

A PEEP INTO THE GITA

SWAMI PURUSHOTTAMANANDA

VASISHTHA GUHA ASHRAM
GOOLAR-DOGI 249 303
DIST. TEHRI-GARHWAL (UTTARANCHAL)

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The book is published by
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Vasishtha Gita Ashram,
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DIST. TEHRI-GARHWAL (UTTARANCHAL).
A few pages are given in concise form of the most important
book of the Hindu Scriptures and those who go through it
will certainly feel inspired to read the original book and
practice its teachings.

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INTRODUCTION

FOREWORD

This little book gives an excellent introduction to the Bhagavad Gita by one, who is not only a great lover of the book but also a living embodiment of its teachings. In its few pages is given the quintessence of the most important book of the Hindu Scriptures and those who go through it will certainly feel inspired to read the original book and practise its teachings.

— I.K. Taimni

— Purushottamananda
Vasishtha Guha
2.10.1983

SWAMI PURUSHOTTAMANANDA JI

INTRODUCTION FOREWORD

Pandit Chand Narain Harkauli of Sitapur was a close friend of mine. He was a sage in disguise. Though in the midst of the world he was quite aloof like the lotus in water. His main spiritual Sadhana was the service of Sadhus. He used to invite me to Sitapur. Once I was asked to give some discourses on the Gita at his residence. After several years, those discourses are now coming out in the form of a booklet.

Vasishtha Guha
2.10.1953

— **Purushottamananda**

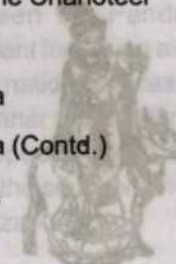
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CONTENTS

Discourse	Page
I. Gita – What it is	1
II. Arjuna's Despondency	6
III. Krishna – The Charioteer	10
IV. Jnana Yoga	14
V. Karma Yoga	23
VI. Karma Yoga (Contd.)	28
VII. Bhakti Yoga	31
Conclusion	39



CONTENTS

Page	Discourse
1	Gita - What it is I
8	Arjuna's Despondency II
10	Krishna - The Charioteer III
14	Jnana Yoga IV
23	Karma Yoga V
28	Karma Yoga (C VI
31	Bhakti Yoga VII
39	Conclusion



कृष्णाय वासुदेवाय हरये परमात्मने।
प्रणतः क्लेशनाशाय गोविन्दाय नमो नमः॥

I bow to Krishna, the unlimited and eternal, who, though formless and birthless, has taken names and forms for the sake of His devotees; who is called by various names such as Vasudeva, Hari and Govinda; who destroys in a moment the miseries and hardships of those that fall at His feet and take Him as their sole guide, protector, father and mother.

First Discourse

GITA : WHAT IT IS

By Gita I mean Srimad-Bhagavad-Gita, the wonderful 'Song-Celestial' of Bhagavan Sri Krishna addressed to his friend and admirer Arjuna, on the eve of the great battle of Kurukshetra between the Pandavas and Kauravas. However, it is not meant for Arjuna alone, but for all mankind without distinction of nationality, caste or creed. For it deals in the most lucid manner with the fundamental problems of human life, and especially with the means which are available for freeing the soul from the bondage of Samsara by gaining Self-realization.

सर्वोपनिषदो गावो दोग्धा गोपालनन्दनः।
पार्थो वत्सः सुधीर्भोक्ता दुग्धं गीतामृतं महत्॥

All the Upanishads represent cows. The one who milks the cows must obviously be one trained in that line, and it is none other than the cowherd boy, the son of Nanda, protector of cows. Arjuna is the calf. Those who actually drink the milk and enjoy it are the wise and the fortunate, for the milk is nothing but the ambrosia (Amrita) which gives real life to dying millions. I tell you it is full of Amrita. Approach it with the proper attitude, and you get solace, vigour, activity, wisdom and life. It is experience crystallized and synthesized; the experience of our Great Ones, who have recorded it in words clear as crystal.

The Gita is a salutary halting station for all those who are overcome by turmoil and temptations, worries and anxieties, cowardice and laziness, ignorance and pride, vanity and egoism, jealousy and weakness, bigotry and parochialism. Take one dip in this freshwater lake of the Gita, and you will get its everlasting effects. The Gita is not a small pond with only one bathing Ghat. It is a vast lake with ambrosial waters and many Ghats where each, according to his taste, can have a plunge and benefit by it. It is a universal Scripture, denying admission to none but welcoming all. Come, come and enjoy! A mother has several children of diverse natures and tastes and she distributes the food best suited to each. Similarly, the Gita is a universal loving mother, distributing food, sufficient unto every man, be he a theist or atheist, Karmi or Jnani, Yogi or philosopher, Saguna Upasak, or Nirguna Upasak, learned or fool. The only requisite is a proper approach with the proper spirit.

अम्ब त्वामनुसंदधामि भगवद्गीते ।

Oh my loving mother! I revere and bow down before thee always.

We must indeed be proud of the Gita, our gracious mother, who gives all that we want in abundance. But familiarity breeds contempt. We were ignorant of the treasures that we possessed. We had totally neglected them. And it was only after the coming of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda and Swami Rama Tirtha that our eyes were opened. The foreigner, with his indefatigable energy, studied our religion and stood wonderstruck at its

sublimity. Yet we had so degenerated and become slaves in our mentality that we did not appreciate anything unless it came in a Western garb.

