivity that is in us, but rather of the objectivity in which we are involved and which we, however wrongly, identify with our true being. Heat and cold, hunger and thirst, pleasure and pain—even birth and death should be considered as characteristics

of objectivity rather than the subjectivity of experience.

Thus it is that whatever we regard ourselves to be in an empirical sense goes with the world of objects. Therefore, in this characterisation or categorisation of the object universe in these verses of the Thirteenth Chapter, everything is rolled up in an omnibus. Whatever we know is the world of objects. That which becomes the instrument in cognising the presence of the object is knowledge. Knowledge is either lower or higher. Perceptive knowledge or sensory knowledge is a lower knowledge whereby we acquire a sort of acquaintance with the objects, but not a true knowledge of things. We come in contact sensorily and psychologically with the name and form of the things of the world in a mediate manner of space-time contact, but we never enter into the being of anything. Really we have no knowledge of anything ultimately. We have only an acquaintance with the name and form of objects, not an insight into the nature of anything.

But what is true knowledge? This is described in a few verses in this very chapter. While, finally, true knowledge has to be identified with actual realisation of existence in its pristine purity, anything that is contributory to the acquisition of this knowledge is also regarded as knowledge, so that righteousness, virtues and those qualities that we consider as praiseworthy are also regarded as knowledge. Humility, though it cannot be identified with knowledge as such, is associated with knowledge. Unpretentiousness and straightforwardness of behaviour cannot be identified with knowledge as such, but it is a reflection of true knowledge. It indicates true knowledge and contributes to the acquirement of true knowledge; and so are other virtues, such as non-violence and love, servicefulness, charitable feeling, detachment and freedom from every kind of clinging, whether to the senses or the mind. The capacity to contemplate on the transitoriness of all things, the recognition of the phenomenal character of the universe, an awareness of the presence of a Supreme Reality beyond the transitory universe, and a sincere aspiration for this realisation—all these go to constitute what is known as right knowledge.

We have usually been identifying knowledge with learning—the academic acquisition of information regarding the various objects of the world. But spiritual wisdom is the same as insight, known also as intuition, whereby the object of knowledge is possessed in completeness and does not any more remain as an extraneous something. Knowledge is power, and where power is lacking in respect of the object of knowledge, it can be safely said that right knowledge of that object also is comparatively lacking. Knowledge of an object is not merely the observation of an object in a scientific manner; it is a complete grasp of the secrets of that object, whereby it becomes a content of one's knowledge in an inseparable manner. Therefore it is that it acquires complete control over the object—mastery over things—so that the apotheosis of knowledge is omniscience, which cannot be separated from omnipotence. So knowledge is power, knowledge is also righteousness, and knowledge is at the same time happiness. Wherever there is right knowledge, there should be power of some kind—capacity and energy. Wherever there is right knowledge, there is also automatically felt the presence of virtue and righteousness; and wherever there is knowledge, there is also the experience of happiness. If these results are not seen even in a meager measure, one should conclude that the knowledge is defective. Knowledge is not book-learning, and is not the acquisition of a certificate from an academy. Knowledge is actual communion with

things, gradually, by appreciation of the character of things—an approximation of oneself to the nature of things with the intention finally of abolishing the distinction between oneself and the objects of knowledge.

What is the supreme object of knowledge then, whose experience abolishes the distinction between the subject and object? That is Brahman, according to the Bhagavadgītā. Inasmuch as it includes within its Being both the objective universe and the subjective faculties, we cannot designate it as either being or non-being—*na sat tan nasad ucyate*. It is neither *sat* nor *asat*, in the sense we understand these two terms. We cannot say whether it is something that is existent, or that which is non-existent. We consider the existence of a thing as a content of sensory experience. When we say that something exists, we mean that it is perceptible or cognisable. We generally associate existence with objects, as a quality or an attribute of the object. When we say a table exists or a tree exists or something exists, we immediately regard this existence as a predicate of that which we regard as the nominative or the substantive, the pure subject. The tree is important—the existence is only an attribute. The existence of the tree is regarded as a quality of the tree; but, unfortunately, existence is not a quality of anything. That ‘thinghood’ rather, which we perceive through the senses, is the attribute of existence. The tree is not the nominative—the existence is the nominative.

But we cannot understand this because of the defect of our language and the way in which we usually define things. Therefore, because of the fact that we wrongly understand the nature of existence, we cannot consider Brahman, the Absolute, as existence in the sense that we interpret it. Brahman is also not non-existence, because it is the supreme existence. It non-existence to the senses, but it is the precondition of the existence of everything else. It appears to be non-existent because it is the subject of experience. Who can know the subject; who can know the knower? All things are known by the subject, but who can then know the subject? It remains always an unknowable, indescribable mystery. No one can know the subject, because it refuses to convert itself into an object.

Who can know the knower of things? Thus the supreme knower of all things, the omniscient Absolute, is a non-existent something to the senses, the mind and the intellect which expect everything existent to be outward in space and in time. It has neither beginning nor end, but it exists everywhere. That which exists everywhere appears to be nowhere. For us, to be existent is to be somewhere, and we cannot imagine a state of affairs where things can be existing everywhere, because perception is impossible if the object is spread out everywhere uniformly or equally. If perception is not possible, knowledge of it is also not possible. When knowledge does not recognise the presence of a thing, it dubs it as non-existent. But here is the mystery of mysteries, the miracle of all miracles, which is the Supreme Godhead of the universe that grasps everything without limbs, sees all things without eyes, hears everything without ears, moves everywhere without feet, and speaks in every language, through all tongues.

The human mind is not made in a way to understand this mystery, because the uniformity of existence is something not seen anywhere in this world. Nothing is uniformly present anywhere. Everything is somewhere, in some form, but not everywhere, in every way. But That which is everywhere, at every time, in every form, is an object of stories and fables for us—we cannot conceive it even with the farthest

stretch of our imagination. All eyes, all ears, all feet, all heads, all limbs is this Supreme Being. Every part of it can perform every function. This is not so in the case of individuals like us, where some organ, some limb, some faculty can perform only some function allotted to it, and not all things. Our minds become stupefied by even thinking such a supreme fact of facts. We go giddy, our heads begin to reel, or the mind finds it is better to go to sleep rather than contemplate mighty mysteries of this nature. It envelops all things. Not merely does it envelop in the sense of covering things, but it is the indweller of all beings. It is not merely outside things as their cover, but it is also inside things. It is not merely outside things and inside things, but it is also the substance and constitution of all things. It is not merely the efficient cause, the Creator of things, but it is also the material cause or the substance of things.