My intention is to place before you a part of the Gita's sublime message in the hope that it will instil into you all a desire to know the Gita better, whereby you can shape and mould your life in your own interest as well as for the common good –

आत्मनो मोक्षार्थं जगद्धिताय च।

The keynote of the Gita is Tyaga. I have told you that the Gita contains the essence of the Upanishads, and to understand it well some knowledge of the Upanishads is required. The Sruti declares,

न कर्मणा न प्रजया धनेन त्यागेनैके अमृतत्वमानशुः।

Through Karma, progeny or wealth alone one cannot attain immortality. In Tyaga and Tyaga alone lies salvation, and this Tyaga is not external. I shall come to this point later. Suffice it to say here that a man of any Ashrama can practise it. Do not be led away by the idea that it is the sole possession of the Mahatmas and Sadhus who have left their kith and kin and taken shelter in the deep jungles. That is a foolish notion. A Brahmachari can be a Tyagi as well as a Grihastha and a Vanaprastha. On the other hand, a Sadhu or a Sannyasi who has resorted to the depths of the jungle may or may not be a Tyagi in the real sense. King Sikhidhwaja, the husband of Chudala, left his vast dominion and his dear wife, and went alone into the dense

forest thinking he was a Tyagi. But his intelligent wife taught him the principle of Tyaga and made him the ruler of a vast territory in the fullness of Tyagi spirit. The great Janaka was also a ruler of a vast empire. It was to him that Vyasa sent his son, Suka, to learn Atma-Vidya.

I have told you that the keynote of the Gita is Tyaga, and I shall touch upon it again whenever and wherever I find it necessary. But Gita is a Mantra as well. Mantras are some letters or symbols or poems with great Sakti or energy latent in them. (One must first know the Rishis or Satya Sankalpas.) It is with an object in view that the Vedas and the Puranas have been compiled. Even if we read the Gita without comprehending its full meaning, the simple reading will do us good in the long run. Words have forms. Nama and Nami are inseparably united. With the help of Nama the Nami will have to reveal himself. What I mean is that through the repetition of the Gita, with earnestness and sincerity, the Almighty Lord will, sooner or later, have to reveal Himself to His devotee.

A simple, illiterate man was once listening to the Gita being recited by a Pandit. Many more were the listeners, but the ignorant man was most moved. Tears of joy ran down his cheeks. When asked about the cause of his ecstasy, he replied, "O friends, I do not understand the Pandit's words. But this much I know that he is reading the Srimad Bhagavad-Gita taught by Sri Bhagavan. I think of the beautiful form of Sri Krishna, and I forget all else in that intense bliss".

Hence we have to approach the Gita with devotion and earnestness, humility and faith. Then alone will the Gita unfold its secrets and make us superhuman.

भारतामृतसर्वस्वं विष्णोर्वक्त्राद्दिनिःसृतम् ।
गीतागङ्गोदकं पीत्वा पुनर्जन्म न विद्यते ॥

Gita is the essence of the Mahabharata. Whoever drinks the nectar fallen from the mouth of Vishnu, the holy water of the Ganges, for him there is no more birth and death. He is saved for ever.

★★★

Second Discourse

ARJUNA'S DESPONDENCY

Today we shall move to the great battlefield of Kurukshetra and see what goes on there. The Pandava and Kaurava armies have arrayed themselves in readiness to fight. Lord Krishna is the charioteer of Arjuna. At Arjuna's request, Krishna takes the chariot (drawn by four white horses) between the two armies. Looking round, Arjuna sees the alien army spreading oceanlike, while his own seems small and limited in comparison. How to conquer this vast army is his first doubt. Further he sees the array of great personages - the mighty Bhishma, his own grandfather; the matchless Drona his preceptor; Karna the strong and loyal, and many others who are ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of Duryodhana, his bitter enemy. True, he has Krishna, the Lord of the Universe, who can create or destroy the entire universe in the twinkling of an eye. Still, he does not know. He forgets everything. He is overwhelmed with fright. First he only doubted, now he is despondent, dejected.

शरीरं स्थमेव तु - The body is verily the chariot. The meaning of this mystic sentence is all hidden, but it is for you, aspirant soul, to find out the truth underlying it. तपसा ब्रह्म विजिज्ञासस्व - And remember, you cannot understand it without Tapasya. Understanding, does not mean reproducing something like a parrot or a record. In the

spiritual sense it means making the idea your own. If we come to realize that the resident in this body is quite apart from the body and cannot be affected by things physical and material, we shall become free once for all. To gain this object we are given the best opportunity, and if we do not utilise it in the best way possible who is to be blamed?

Now we shall go back to Arjuna. He has become desperate. He does not want to fight. He has self-respect. Till now he had not known failure; he does not now want to court dishonour and shame. To strengthen these thoughts, as it were, come the thoughts of his Gurus. He cannot win unless he fights face to face with his grandfather Bhishma, preceptor Drona and such other worshipful persons.

You must know that this idea never entered his mind before. When the Kauravas headed by Bhishma and Drona invaded the kingdom of Virat to steal away the cows therefrom, Arjuna, as the driver of the Prince of Virat, had to fight with Bhishma and Drona. At that time Gurubhava did not trouble him. Moreover, he was fully aware that he would have to fight with his Gurus. It was not an unexpected thing. The fact was that when he saw the vast Kaurava army he lost his equilibrium and sought shelter in Tyaga, which was obviously false.

Let us see what Arjuna says: 'O Lord! having seen my own kinsmen assembled here to fight, my body faints, my mouth becomes dry, my voice chokes, I am unable to hold my Gandiva. I feel a burning sensation all over me. I cannot stand, my mind is in a whirl. I notice the omens, too, are against me. By killing my own kinsmen in battle what good shall I gain? O Krishna, I have no desire for

victory nor do I want kingdom or the pleasures derived from it. O Govinda! of what use to us is kingdom or prosperity or even our existence? All our friends, relatives and Gurus are standing here, having renounced all wealth and even life – preceptors, guardians, sons, grandsons, grandfathers, uncles, fathers-in-law, brothers-in-law and other relatives. Oh Madhusudana! I am not prepared to kill them even for the three worlds - how much less for this petty kingdom. Oh Janardana! how can we be happy having killed the sons of Dhritarashtra, our own kinsmen ? No doubt they are full of cruelty, treachery, roguery and the like. Yet we shall be committing a serious blunder if we kill our own kinsmen. We have no right to kill them. Tell me Madhava, how can we be happy at the cost of our own people? Though they cannot realize the sinful effect of ruining the family and inflicting pain and injury on relatives and friends because their intense covetousness has made them blind as to the correct path, how can we, who clearly foresee the harm of destroying the family as a whole, not refrain from committing the same evil? With the destruction of the family the traditions of the family will also disappear. When the traditions perish Adharma will prevail; all the women of the family will become corrupt; this will lead to confusion and intermingling of the four Varnas, and those who were the cause of such chaos will certainly go to hell. The forefathers, too, will have to undergo a fall, because there will be no one to give them offerings of rice-balls. Alas ! out of sheer covetousness, we are going to commit the serious crime of killing our own people. I will consider it more proper if the sons of Dhritarashtra kill me with their sharp weapons while I remain unarmed, having not the

slightest desire to resist'. The bow and arrows dropped from his hand, and Arjuna sank down on the seat of the chariot, overwhelmed with grief and melancholy.

True that Arjuna was feeling for his friends and relatives. But it was only for Krishna to decide whether these feelings were primary or secondary. In case they were genuine and sincere, what right had Sri Krishna to compel Arjuna to fight?



Third Discourse

KRISHNA - THE CHARIOTEER

Last evening we saw the pitiable condition of Arjuna, his giving way at the eleventh hour of the Great War, to grief and despondency, and crying, 'Oh Lord! have mercy upon me. I can no longer fight'. We all sympathise with Arjuna and see no other way for him than his being relieved from the duty of waging a war. What he says is perfectly right. But Sri Krishna would not let him off so easily. He wants not external show, but real reform. He wants to make Arjuna a real Tyagi. The weeping and wailing and falling down in the chariot were all the result of pride and egoism, 'I am the greatest warrior!' Arjuna has some regard and respect for Krishna, but he does not seek Krishna's advice. Why should he, when there is no one greater or wiser than himself: so thinks Arjuna. Exercise your thought. Then only can you understand the inner significance. Mahabharata Yuddha is nothing old or new, it is our everyday experience. So, be awake!

Let us now turn our eyes to the beautiful, smiling countenance of the charioteer, Bhagavan Sri Krishna; Krishna—the marvellous actor who can act any part he takes up to its highest degree of excellence and perfection. From his very infancy he attracted all to his side. He was the best and most dutiful boy, the best player and playmate, the clever and cunning robber, athlete, the most obedient

and intelligent student, an excellent lover, the best dancer, the unrivalled musician, best and most loving husband, kind father, pleader, scientist, lawyer, reformer, politician and philosopher, the best master as well as the best servant, the greatest Yogi and the best householder imaginable, the best administrator, best friend and best devotee. The best in everything! And all the while the Prince of Tyagis; from early childhood to the end of his life you can notice Tyaga as the chief characteristic of his life. Hence the tone of Tyaga in the Gita. We always need an ideal before us for our guidance and emancipation. If you want to find all the best and noblest qualities in one personage, say they are in Krishna and Krishna alone. Thus, it is no exaggeration if his devotees regard him as Purna Avatara.

The more we think and meditate on Krishna and His attributes, the more we shall forget our miseries.

You were hearing all the pleadings of Arjuna, how nicely he pleaded for his cause. But Lord Krishna did not attach any weight to his arguments. Why should He? He knew very well that it was all hypocrisy, the offspring of delusion and egoism. Determined to eradicate all the baser elements in Arjuna's nature and make him aware and be proud of his divine heritage, Sri Krishna accosts Arjuna thus:

कुतस्त्वा कश्मलमिदं विषमे समुपस्थितम्।
अनार्यजुष्टमस्वर्ग्यमकीर्तिकरमर्जुन ॥

'Oh Arjuna, at this critical moment, I do not know wherefrom you got these unbecoming notions, debasing, perilous, disgraceful impediments in your bright progress.

bringing censure to your fair name.'

क्लैब्यं मा स्म गमः पार्थ नैतत्त्वय्युपपद्यते।
क्षुद्रं हृदयदौर्बल्यं त्यक्त्वोत्तिष्ठ परंतप॥

'This unmanly attitude of yours, O Partha, does not become you. Shake off this cowardice and faint-heartedness. Get up and be ready for the fight. Are you not a hero capable of striking terror in the enemy?'

This is the clarion call of the Gita. Do away with your lethargy. Enough of your sleeping. Awake now and gird up your loins for the fight. Will India mark these words! However, these words did instil some spirit into the stupefied Arjuna, whereby he was enabled to collect his thoughts and make an appeal to his wise charioteer: 'Oh Madhusudana, Bhishma is my grandfather, and Drona my preceptor. It is my duty to worship them with flowers. How can I strike them with sharp arrows, O slayer of foes? Just think. It is thousand times better to live on alms than to have enjoyments by slaying these high-minded and enlightened souls, my own Gurus. These enjoyments will be tainted with their blood. Also, we do not know whether victory will be ours. And are not those sons of Dhritarashtra our own cousins? We want to win success by killing them!'