How is it possible? We have never seen anywhere in this world an efficient or instrumental cause being the same thing as the material cause or the substantial cause. But here is a wonder again. It has no sense organs, but every sense organ operates through its presence. The light and the force that is emanated by this Being is the source of the energy of the various faculties of perception and cognition. When it operates through the eyeballs, we call it seeing; when it operates through the eardrums, we call it hearing, and so on. It is all existence, all knowledge, all perfection, all freedom, and all happiness. The content of anything is everywhere in its original perfection. The supreme Brahman or the Absolute is the originality of all things, while what we see in this world is the reflection of all things. We only perceive the shadows of things in this world, whereas the original is somewhere else—beyond our grasp, beyond our understanding, and beyond the reach of anything that we have as our endowments. We live in a world of shadows—so much credit for us. We perceive the will-o'-the-wisp.

That is why it is said that we live in a world of *maya*—phantasm, illusion, phantasmagoria—and we pass for realities and judge all things as if they are ultimate realities, while the so-called reality that we seem to recognise in these reflected forms is a faint distraction of the original which is operating through them. Reality is visible in appearance, just as in the famous Vedantic analogy we have the silver appearing in the oyster shell, or the snake appearing in the rope. The substantiality of the snake is the rope. The 'this-ness', the reality, the substantiality, the visibility of the so-called snake is the rope there underneath. But we perceive the snake rather than the rope on account of a distortion of our vision. So is the case with every kind of perception of anything in this world. The substantiality, the solidity, the value that we attach to things is the 'rope-ness' that is behind the 'snake-ness' of these forms. Hence we are in a wonderful world of drama that is played by names and forms, behind which is the Supreme Director of the cosmos—Brahman or the Absolute. It is undivided everywhere but appears to be divided, just as the ocean is undivided in itself but appears to be divided through its waves which differentiate themselves one from the other.

We are sitting here as people in a hall, one different from the other, one having no connection with the other. But there is an undercurrent of immanence even in the midst of the so-called diversities of people sitting here. On account of this universal immanence, we are able to cognise one another, see each other and understand each other. Even the knowledge that we have of each other is due to the universal principle that is present in the midst this diversity of people that we are. So nothing can be without it. Even the grossest error is charged with this universal reality of the Absolute.

It is the light of all lights—*jyotiṣām api taj jyotis tamasah param uchyate*. Beyond the darkness of the ignorance of this sense perception is this transcendent blaze of the supernal sun of the Absolute, and it is in one's own heart; it is not somewhere far off. This blazing sun of wisdom is not in the distant heavens—it is in the deepest recesses of your own heart. We are carrying it wherever we go, as a vessel carries space wherever it is moved. It is the heart of all beings, the Self of everything. This is the supreme object of knowledge and this is the only thing that we have to know in this world - there is nothing else to know. What is the use of knowing merely the 'snakes' that are not there; we have to see the 'rope' behind the appearance.

Thus it is that we are told that this is the object of knowledge. We would be wondering how only this can be called the object of knowledge as if there is nothing else. We have the various sciences and arts in this world—are they not objects of knowledge? They are the 'snakes'; here is the 'rope'. And so, this alone is the supreme object of knowledge, and when this is known, everything else is known automatically. When this One Thing is known, all the multifarious variety in the form of this creation is at once known instantly.

Now, towards this end, the analysis of *purusha* and *prakriti* is made again in this very chapter. The *purusha* and *prakriti* stand as consciousness and its object. The whole of philosophy, whether in the East or in the West, is an analysis of this relationship between consciousness and its object, and it is not an easy thing to understand this relation. However much we may rack our brains, the object stands apart from consciousness. Not merely that, sometimes the object has the audacity to assert its supremacy over consciousness, and materialism supervenes, concluding that even consciousness is an offshoot, a gradation of matter, as if the subject does not exist at all—the cart has come before the horse. This is the lowest condition of experience, where we lodge ourselves in the objects, lose ourselves completely in things, kill ourselves, as the Isavasya Upanishad puts it—commit suicide in the midst of these objects, drown ourselves in objectivity and completely destroy our subjectivity wholly; and then that is called hell, the inferno as called in theology.

The more we move towards subjectivity, the more we are tracing our steps in the direction of paradise, heaven, the region of angels, or God experience. The more we move towards objects and external comforts and involve ourselves in sensory things, the more we head towards the hell of religions. Hell is objectivity and paradise is subjectivity, so that, when supreme subjectivity is realised as the All-in-All Being, we have attained liberation or *moksha*. All this, though it appears to be a little bit clear to us for the time being, is beyond the grasp of ordinary reason. Always the objects stand before us, staring at us as reality, and *prakriti* tries to grapple with *purusha* as a contending party trying to defeat it, swallow it and absorb it into itself, so that oftentimes we are led to the erroneous conclusion that the world of matter is the only reality. Consciousness is swallowed by matter; *purusha* is lost in *prakriti*. This is what has happened to us these days, so that we think only of the world, only of things, only of objects, only of physical comfort—nothing else. This is the fate of consciousness when it befriends matter to such an extent that it cannot anymore exist as an independent reality or value.

But the Samkhya analysis distinguishes consciousness from matter. That the knower

cannot be the known is a crux of philosophical analysis, and the known cannot be the knower. *Kshetrajna* and *kshetra* are two different things. If the known is the knower, or the knower is the known, the whole language is tautological and loses its meaning. If the known is the knower, or the knower is the known, we do not know what we are saying. The two are distinct, and this drawing the distinction between the knowing consciousness and the known objectivity is the Samkhya. But, this distinction is tentative and relative, because even the distinction between two things cannot be known, unless there is a transcendent comprehensibility of the so-called knower and the known. How do we know that 'A' is different from 'B' unless we are more than 'A' and 'B'? Here is a victorious note struck by the Vedanta philosophy, which rises above the Samkhya distinction of *prakriti* and *purusha*.