But again, see how Arjuna is coming down slowly from his proud state when he says: 'I have lost my mental equilibrium; I am overcome by love and pity. What is right, beneficial to me, that too I cannot decide. I implore Thee to advise me. For am I not Thy Sishya? I have surrendered myself unto Thee. Command me as Thou likest.' But this surrender was only momentary. For with the next breath

he says, 'Even if I gain this world, as well as sovereignty over the Devas, without any opposition, I do not know how I shall quench the fire of grief which is devouring my body.' Having spoken thus to Krishna, the Lord of the Indriyas Arjuna resumed silence, iterating once more, 'I am not going to fight.'

However, Sri Bhagavan does not want to compel Arjuna. He wants to convince him first. So Sri Bhagavan begins to shower upon him the words of wisdom known as the Bhagavad-Gita.

★★★

Fourth Discourse

JNANA YOGA

अशोच्यानन्वशोचस्त्वं प्रज्ञावादांश्च भाषसे।

गतासूनगतासूँश्च नानुशोचन्ति पण्डिताः॥

'My friend Arjuna, you talk like a great philosopher and act like a fool. Do you know what you are doing? You are grieving for those for whom there is not the least room for grief. A man with some wisdom never grieves for those who are already dead, or going to die or for those who are living.'

This is a new theory for Arjuna: he does not understand and looks surprised. The Lord explains further:

न त्वेवाहं जातु नासं न त्वं नेमे जनाधिपाः।

न चैव न भविष्यामः सर्वे वयमतः परम्॥

'I know the cause of your grief. You think that with the death of this body everything will be lost. That is not the truth, my friend. You see me now before you. You may think that I did not exist before coming into this body or will perish after leaving this body. You might think the same about yourself and about those kings and chieftains who are standing before you ready for battle. We have got eternal existence. Never can we cease to exist.'

Arjuna stands perplexed. The Lord gives an example:

देहिनोऽस्मिन्यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं जरा।

तथा देहान्तरप्राप्तिर्धीरस्तत्र न मुह्यति॥

"My friend, you are not a fool. You are, I know, a man of knowledge and intelligence. Only hear me patiently and you will understand. All are afraid of death simply because they do not know what it is. Please hear attentively. You were born a small baby, gradually you grew up into a boy. Nobody wept and lamented for you, saying, 'Oh, my baby is dead.' Then you entered youth. Now too, nobody wept and lamented, 'My boy is dead and lost.' Again, you may grow into an old man. Then too, no fool will weep and cry, 'Oh, my young man is dead.' Please consider why they do not cry and weep. First, they do not notice this change of the body, for it takes place very slowly, like the motion of an hour-hand of a clock from one minute to another. Secondly, they see the infant in the boy, the boy in the youth, and the youth in the old man. Though they distinguish the change they know that the principal thing is there. But at his death they weep and lament, thinking that he is completely lost. A sage, however, does not lament, because he knows the truth. O Arjuna, know for certain that death also is a stage of transition like infancy, boyhood and growth into old age."

जीवापेतं वाव किलेदं ध्रियते न जीवो ध्रियते।

'Jiva never dies. It is the body that dies when the Jiva leaves it. The tree becomes dry and withers when the juice or sap is gone.'

All that is seen is the offspring of the Bliss Absolute - आनन्दं ब्रह्मेति व्यजानात्। The seers understood the Reality as Ananda, as रसो वै सः 'That is Bliss, indeed.'

ऊर्ध्वमूलमधःशाखमश्वत्थं प्राहुरव्ययम्।
छन्दांसि यस्य पर्णानि यस्तं वेद स वेदवित्॥

In the 15th chapter the world is compared to an Aswattha tree which has its roots above and branches below. This means that this universe has got its existence from above—the Self. Further,

न रूपमस्येह तथोपलभ्यते

It has no form of its own. Its existence is not real, only apparent to us, just as that of the dream world.

Both the Srutis and the Smritis have openly declared that the world has only a relative existence, and that which exists eternally is our own Self, the Atman. But we can realise this only through meditation, and meditation is nothing but drawing within the mind and the Indriyas as a tortoise draws its limbs into its shell. But this drawing within is not easy. Why?

The Lord has created the external five senses so that the one not knowing what is within is always busy with the things outside. But one brave soul out of a thousand, because of his intense desire to know the Truth and become free, having stopped all external tendencies, comes face to face with the Self.

तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत् मत्परः।

"Therefore, O Arjuna, having completely controlled the five sense-organs, be always in communion with Me, your own Self, which is your end and goal."

As long as one is busy with material things one cannot have the least control over the sense-organs. The mind will be like a monkey, leaping from one object to another without any rest whatsoever.

ध्यायतो विषयान्मुंसः सङ्गस्तेषूपजायते।

Man wants to satisfy the senses. This satisfaction he considers to be the aim of his life. So day and night he will be engaged in the thought of acquiring sensual objects. In short, his mind will be wholly saturated with the thought of Kamini and Kanchana, woman and gold. How can he withdraw his sense organs from something that he yearns for?

There is one weapon with which to strike this worldliness at the root, and that is Asanga, non-attachment. We are attached to a thing because we think it to be real. But once we realize that all material objects must vanish, there will be no attachment. And this realization can be achieved through constant practice. First, distinguish what is real from what is unreal. Then leave off the unreal and acquire the real. In this way we shall be able to bring our senses under full control. From Viveka or discrimination will be born Vairagya- dispassion towards worldly things.

Hence, always practise discrimination and dispassion. With them you will cut this world-tree at the very root and reach that abode of Eternal Bliss which is beyond this world,

offers. Know, Arjuna, such people are compassionate. If you are sincere, they will disclose all to you.'