That peculiar mystery which eludes the grasp of the senses and the mind, but which knows the distinction between the subject and the object, which is that which tells us that *prakriti* is different from *purusha*—that thing is the object to be known. Who tells us that *prakriti* is different from *purusha*? Know that. That is the supreme object of knowledge. As the sun illuminates all things with its brilliant light, so does this supreme *kshetrajna* illumine all things. If all light is extinguished, this light will remain. As the Upanishad puts it: "When the sun has set, the moon will shine; when the moon is not there, the stars will shine; when the stars are not there, the fire will shed light for us; but if that goes out, what remains? Your own Self remains." We may grope in darkness, but we are aware that we grope in darkness—that is the Light behind us. Even when we are ignorant, we know that we are ignorant. That is the Light behind this darkness of ignorance, and it cannot be extinguished. So this supreme existence can never be abolished; it can never become non-existent ultimately. Know this.

So here is a grand exposition of the nature of the object, the nature of true knowledge and the nature of That which is ultimately to be known. This is the subject of the Thirteenth Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā, which gives us a comprehensive description of the highest Knowledge.

## CHAPTER 20

### WE ARE THE FRUITS AND LEAVES OF THE COSMIC TREE

In the process of the creation of the universe, three powerful forces emanate from God, and these forces constitute the stuff of the whole of creation. It is, as it were, three arms of God projecting themselves outwardly in cosmic space and time and enacting this drama of life in all the planes of existence. God plays the role of the actor in this drama, as well as the director and the witness thereof. These three forces, which proceed from the Supreme Being like rays from the sun, are known as *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. They are known as the *gunas* or the properties of that original condition which is responsible for the entire panorama of creation. On the one hand there is the vast world of varieties of material objects, all constituted of the basic elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether, which constitute or are formed of the *tamas* portion of this original emanation from God. One would wonder how *tamas* can be in God, because it is regarded as darkness, a screening out of the light, which cannot be reconciled with the blaze and the glory of the light of the Creator. This is a point which requires consideration and understanding. Another aspect rushes forth simultaneously and divides this creation into various isolated bodies known as *jivas*, individuals, you and I and everything that we see as the units of creation—this is the work of *rajas*. The dividing factor in creation is called *rajas*, and the material substance of creation is called *tamas*.

Now, life cannot go on with merely a dividing factor and a material substance, because neither of these have a sustaining capacity. The material object is like dead matter, almost equated with a state of unconsciousness, such as a stone, a brick wall, or what we call the inorganic field, and the force of division, again, cannot be regarded as an intelligent power. Neither the energy that rushes forth into division nor the energy that condenses or solidifies itself into matter can be regarded as intelligent purposive organisers of creation. So God remains as the ordainer of the law of unity even in the midst of this diversity. This function of the prevalence of the unifying factor in the midst of this dividing activity of *rajas*, together with the inert substantiality of the material cosmos, is known as *sattva*.

God's actions are simultaneous and cannot be said to proceed one after the other. Everything happens at the same time—a miraculous instantaneity is the characteristic of God's activity. He does not work as we do, doing one thing after another. "Now I am doing this and I will do another thing later on." There is no succession of actions or functions in the realm of the universal creation. These universal forces are impersonal in their nature. These terms, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, used here in the context of the creation of the cosmos, are forces which are not human. That peculiar feature we call the human element is completely absent in the level of cosmic existence, because it has not yet originated. There is no distinction in this classification of what we call human, subhuman, etc., though these qualities have an individualised form or nature also. The very same *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* begin functioning in a topsy-turvy manner when there is isolation or the dividing of individuals, just as the reflection of the sun in shaky, muddy water, or the reflection of one's own body in a pool or a mass of water looks topsy-turvily reflected.

In this isolation of the individual, which is the consequence of the dividing work of *rajas*, a great calamity befalls everyone. This is the origin of the story of the fall of the spirit from the angelic Garden of Eden in biblical mythology and in the mythologies of all creational doctrines. A consciousness of personality consequent upon an unconsciousness of one's relation to God's universality is the beginning of the catastrophe of human suffering. There is an unconsciousness preceding our present state of intellectual, rational, personal consciousness. We cannot be individually conscious unless we are at the same time unconscious of universality. There is a veiling power operating at the base of this multitudinous variety of creation. We are very highly evolved intellectuals and rational individuals, as we imagine ourselves to be, but we are reflected intelligences, cut off from the source and divested of the consciousness of our universal relevance to God's omnipotent and omnipresent Being.

There was a great philosopher called Schopenhauer in Germany who propounded a doctrine which is revolting to ordinary understanding, though it has some connection with what I am saying now. The whole universe is a drama of the devilish will, says he, which projects or creates this intellect we call the prerogative of the human being. The point made out here is that there is a cosmic unconsciousness, a screening out, a clouding, an eclipsing of the reality before the individual affirmation or assertion commences. We cannot be aware of ourselves unless we forget God at the same time—the two things cannot go together. For the person to know that he is Mr. John, at the same time he must be totally oblivious of his relationship to God. So this oblivion is the preceding factor; it conditions the very existence of the so-called intellectual consciousness of one's individuality. Therefore we are far from being as great as we imagine ourselves to be.

In this distortion and separation of the individual by the work of *rajas*, something very unfortunate has been done. Nothing can be more unfortunate than to forget the truth and to cling to untruth. We are the untruths appearing here as so-called individuals, having no connection of one with the other. The truth is that we are basically united. As I mentioned originally, God in His *sattva* aspect cosmically exists even now, just as we as individuals exist even in deep sleep where we are practically unconscious of our own being. That is why, in spite of all our self-affirmation and clinging to personalities and things of the world, we also have a subtle impulse from within us to unite ourselves into a body, an organisation and a friendly community of people. Even rustics and boors and very crude intelligences that are undeveloped and are comparable to the apish type of humanity have this group mentality. Even monkeys and cattle have this sense to group themselves into bodies or species or types, which is a very faint reflection of the necessity for garnering such a thing called the unity behind the diversity, or the division worked out by *rajas*.

So God exists even in the world, even in this variety of the cosmos. This is the great philosophical basis that is described in a psychological manner in the Fourteenth Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā—the division of the three *gunas* into *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. The universe, formed in this manner and consisting of these varieties, is compared to a vast, widespread tree whose roots are above and branches are below. We all are like the leaves and the fruits, and are sometimes compared to the birds perching on this tree, and so on. The roots of the tree are invisible, in the high heavens, because they are the imperceptible unity that is pervading the variety we call creation. Hence it is

that we cannot see God. Not merely that—we cannot be even aware of the existence of God due to the intellect being conditioned to this body and our isolatedness, which asserts itself so vehemently that it will not permit the awareness of that vast universality called God. Neither can we see God, nor can we understand God—what could be a greater sorrow for us then this?