यज्ज्ञात्वा न पुनर्मोहमेवं यास्यसि पाण्डव।

'And knowing the Truth, O Pandava, there will be no room for delusion. For thou shalt then become free in Me. Thou shalt see the universe within thine own Self, which is nothing else but I.'

निर्मानमोहा जितसङ्गदोषा
अध्यात्मनित्या विनिवृत्तकामाः।
द्वन्द्वैर्विमुक्ताः सुखदुःखसंज्ञैः
गच्छन्त्यमूढाः पदमव्ययं तत्॥

'Being free from pride, from vanity and delusion; having gone beyond the evils of attachment, always busy with the ways and means of knowing the Self, without a tinge of worldliness in them, being indifferent to heat and cold, pleasure and pain, the wise reach that Eternal Goal.

★★★

Fifth Discourse

KARMA YOGA

This evening we are again assembled to listen to the illuminating discourse of Sri Bhagavan. Hearing the nature and glory of the Self, his own real form, Arjuna rejoices. His unmanly gloom gives way to boldness. He asks Bhagavan:

ज्यायसी चेत्कर्मणस्ते मता बुद्धिर्जनार्दना।
तत्किं कर्मणि घोरे मां नियोजयसि केशवा॥

'Oh Janardana, destroyer of ignorance, if you consider Jnana superior to Karma, why then, O Kesava, do you compel me to do this horrible deed?' Bhagavan has already stated at the end of the second chapter that if one attains a tranquil and peaceful state of mind even at the last moment of one's life, one becomes free.

Bhagavan approves of Arjuna's sincere and intelligent question and replies, 'O Arjuna, you are perfectly right. But your path is different. The way of Jnana suits only the intellectuals, men who seek Truth through knowledge alone. But you have a different nature, so your path is also different. You are a Kshatriya, of a warlike temperament. For you there is the path of Karma. Only after the performance of one's duties does one become fit for Jnana. If all of a sudden you give up work and become inactive,

your fall is certain. Unless you attain that internal renunciation you cannot abandon your duties. Therefore, fight; fight; only through fighting will you conquer your rebellious nature. Moreover, none can remain inactive even for a second. Nature forces every one to act.

यस्त्वात्मरतिरेव स्यादात्मतृप्तश्च मानवः।
आत्मन्येव च संतुष्टस्तस्य कार्यं न विद्यते॥

'He who finds enjoyment in the Self alone, who is content with the Self alone, for him there is no work to be done.' But you have so many obligations. True, Karma has a binding effect, but you can transcend it by doing work without desire or attachment.

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन।

'You have the right to work but not to the fruits thereof. Then there will be no binding effect, and you will be saved.'

Therefore, Bhagavan advises Arjuna to perform the work before him for establishing himself in Yoga. Yoga has undoubtedly different meanings, but here it means the state of keeping the mind in equilibrium both in success and in failure, i.e., not exalted in success or dejected in failure. All actions done without this spirit of sacrifice and equipoise are binding.

कर्मणैव हि संसिद्धिमास्थिता जनकादयः।

'Oh Arjuna, it was by Karma that Janaka and other Yogis attained perfection. You should also do your duties for the sake of the world. If you neglect your duties and sit

idle, others will follow you and there will be chaos in the world.

अहङ्कारविमूढात्मा कर्ताहमिति मन्यते॥

'Besides, are you really the doer? All evils are born of the wrong notion that 'I am doing'. You deem 'I' as the body while the real 'I' is your own Self, which is neither doer nor enjoyer. I have told you enough of the nature of 'I', your Self. Therefore, try to be established in that, even during your ordinary actions, such as eating, drinking, talking, studying, fighting, etc. Do not confuse the 'I' with those functions. Keep It aloof always. Actually It is always aloof. You take It as the doer in your ignorance. Now you have come to know, I hope, that every action, whether good or bad, gets its strength from within. Then why do you take the responsibility for something that you are prompted to do from within ? Surrender yourself to that 'Inner Man', and ignore the result. Be a real Sannyasi and Yogi, who performs his works without caring for the fruits thereof.'

But to become a real Sannyasi or Karmayogi is not an easy task. Only through Tapas can one hope to become free. And Tapas admits of a triple classification - physical, verbal and mental.

Serve with faith and devotion the Devas and Brahmanas, your own father, mother and preceptors, and those who are wise and noble, great and learned. Keep your body ever pure and clean. Observe Brahmacharya (continence) and Ahimsa (non-violence). This is called physical Tapasya.

Let not your talk wound the feelings of others; let it be

true, honest, agreeable and pleasing. Study the holy scriptures and do Japa. This is said to be Tapasya through words.

Try to keep the mind always calm and serene, make it gentle, so that you may have love and sympathy; try to silence the cravings of the heart and acquire self-control. This is mental Tapasya.

These, O Arjuna, are the characteristics of a perfect man. I want to make you a perfect man and, therefore, listen attentively to every word of mine.

By simply throwing yourself at the mercy of the Lord you cannot achieve success in any of your works. You will meet with failures, but failures can become success ere long. Take the case of a student. Five things are imperative for his success. First, he must have a definite goal. Secondly, he must be prepared to work for it. Thirdly, he must have competent teachers and the right books to study. Fourthly, he has to employ ways and means to come out successful. And finally, there is luck, or the grace of the Lord. If the first four things are there, there is no doubt that he will be blessed by the Lord's grace. Given these five conditions, i.e., the goal, the doer, various weapons, implements or means, the ways and methods of working, and the grace of the Almighty, any work will bring success and fulfilment.

कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि जिजीविषेच्छतं समाः।

One's whole life should be devoted to the performance of one's duties. So says the Sruti. But there are some souls

who have achieved Realisation, and who may or may not work. Either way they are free; but such souls are rare and we are not to emulate their inactivity. One of the causes of India's degeneration is this—the sham giving up of all work and seeking shelter in hermitage. For such foolish lazy imitators the Gita has no sympathy. For them there is the peremptory order, नियतं कुरु कर्म त्वम् । - 'Do your allotted work.' Your forefathers were never idle. They were great Karmayogis. Your duty is to follow them and endeavour to excel them, if possible. For no one can remain without action even for a moment. If you cannot do Karma without attachment or desire for rewards, never mind. You must not be lazy, inert, idiotically inactive in any way. Act! Work! Work even with attachment and you will become a real Karmayogi in the long run.

My friend, no work in itself is mean. It is you who make it mean or noble. You can make of it whatever you like. Therefore, Sri Bhagavan instructs Arjuna thus:

श्रेयान्स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात्।

'One's duty, though it may look ugly or mean, is, if properly performed, a thousand times better than the duty of another, however great and noble it may seem. Arjuna was a Kshatriya, but he wanted renunciation, the way of the Brahmins.

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Sixth Discourse

KARMA YOGA (Contd.)

Last evening we had a talk on some aspects of Karmayoga. The subject is so important that I would like to deal with the subject a little more this evening.

My friends, as I pointed out before, no Karma is in itself mean or noble. You can even, make kingship mean and the sweeper's profession the noblest.

यज्ञार्थात्कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः।

It is true that every Karma that does not come under the category of Yajna (Sacrifice) has a binding effect. But to convert every act into Yajna is not beyond our power.

व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिरेकेह कुरुनन्दन।

Sri Bhagavan says to Arjuna, 'O Karunandana, what is most needed here is determination and perseverance. Perseverance is the pivot on which all virtues turn. Let your identity be lost completely in the work you do. A chaste young wife comes to know at night that her husband, who has been out for long, would be coming early next morning. From this very moment till she meets him, she will think of nothing but her husband, her lord. She will wash her clothes, clean the house, and prepare nice dishes with her own hands. She loses her self-consciousness, she cannot think

of anything else. But all the time she is performing Yajna. The students busy with their studies and in their playgrounds, the teachers occupied with teaching in right earnest, the pleaders busy with their cases, the clerks with their office work, the kings with their administration, the butchers with their butchery, are all doing great Yajna, if they do their work in the right spirit. यज्ञाद्भवति पर्जन्यः There is no room for doubt here. It is a paradise, indeed, where people practise Svadharma, in the spirit of Yajna.

Therefore, all of you are advised to get up early, to have your ablutions, perform Sandhya and recite the Gayatri, with Havan, if possible, to meditate, to do your Puja and Japa without failure, to be charitable, loving and sympathetic, to build up your character and apply yourselves zealously and earnestly to the work that has to be done. We are not to scoff at our religion. For, every one of its observances, every ritual and ceremony, has a significance. Rituals are full of meaning, they have a hygienic and scientific basis. Open your eyes and see! Another thing Bhagavan wants to emphasize is:

श्रद्धामयोऽयं पुरुषो यो यच्छ्रद्धः स एव सः॥

Man's success depends upon his Sraddha. One thrives in his business due to Sraddha while another, lazy and indifferent and without Sraddha, meets with failure. And what is this Sraddha? It is the strong dynamic faith in the truth of the scriptures and the sayings of the Gurus which soon becomes the motive force of one's actions. Whatever we do with faith tends to arouse the inherent strength in us, thus making our progress more rapid. On

the contrary, work done without faith deepens our ignorance and egoism, whereby the bonds of Samsara are strengthened.

अश्रद्धया हुतं दत्तं तपस्तप्तं कृतं च यत्।

असदित्युच्यते पार्थ न च तत्प्रेत्य नो इह॥

'O Arjuna! everything done without Sraddha, whether it be sacrifice, charity, worship, or other meritorious act, will be of little use to you either here or hereafter.' And finally, as pointed out in the previous chapter, Bhagavan reminds us of the five things that are essential for success in any undertaking:

अधिष्ठानं तथा कर्ता करणं च पृथग्विधम्।

विविधाश्च पृथक्चेष्टा देवं चैवात्र पश्यमम्॥

the object, the doer, the different measures and instruments, and activities of various kinds, and lastly, the grace of the Almighty Lord.

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Seventh Discourse

BHAKTI YOGA

This evening I shall try to deal with Bhakti Yoga as has been taught by Sri Krishna to his friend and admirer Arjuna. It is an important subject.

The definition of Bhakti according to Narada is: परानुरक्तिरीक्षरे – supreme unceasing love towards the Lord. This love towards the Lord, from the very beginning gives peace and happiness. So they say this path of Devotion is the easiest path to perfection. Indeed, it becomes easy when we acquire some love. No one can hope to acquire this love suddenly. How to create this love? This is the difficulty. The Lord Himself says, 'I shall gladly give away Mukti, salvation, to those who seek it but not Bhakti.' See, how lofty and great Bhakti is! It makes one more and more divine and at last converts him into the Lord's own form; he becomes the Lord Himself ultimately.

Hence Sri Bhagavan says to Arjuna,

भक्त्या मामभिजानाति यावान्यक्षास्मि तत्त्वतः।

'Through Bhakti one comes to know Me perfectly; who I am and what My attributes are.' The Bhakta fully realizes Sri Bhagavan in his own Self. And what is He, the Great Lord ?