But the great panacea is described in this great gospel, which speaks of this comparison of the universe as a tree spreading forth downwards through the branches and getting itself rooted in the supreme Absolute. We are caught up in this variety on account of clinging to particulars—bodies, our own as well as those connected with us through social relationship. That this has to be severed is the great teaching. The art of detachment is the most difficult thing to understand, because we are accustomed to see union and separation of bodies. By the term ‘detachment’ we are likely to imagine that a body has to be physically separated from another body, because we think only in terms of bodies. For a small child studying in kindergarten, to be taught that one and one make two, one object has to be placed before it in juxtaposition with another object, physically. The teacher may put a finger on a solid object and say, “Here is one object and there is another object, and they make two objects.” The baby, in that condition, cannot understand abstract thinking. Likewise an abstract, spiritual concept of detachment is outside the reach of the mind of the individual who is accustomed only to think in terms of solid bodies. So when we think of spiritual detachment, renunciation, we think in particular of a cutting off of bodies, whereas the great teachings of the spiritual adepts is the disassociation of consciousness from its association with objectivity of every kind. It is not objects that bind us, but objectivity of consciousness. The insistence of consciousness that things exist outside it is the attachment and the detachment.

All these concepts are not a part and parcel of the education of the ordinary human being. We are brought up in families and societies and atmospheres which are given to the technique of physically counting things and associating particulars in solid manners and not abstract, philosophical ways. But when the Ultimate Being, God Himself, is finally equivalent to the supreme state of consciousness, *chaitanya*, and His sole existence cannot permit the externality of any object outside Him, it amounts to saying that any kind of detachment to be practiced as a yoga for the purpose of the realisation of God should be a tendency of consciousness to withdraw from the insistence that objects are outside. Here is a divine element that is introduced into the practice of yoga, apart from its physical aspects or psychological manouevers. The sum and substance of the significance that seems to be hidden behind this great analogy of the tree as the creation, in toto, seems to be this much.

It was mentioned that God, the Supreme Being, operates in three ways—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. This point is brought up again in the Fifteenth Chapter of the Gītā, where it is stated that God, as *purushottama*, is superior and transcendent to *kshara* and *akshara prakritis*. The perishable and the imperishable are both like the arms, again to use the same comparison, of the one indivisible God. He is the supreme *purusha*, consciousness par excellence—*purushottama*. The so-called *jiva*, the individual, and the world outside are both included within the all-pervading Being of God, and at the same time God is transcendent. So we as persons here, human beings, are therefore finally inextricable in our relationship with the world outside, and both these are inviolably related to God’s

super-personal *purushottama* state. The state of *purushottama* is often compared to the *jivanmukta* condition by many interpreters of the Bhagavadgītā, though it is difficult to say whether that is the intention of the Gītā when it speaks of the *purushottama*, because God's personality seems to be emphasised here for the purpose of contemplation and meditation.

The term *purusha* is used in a highly philosophical sense, and not in the sense of any gender. It is intended to express the characteristic of the ruling consciousness, and not of the ruled object. Thus it is that wherever two people sit together, there is a third person between them. *Purushottama* is between *kshara* and *akshara*. When one whispers into the ear of another, there is a third one seeing what is going on and listening to what is spoken, and there is no chance of two people existing without a third being there at the same time. These two persons do not necessarily mean two human beings. It is only a way of indicating the presence of a supreme principle operating between the subjective individual and the objective atmosphere, whatever be its nature. It may be a person, it may be things, and it may be mere space and time—whatever it is. So we cannot escape God's hands. Wherever we go - even if we fly to heaven or descend to the nether regions—there we find the great Being Himself greeting us. The glory of God and the omnipresence of His Being are such that we cannot go outside the boundary of His existence. Whatever be the power of our wings and the speed with which we fly, even before we reach our destination He is already there to greet us.

This *purushottama* is not a person, like a judge in the court or a head of a country governing subjects, but is a pervasive power, an omnipresent reality, and is inescapably present in every little nook and cranny of the world. The implication of this is not visible in the words of the verses of the Bhagavadgītā, but if we read between the lines we will find the glorious message that is embedded within these verses, in the midst of these words, as a string passing through various pearls or gems.

This Supreme Master of the cosmos, the Soul of the universe, rules and operates through these properties of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*; yet the Bhagavadgītā wants to awaken us to another fact—that God is not actually threefold. This threefold activity can be boiled down or reduced to a twofold activity of the positive and the negative powers. We need not call them by the terms *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. They are only, to put it in the language of the Gītā itself, the divine and undivine forces, which is another way of saying consciousness which moves us towards unity of comprehension, and that which moves us towards diversity, dissention and separation of one from the other.

Both these tendencies are present in everyone, and we as human beings are particularly concerned with our own state of affairs. We are urged in two way— inwardly and outwardly. We have a loving, sympathetic, affectionate core within us, and also a devilish, separating nature. Both are working within us at different time—we are good people and bad people at the same time. Any one particular characteristic can be evoked from us by the operating of a particular pattern in our personalities. Thus it is that we are god and devil at the same time, as it were, and any person can behave either way under different conditions. There is no absolutely good person in the world, and also no absolutely bad person. Both these characteristics are mixed up in human individuals in certain proportions, and they are evoked by certain circumstances that take place outside.

Thus, finally, it can be said that there are two forces—*daiva* and *asura*. These are only theological terms representing the highly incomprehensible activity of the cosmos by which it evolves and involves itself in the process of creation, preservation and transformation, sometimes called destruction. This cyclic movement of all things stands before us as a mighty mystery that we cannot understand. Thus, to put it concisely before you, it may be said that the whole universe is a drama, an interesting enactment of various dramatic personae coming in, and leaving when the curtain drops and the scene is over. No dramatic persona is indispensable throughout the play, while everyone is necessary at the particular time when that personality is to be projected in the scene. So nothing is necessary, and nothing is totally unnecessary in this universe. This puts the characteristic of impersonality and universality of operation in the hands of God.

All things in the world are divinely ordained. This is the great message that comes forth from these mighty verses of the Bhagavadgītā. God plays the drama within Himself—He does not create a world outside, as if there is matter external to Him. It is a scene and a performance that is going on eternally, as it were, within His Being, and He Himself is the witness thereof, while it can be said that He Himself is the actor in the drama. Mystery is the name of this creation, and wonder is the way in which things operate, even in the least of circumstances. The mystery that is hidden within a little grain of sand on the shore of the ocean is cosmically significant. The great mystery that throbs through the orb of the sun in that resplendent supernatural transcendence that we see in the sky can also be seen in the little, insignificant sand particle. In the little ant that crawls in one's kitchen, one can see the great glory of Brahma, the Creator Himself. Such is the prevalence and the pervasive character of the universal in all the little particulars—*purushottama* operating through *kshara* and *akshara*. The more we contemplate these mysteries, the more our sins will be discharged and burned up.

The fire of knowledge burns ignorance, burns all impressions of past *karmas*, and blazes forth into a luminance of awakening where we do not any more exist as persons, but move in this world as citizens of the universe, belonging to all and living as if all things also belong to us. Such is the mighty superman demonstrated in the personality of Bhagavan Sri Krishna, the citizen of all the worlds at the same time, and a friend and well-wisher of all beings in this world—belonging to all and yet belonging to nobody. So, in these few remarks I cited from one or two chapters of the Bhagavadgītā, we have a great message before us which is worthwhile for us to contemplate every day for our own welfare. God bless you.

## CHAPTER 21

### THE LORD DWELLS IN THE HEARTS OF ALL BEINGS

We have been familiarised with the terms *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* many a time through the course of the Bhagavadgītā. In fact, these are not independent things external to us. They are not three things that lie outside in space, working in respect of us with an outward impulsion or compulsion. Actually these three forces are pressures exerted from three different sides, and these being mere pressures exerted upon us by the very law of things, they cannot be regarded as substances in themselves. There is a pressure from within, a pressure from without, and a pressure from above. Thus every event is a threefold concatenation of factors. Nothing happens independently by itself, as either a subjective element, an objective substance or a supernatural divinity. Three forces work together—*sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*—in everything.

*Na tad asti pṛithivyam vā divi deveṣu vā punaḥ, sattvaṁ prakṛiti-jair muktaṁ yad ebhiḥ syāt tribhir guṇaiḥ.* There is nothing anywhere—either on earth or in heaven, neither high nor low, whatever be its nature—which is free from the clutches of these three *gunas*. This is another way of saying that everything is an expression consequent upon a threefold pressure exerted by the law of nature in any particular point in the space-time complex. There is in every person, to give a gross example, an impulsion from within. Every person, every individual has a propulsive inclination from within oneself in some direction, in some manner, for some purpose. But it is not an independent propulsion, because it is conditioned by the existence of an external atmosphere. There is an outward world, other people around us, and many other things. The outward atmosphere of the existence of factors other than one's own self limits the operation of the inward propulsions. In a similar manner, the effect that the external atmosphere has upon oneself is limited by the outlook that one has from one's own self. So there is a collision of powers, which may be broadly spoken of as the inward and the outward factors in experience. But this inward and outward bifurcation of experience is again decided upon and determined by a superintending element, which is often known as the *adhidaiva*. So in some sense we may say that *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* are the propulsive features of *adhidaiva*, *adhyatma* and *adhibhuta*.

The Bhagavadgītā is very eloquent in its explanation of the manner in which one has to direct one's conduct and express one's outlook in relation to these forces. It is always insists, throughout, that we have a *sattvic* attitude, and not merely a *rajasic*, or much less a *tamasic* attitude. The idea behind it is that the supernatural element or the principle of universality is to guide our destiny, our conduct, our actions and our outlook, and we should not be directed by our individual proclivities, idiosyncrasies, instincts, sentiments or desires, nor should all these be decided by the existence of outward objects. Our conduct, our behaviour, our entire outlook, our experiential attitude should not be decided upon by the existence of things outside. Nor should this decision be a consequence of our inward sentiments and ways of looking at things. That is the meaning of saying that it is not enough if we are merely *tamasic* or *rajasic*. We have to be *sattvic*, which means our stand should be on a third superintending, transcendent, universalising feature which is God present—divinity manifesting itself in

some form, in some degree, in some intensity of manifestation.

Humanly this attitude is impossible. Ordinarily no human being can think in this manner, because either each one thinks for himself from his own individualised body-mind complex point of view, or it is entirely decided by the factors preponderating outside. We either take our stand on the conditions prevailing outside, or we are propelled by our own prejudices and preconceived judgments. Not for a moment would it be possible for ordinary human beings to stand above these two clutches and take an impartial attitude towards both sides. That impartiality of outlook is called the *sattvica bhava*. There is the finger of God operating in some element, in some form, and herein is the inner significance of what is known as *karma* yoga—action based on understanding, and understanding of that collaborating principle operating between the inward and the outward factors, the subject and the object. It is difficult for the mind to grasp and more difficult to put into practice.

These three principles are described in the Fourteenth Chapter in some detail, which again become the principal features guiding the themes described in the Seventeenth Chapter. Everything is *sattvica*, *rajasica* or *tamasica*. Whatever we think, whatever we speak, whatever we do, whatever we will—everything conceivable anywhere in any manner is one of these things—*sattvica*, or *rajasica*, or *tamasica*, or it is a mixture of one or two of these things in some proportion. Anyway, there cannot be anything independent of these. That means to say there cannot be anything, anywhere, which is neither subjective, nor objective, or a blend of both.

The more we are able to bring a harmony between the subjective element and the objective features in the gradually ascending series of the manifestations of this principle of universality known as *adhidaiva*, the more we are able to succeed along these lines, the more we are spiritual, and the more we are moving along the path of God. Else we are individuals—human beings caught up in the cocoon of our own feelings, or conditioned by the existence of outside things. Thus a categorisation has been made in the Seventeenth Chapter of the activities of our mind, speech and body, the food that we eat and many other things. In fact, anything that is of any meaning in our lives has been classified into either the *sattvica*, the *rajasica*, or the *tamasica* group. We are advised that it not proper for us to work on the basis of the *tamas* element, or even the *rajas* element—always the *sattva* has been praised. That is, the only valuable meaning in this world is the presence of divinity, and divinity is the harmonising principle among the conflicting factors. It is the cementing force in the middle of the gulf that is created in experience by the interference of subjectivity and objectivity.