अहं कृत्स्नस्य जगतः प्रभवः प्रलयस्तथा॥

'From Me the whole universe has sprung up and in Me it will dissolve. I am the cause both of creation and dissolution.' Again,

पिताहमस्य जगतो माता धाता पितामहः।

"Of this universe I am the father, mother, protector and grandfather as well". It is our duty to remember Him for the great kindness and mercy which He bestows upon us. And He is in our hearts giving life and lustre to every tissue. This body is the vehicle of the Lord, and He is its Presiding Deity. He is Sat-Chit-Ananda, Eternal Existence, All-Intelligence, All-Bliss. He is All-Effulgent. All the shining things like the sun, moon, stars and the fire borrow their brilliance and brightness from Him only : यस्मिन् विभाते सर्वं मिदं विभाति। It is only due to Him that we are having sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste and speech. We feel grateful to one, who has rendered us some benefit. Then how much grateful we must be to Him from whom we have derived everything. But very few know this fact. Hence the lack of faith and devotion towards His lotus feet. But when one knows this fact, his mind will naturally flow towards Him. That flow will be so strong that nothing can stop it, as in the cases of Prahlada, Dhruva, Ramakrishna, Mira Bai, Tulasi Das and other devotees, past and present.

And how can one love a thing unless he knows something about it on hearing from others? Hence we have to hear constantly of Him from His devotees; not only hear but think over His attributes again and again until we become wholly and permanently established in Him. Everything depends upon the love of one towards an object.

Those who are of a passionate nature are never tired of hearing of their objects of love and those who are after money have their minds concentrated always on money. Prahlada says:

या बुद्धिरविवेकानां विषयेष्वनपायिनी।
त्वामनुस्मरतः सा मे हृदयान्मापसर्पतु॥

"O Lord, the worldly and ignorant people seek the worldly pleasures with unceasing effort. Let me have such strong and everlasting Love towards Thee." God, though formless, can assume as many forms as He likes. All of a sudden one will not be able to go direct to the formless God. One has to begin with meditation on divine forms like Rama, Krishna, etc. Hearing the Leelas of the Avatars our minds become absorbed in them, and in the long run, if we keep our aspiration strong it will not be very difficult for us to reach the goal of Bhakti. Everything, riches and honours, name and fame and even our own egoism we will have to sacrifice at His feet, willingly and not forcibly. Do you know what we are aiming to be? We are going to be moulded into His Form and Spirit. We are going to experience ourselves the truth of the saying, "My father and I are one". We are not going to remain slaves any more but master of the whole universe. Is it a small task? To attain this we have to train ourselves so as to become proof against worldliness. There should be no room in our mind for the slightest worldly desire. The mind should be wholly filled with Him and Him alone.

To attain this purpose the Rishis have prescribed the Saguna worship. Choose your Ishta Devata; have an image

of Him installed in some room in your house. Worship Him daily whole-heartedly and with intense feeling. Do your daily meditation, sitting erect and adopting any convenient Asana. Let your mind be fixed on His form only. Whenever the mind wanders bring it slowly again to the point. Through this practice you can make your mind calm and quiet. God manifests only in the still mind.

Sri Bhagavan asks Arjuna to think of and worship His Virat Roopa - the Universal Form - thousands of mouths, thousands of eyes, thousands of hands and thousands of feet.

अग्निर्मूर्धा चक्षुषी चन्द्रसूर्यौ

दिशः श्रोत्रे वारिववृताश्च वेदाः।

वायुः प्राणो हृदयं विश्वमस्य

पद्भ्यां पृथिवी ह्येष सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा ॥

'His head is the highest sky, His eyes the sun and the moon, His ears the quarters, His vital Pranas the wind, His heart the space in the Universe and His footstool the earth. And He is the indwelling Spirit of all beings.'

यस्याग्निरास्यं द्यौर्मूर्धा खं नाभिश्चरणौ क्षितिः।

सूर्यश्चक्षुः दिशः श्रोत्रे तस्मै लोकात्मने नमः॥

'My salutations to Him who pervades the whole universe, whose mouth is the fire, head the Heaven, the navel the sky, the feet the earth, the eye the sun and the ears the quarters.'

This too is the universal aspect of worship. Wherever we turn our eyes, we perceive Him and Him only.

One is to meditate on the Self as the Universal Mind. And He is located in our heart of hearts.

When the Universal Form of Bhagavan was shown to Arjuna he was greatly terrified and Bhagavan had to appear before Him in His charming figure with four hands, smiling countenance, and yellow garb. If the Lord is seated in the hearts of all, everyone ought to feel His presence and be above all misery and suffering. But that is not the case. The reason is not far to seek. Only a clear mirror can give a reflection, not a dirty one. In the same way, as long as the mind is impure, it cannot feel His presence. Hence the necessity of Karma Yoga and Upasana (worship).

स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः।

'One attains to perfection by worshipping Me with one's duties'. One can purify his mind more and more by doing his assigned duty earnestly and sincerely. We have already dealt upon the necessity and importance of Karma Yoga and Upasana.

Pumping out must be our method. Pump out the Asuric (demoniac) tendencies in you and divinity will rush in. It is not an easy job. We have been fondling and caressing the world for such a long time that it would not leave us easily even if we want. You all know about the pet dog in Sri Ramakrishna's parable :

A certain man had a pet dog and he used to caress him and play with him all the time. A wise man once advised him not to fondle the dog so much. It was, after all, an unreasoning brute, and might turn round and bite him some day. The rich man thereafter tried to keep the dog away;

but his efforts were in vain. At last the rich man lost all sympathy for the dog, beat him severely and dashed him to the ground. From that time, the dog left him. In the same way as long as we fondle and caress this world of the senses, it will never leave us. We have to discard it completely and sensory pleasures as poison;

मुक्तिमिच्छसि चेत्तात विषयान् विषवत्थज

If you want salvation then discard all the sensory pleasures as poison;

क्षमार्जवदयातोषसत्यं पीयूषवद्भज

and cherish all the noble qualities like forebearance, straightforwardness, contentment, love, mercy and truthfulness as nectar.