Our understanding, our volition, our feelings and our actions are therefore *sattvic*, *rajasic* or *tamasic*. The gross understanding or the *tamasic*, objective-motivated understanding is that which clings to objects as realities in themselves and pours forth all one's affection upon the objects, transferring oneself into them in some manner, so that there is a loss of personality in the love that one evinces in regard to the object of attachment. This is the lowest kind of understanding of the nature of reality. For the mother, the son is all reality—there no reality more than that. She will die for her son. People die for wealth, people die for name, fame, honour and many other things of that kind. These are examples of how the self within is transferred to outside factors and features that are visibly substantial, or merely psychological or conceivable, and become

objects rather than subjects. When one, as a true subject, sell oneself as a belonging of an object outside and are contented to remain as an object rather than a subject, one is in a *tamasic* condition. This is the worst state of knowledge, where particular things are regarded as universals and one's concentration goes entirely to these particular element—whether property, family relations, wealth, name, fame, power, authority, and the like.

The higher understanding is the logical acumen that intellectual geniuses possess. By scientific investigation into the nature of things, they recognise the interconnectedness of all objects and realise that the world is an organism, completeness in itself, rather than a medley of scattered particulars. For the lowest understanding, everything is confusion and nothing has any connection with any other thing, whatsoever. Everything is totally independent of everything else—this is the lowest type of knowledge. “I have nothing to do with you, and you have nothing to do with me, and no object in this world has anything to do with anything else.” This is *tamasic* knowledge, the lowest type of understanding. So we think we can cling to anything or hate something with impunity, without any kind of nemesis or retribution following therefrom.

But the higher understanding knows that such a thing is impossible on the very face of it. We cannot love something to the exclusion of something else, because there is an inward relationship of things by a prehensive activity, so that when we touch something, we touch something else also, at the same time, without knowing what we are doing. Any kind of relationship with any particular object or situation at once implies a sort of interference with the positive or the negative prehensions of that particular object with other things in the world. Everything is somehow or other related to everything, whether mediately or immediately. Thus the genius of logical knowledge appreciates the presence of an interrelationship of all things. This is *rajasic* knowledge, where we maintain the diversity of objects as a reality in itself and yet accede or concede there being an inward collaborative activity going on along the various particulars of this organism of things.

The highest knowledge is that intuition by which one enters into the soul of all bodies and realises, by a total grasp of instantaneous experience, the indivisibility of what we may call a universal subjectivity, *atmatattva*, which is independent of any kind of externalisation in perception, and which is inseparable from *brahmatattva* or Absoluteness. We have been told that *atman* is Brahman, which means to say that the Universal is the same as the Self, and the Self is the same as the Universal. The two are two terms referring to one and the same context—reality and existence. This is *sattvic* wisdom, the highest that one can have.

Likewise is the classification of will, emotion, action, etc. which is elaborated in the Eighteenth Chapter. When we decide, we are exerting our volition—the will is operating. It is *sattvic* volition or will which is able to restrain the senses and stabilise the mind and the intellect in the direction of harmony with all things. *Rajas* is that which confuses one thing with another other and is unable to bring about this harmonising feature among the various types of experiences we have in the world. *Tamas* is that which adheres to a prejudiced affirmation of will. Feelings are the expressions of emotion. They are the premonitions of a desire for pleasure, satisfaction, or happiness. We require immediate happiness—comfort at once, and not tomorrow. This inclination

or instinct of the mind by which one seeks immediate satisfaction and pleasure, whatever be the consequences following, is a misguided attitude, because the immediate satisfaction that we are after generally proceeds from the contact of the senses with objects. This contact stimulates the nervous system, an itching sensation is created, and any stimulation is mistaken for happiness. That which is pleasurable in the beginning but painful in the end is not the right type of satisfaction. But that which is genuine in its nature appears to be painful in the beginning, but in the end it brings a joyous fruit which is permanent in its nature.

The way to the realisation of *sattva* is often painful and agonising, because it often passes through *tamas* and *rajas*. We have to move through the thick jungle infested with thorns, etc. in the form of *tamasic* and *rajasic* impulses, before we reach the luminous, lustrous jewel of *sattva*. The lowest satisfaction is that which revels in utter ignorance of the consequences, the pros and cons of experience, lives like an animal and rejoices in the predicament of a beastly existence. The satisfactions of a beast are *tamasic*, and man often searches for beastly satisfactions. The *rajasic* satisfactions are those which are superior, no doubt, but which are painful in the consequence, though appearing to be satisfying in the beginning. The true satisfaction, which is *sattvic*, is satisfying only in the end, not in the beginning.

Actions which are motivated by personal agency are erroneous actions, and who can avoid this feeling of personal agency in action? Everyone knows and feels, “I do, and I have to do”, not knowing that many factors are contributory to the production of a result. As we have already noted, all that goes to constitute the personality of the individual, no doubt, is a group of factors contributory to the result of the action. But this is not all. The outward world also has a part to play in the production of the result. Every event is a collision of the subject and the object, and a spark splashes forth, as it were, in this impact which is the result often attributed to the subject and often attributed to the object. But neither is the truth, because the experience of a consequence is the interference of the third element, as was pointed out earlier, namely, one degree of the Universal operating in the midst of the particulars in the form of the subject and the object. In every experience there is this Universal element present.

I cannot even be aware that you are sitting in front of me unless the Universal is operating between you and me. Neither can I speak to you, nor can I understand that you are in my presence, nor can you know that I am here. All knowledge is a manifestation of Universality. Every experience is Universal in its nature. There is nothing anywhere except the Universal ultimately; the particulars are not. One who knows this truth cannot appropriate agency to oneself. That action that is free from the agency or the commitment of personality in the performance of activity is *sattvic*. Anything else is *rajasic* or *tamasic*—motivated by egoism, personal esteem, and selfish desire, or performed with an intention of harming others in some way or the other, covertly or overtly.

The Eighteenth Chapter is something like a catalogue or an index of several things that have been discussed in greater detail in the earlier chapters, tending towards a summing up of the supremacy of God—the absoluteness of the Universal element in all experience. *Īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānāṃ hṛd-deśe'ṛjuna tiṣṭhati. Ishvara* is the heart of all beings. That means to say, as I mentioned, the Universal is also the Self, and everything

is determined by the purpose of this Supreme Will that is known as all this creation. The surrender of oneself to the intentions of this Universal is the gospel, ultimately, of the Bhagavadgītā. The coming into utter abolition of oneself in the recognition of the All-Being of God is what is known as *sharanagati* or the surrender of self. The surrender of self is the last sacrifice that one can do, and the hardest of sacrifices that one can conceive. Whatever books we read or efforts that we make, this last sacrifice would be withheld for anyone, because sacrifice is generally regarded as an offering of possession. However, the highest sacrifice is not a giving up possession, but the giving up of the possessor himself, which is unthinkable on earth. How can one surrender the personality of one's own self, which is the source of the surrendering act or performance? How can the doer abandon himself? How can the sacrificer sacrifice himself?

The crux of spiritual knowledge and *tapas* or *sadhana* is reached when we come to our own selves from the outward panorama of things. Everything looks successful and grand and practicable when the dealings are only with external objects, with the vast cosmos. We may handle the whole world with great success and victory, but when it comes to a question of handling our own selves, we are an utter failure, because the most difficult thing is one's own self and not the world outside, though it appears many a time that the world is a terrible thing before us. But we are the terrible things, and not the world.

Hence this great terror is our own ego which has to be offered on the altar of *sharanagati*. "Come to Me alone and I will free you from all sins," is the last message of the Bhagavadgītā. It is wonderful indeed that all our sins will be pardoned and will be extinguished as if they had never been there. How could that which was there not be there now? It is impossible to imagine. It was already mentioned in some other place in the Gītā itself, "That which is, cannot not be." So if there is sin, it cannot not be; no one can destroy it. But here is the message that it can be extinguished in one moment, as if it was not there, because it was not a substance existing—it was not a reality. Error, evil, and ugliness are not substances. They are misplacements of values. Just as darkness cannot be called a substance, evil is not a substance by itself—it is an error of commission. Hence, when the erroneous affirmation of the individual ego is consumed in the fire of the recognition of the existence of the Universal, it is something like waking up from the dream consciousness into the brilliance of daylight. All the sins committed in dream are destroyed by the very act of our waking. We need not have to perform special *tapas* when we are awake for the errors that we committed in dream. The very fact that we have woken up into a higher degree or level of consciousness is enough penance or expiation for the blunders of the dream world. Likewise, the very fact that we have woken up into the consciousness of God's All-Being is enough expiation for all the errors and mistakes that one might have committed in the dream of world consciousness.

In this great art of the yoga of the Bhagavadgītā, the individual has always to walk hand in hand with God's grace. God is our friend, and no one else can be our friend. The particular has to go with the Universal. We have to go with God. Arjuna is with Krishna. This is what the last verse of the Gītā says, when it propounds that, "Victory is certain, prosperity will prevail, and everything shall be well, where Arjuna and Krishna are seated in one chariot and move forward in the battlefield of life." Where man walks with God, all will be well. That means to say, everything that is individual becomes divine

when the touch of the Universal galvanises it and transforms it into the precious gold of utter Reality, and lifts it from the mire of the reflected unreality of particularity. Hence it is our duty—the whole of the Bhagavadgītā is a gospel of duty—it is our duty to see that everything that we think, speak and act, our entire outlook, is rooted finally in the existence of God-Being.

## GLOSSARY OF SANSKRIT TERMS

### A

abhyasa: repetition; practice  
abhyasa yoga: the yoga of persistent practice  
adhibhuta: pertaining to the elements  
adhidaiva: presiding deity  
adhiyajna: the entire administration of the cosmos in its various facets  
adhyatma: spirituality; pertaining to the spiritual  
advaita: non-dual  
advaita vedanta: non-dualistic philosophy  
aham: I; the ego  
ahamkara: egoism or self-conceit  
ajnachakra: the psychic point between the eyebrows  
ajnana: spiritual ignorance  
akshara: imperishable Brahman  
ananda: bliss; happiness; joy  
ananya chintana: completely absorbed thinking or contemplation.  
annamaya kosha: gross physical body; food sheath  
anatma(n): non-self; insentient  
antahkarana: internal instrument; fourfold mind; mind, intellect, ego and subconscious mind  
arati: waving of light before the Lord  
artha: meaning; sense; purpose; object of perception or desire; wealth  
asana: posture; seat  
ashtanga yoga: the eight-limbed raja yoga of Maharshi Patanjali  
asura: demon; evil tendency in man  
atma(n): the Self  
avatara: incarnation

### B

bhagavan: the Lord  
Bhagavadgita: 700 verses from the great Hindu epic Mahābhārata recording the conversation between Lord Krishna and Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, prior to the commencement of the war and giving in clear and concise form the highest teachings and truths  
bhakta: devotee  
bhakti: devotion; love of God  
bhakti yoga: path of devotion  
bhav(a): mental attitude; feeling; purity of thought  
bheda: difference; splitting; soliciting political alliances against an opponent  
bhokta: subject of experience or enjoyment  
bhrumadhya: concentration on the centre between the eyebrows  
bhuma: the unconditioned; infinite; Brahman  
brahma-loka: highest heaven  
brahma-jnana: direct knowledge of Brahman

brahmakara vritti: thought of Brahman alone that is arrived at through intense Vedantic meditation

Brahman: the Absolute Reality, Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute; the Supreme Reality that is one and indivisible, infinite and eternal; all-pervading, changeless Existence

brahma-vidya: science of Brahman; knowledge of Brahman; learning pertaining to Brahman or the Absolute Reality

Buddha: the enlightened one; full of knowledge

buddhi: the discriminating faculty; intellect; reason; understanding

### **C**

chaitanya: the consciousness that knows itself and knows others; Absolute consciousness

chakra: plexus; a centre of psychic energy in the human system

chit: the principle of universal intelligence or consciousness

chitta: the subconscious mind

### **D**

dakshina marg: the Southern Path

dama: control of the outer senses

dana: charity; giving; a political sacrifice

danda: the staff of a mendicant or a sannyasin; a kind of physical exercise common in India; punishment

darshan: vision; sight; way of seeing

dharana: concentration of mind

dharma: righteous way of living as enjoined by the sacred scriptures; characteristics; virtue

dhyana: meditation; contemplation

dukhya: pain; misery; sorrow; grief

dvaita: dualism

### **G**

ghee: clarified butter

Gita: see Bhagavadgita

guna: quality born of nature; sattva, rajas and tamas

guru: teacher; spiritual preceptor

### **H**

Hiranyagarbha: cosmic intelligence; the supreme Lord of the universe; also called Brahma, cosmic prana, cosmic mind, etc.

### **I**

ida nadi: the psychic nerve current flowing through the left nostril

Ishvara: God

### **J**

japa: repetition of the Lord's name; repetition of a mantra

jigjnasu: one who aspires after knowledge

jitendriya: one who has controlled the senses  
jiva: individual soul with ego  
jivanmukta: one who is liberated in this life  
jivatma(n): individual soul  
jnana: knowledge; wisdom of the Reality or Brahman  
jnana indriya(s): organs of knowledge  
jyoti: illumination; luminosity; effulgence

### **K**

karma: action; actions operating through the law of cause and effect  
karma bandhana: bondage caused by karma  
karma yoga: the yoga of selfless service  
karma yogi: one who practises karma yoga  
kosha: sheath  
kramamukti: progressive emancipation  
kshara: perishable  
kshetra: field; holy place; physical body in the philosophical sense  
kshetrajna: knower of the field  
kumbhaka: retention of breath; suspension of breath  
kutastachaitanya: inner self; individual consciousness devoid of egoism

### **L**

loka: world of names and forms; realm

### **M**

mahatma: great soul; saint; sage  
mahatattva: the great principle, principle of intelligence or buddhi, Hiranyagarbha or Brahma  
mahat: great, lofty; the first product of prakriti in evolution according to the Samkhya philosophy  
mantra: sacred syllable or word or set of words through the repetition and reflection of which one attains perfection or realisation of the Self  
marga: path; road  
maya: the illusory power of Brahman; the veiling and projecting power of the universe  
moksha: liberation from the wheel of birth and death; Absolute experience  
mrityu-loka: the world of suffering and death  
mukta: the liberated one  
mulaprakriti: the ultimate subtle cause for all matter  
muni: a sage or austere person; one observing the vow of silence

### **N**

nadabindukalatita: the supreme state of Brahman beyond the states of nada, bindu and kala, in Tantric conception  
nam(a): name  
nirguna: without attributes or qualities  
nirvana: liberation; final emancipation

nirvitarka: unchanging; without modification

## **P**

parabhakti: the highest level of devotion

pingala nadi: the psychic nerve current which terminates in the right nostril

prakriti: nature; causal matter

prana: vital energy; life-force; life-breath

prana sakti: the subtle vital power arising from control of prana and self-restraint

pranava: the sacred monosyllable Om

pranayama: regulation and restraint of breath

pratyahara: abstraction or withdrawal of the senses

pravesha: to dissolve oneself in the Absolute

puja: ritualistic worship; adoration

punya: merit; virtue

Puranas: Hindu scriptures containing the whole body of Hindu mythology (the major Puranas are eighteen in number)

purusha: the Supreme Being; the Self which abides in the heart of all things

purushartha: human effort, right exertion

purushottama: the Supreme Person

## **R**

rajas: one of the three aspects of cosmic energy, the principle of dynamism in nature bringing about all change, activity, passion, restlessness

rajasuya: a sacrifice performed by a monarch as a mark of his sovereignty over other kings

raja yoga: the royal yoga of meditation; the system of yoga propounded by Patanjali Maharshi

raja yogi: one who practises raja yoga

## **S**

sadhaka: spiritual aspirant; one who exerts to obtain an object

saguna: with attributes or qualities

sakti: power; energy; force; the divine power of becoming; the dynamic aspect of eternal being; the absolute power or cosmic energy

sama: control of mind; tranquillity; political conciliation between opponents

samadhi: the state of superconsciousness where the Absolute is experienced, attended with all-knowledge and joy; oneness

samatva: evenness of mind; equanimity under all conditions

samkhya: correct understanding; knowledge of reality; a school of philosophy

samkhyabuddhi: correct understanding; higher reason

samsara: life through repeated births and deaths; the process of worldly life

samskara: impression; ceremonial purification; pre-natal tendency

samyama: perfect restraint; an all-complete condition of balance and repose, concentration, meditation and samadhi

sannyasin: a monk; one who has embraced the life of complete renunciation

sastra: scriptures; words of authority

sat: existence; being; reality; truth

satsanga: association with the wise  
sattva: light; purity; reality  
sattvic: pure  
satya-loka: the abode of Brahma, the creator  
savitarka: with logic and argumentation  
sharanagati: self-surrender  
siddhi: psychic power; perfection  
sloka: verse  
sraddha: faith  
sushumna nadi: the psychic nerve current that terminates in the sahasrara  
sutratman: the immanent deity of the totality of the subtle bodies; the cosmic thread  
svabhava: one's own nature or potentiality; innate nature

### T

tamas, tamo guna: ignorance; inertia; darkness  
tanmatra: rudimentary element in an undifferentiated state before panchikarana or quintuplication  
tapas: asceticism; austerity; penance; purificatory action  
tattva: reality; element; truth; essence; principle

### U

Upanishads: knowledge portion of the Vedas, texts dealing with the Ultimate Truth and its realisation. 108 Upanishads are regarded as important ones of which ten are regarded as most important  
upasana: worship or contemplation of God or deity; devout meditation  
uttara marga: the Northern Path

### V

vairagya: dispassion; indifference towards worldly things and enjoyments  
Vedanta: the end of the Vedas (lit); the Upanishads  
Vedas: the most ancient authentic scripture of the Hindus  
vibhuti: manifestation; divine glory and manifestation of divine power; the special forms in which the Lord exhibits Himself  
Virat: the physical world that we see; macrocosm; the Lord in His form as the manifested universe  
vitarka: projection; emanation; ejection; bringing forth

### Y

yajna: a sacrifice  
yoga: union (lit); abstract meditation or union with the Supreme Being; the name of the philosophy by the Sage Patanjali, teaching the process of union of the individual with the Universal Soul; unruffled state of mind under all conditions; yoga is mainly of four types: karma, bhakti, raja and jnana  
yogi(n): one who practises yoga  
yogayukta: one who is established in yoga or linked up through yoga  
yugas: divisions of time  
yugasandhi: one power colliding with another power