The 16th Chapter deals with the attributes, Divine and demoniacal. The real Mahabharata Yuddha is always going on within us between the tendencies - Divine and Asuric. You may study the 16th chapter of the Gita and acquaint yourself with the divine qualities so that you can increase and strengthen them in order to defeat the demoniacal tendencies. If by the grace of God you get a proper guide and begin to serve him and mould your life according to his direction, know you are on the way to success, and everything will be simplified.

There are pitfalls in every path. So with Bhakti Marga too: But only in the initial stage. If we carelessly put fuel on a small fire it may be extinguished. But once the fire has flamed up we can put more and more without any fear of

putting it out. We must be very careful in our initial stage of progress. If we carelessly associate with anybody and everybody we are sure to meet with disaster. We should keep the best company of saints and not of those who are very worldly.

Bhagavan says,

क्लेशोऽधिकतरस्तेषामव्यक्तासक्तचेतसाम् ।

"The way of those who worship Nirguna Brahman is indeed beset with difficulties.' If our object is to get away from all the worldly cares, anxieties, trials and hardships we have to take away our minds from things mundane and give them wholly to the Lord. Never mind whether He is Saguna or Nirguna. There is little difference between them. Only worship of Saguna Brahman is easier. In any way let us increase our Prema towards the Lord. The flood of Devotion will not allow the slightest tinge of impurity to remain in our hearts. Our duty is to intensify by all means this flow of love towards Him.

तेषामहं समुद्धर्ता मृत्युसंसारसागरात् ।

'I shall take them beyond this ocean of death and birth in no time.' We have come here to enjoy, but we are miserable. A slave cannot enjoy. Only a master can get perfect enjoyment. We have to become masters of our own mind and Indriyas. जितं जगत् केन Who has conquered the whole world? मनो हि येन He who has got control over his mind. Says Bhagavan,

युक्ताहारविहारस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु ।

युक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्य योगो भवति दुःखहा ॥

'He alone transcends all fear and anxiety who practises meditation, who regulates his food and drink, his rest and leisure, his time of sleep as well as of his activity.'

The Lord also stresses the importance of Brahmacharya.

प्रशान्तात्मा विगतभीर्ब्रह्मचारिव्रते स्थितः।

Sri Sankara explains Brahmacharya as रतिविषयतृष्णात्यागः the absence of lust and passion towards the fair sex. Without this there will be no progress in spiritual life. We should practise Brahmacharya with effort, if we want to understand the real meaning of the Sastras and the words of the Guru. इदं ब्रह्मलोकं ब्रह्मचर्येण विन्दते - They attain to the Brahmaloaka through Brahmacharya.

The climax of Bhakti is reached in utter self-surrender to the Lord. Sri Bhagavan says,

सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज।

Do not take any responsibility upon yourself O Arjuna. Do your duty properly without looking into its brighter or darker aspects. Surrender yourself and the fruits of your work unto Me and become free.

अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः।

'I shall redeem you from all evils. Do not grieve.' These are the words of assurance given by the Lord to all His sincere devotees. With sincerity and earnestness we should follow His advice.



*Dedicated
to the
Giant Intellect and Tyagi,
the Great
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA
of Global fame
as a token of
Deep love and reverence.*

Sanjaya concludes his narrative by saying,

यत्र योगेश्वरः कृष्णो यत्र पार्थो धनुर्धरः।
तत्र श्रीर्विजयो भूतिर्धुवा नीतिर्मतिर्ममा॥

"Oh Dhritarashtra, where there is Krishna, the Yogeswara, and where there is Partha with bow and arrows ready to fight, there will not be any lack of success, prosperity, justice and the like. All these will be present in abundance. This is my firm and settled belief."

Forget not the Lord. Always remember Him. The enemies are lurking in your heart — passion, lust, avarice, anger, covetousness, delusion and pride. Seek help from the Lord, and be prepared to fight and conquer them. And in this way inherit the Kingdom of Heaven which is already in you.

CONCLUSION

I have tried to place before you some of the salient teachings of the Gita. We want to gain something real. को लाभः। आत्मावगमो हि यो वै । What is real gain? Knowledge of one's own Self. Know your Self and be free. This is the object of our life. The world is full of temptations. We are caught in the net of temptations and are ruined. To resist the temptations we must have extraordinary strength. नायमात्मा बलहीनेन लभ्यः This Atman is not meant for the weaklings.

Arjuna was hesitating to fight. How weak and timid

he was. But Krishna made him a strong man. Hear what Arjuna declares:

नष्टो मोहः स्मृतिर्लब्धा त्वत्प्रसादान्मयाच्युता।
स्थितोऽस्मि गतसन्देहः करिष्ये वचनं तव॥

'Oh Lord, by Thy grace my delusion and ignorance are all gone. I have come to know of my real nature. All doubts have vanished and I am fully established in the Self. I am ready to obey Thy command.

Gita will take us all to this state of freedom, in case we are sincere and earnest. Gita is a harmonious synthesis of all paths - Karma Yoga, Raja Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Jnana Yoga. All these are quite essential for the development of the soul. Our troubles and worries are due to our ignorance. Ignorance can be driven away only by Jnana. The light of Jnana shines only in the pure mind. All these Yogas are the means to purify our minds. Jnana is of two kinds, theoretical and practical, Paroksha and Aparoksha. Paroksha is the means and Aparoksha the end. Let us try to mould and shape our life as Gita wants us to do. Do not be proud and haughty. Observe the rules of Ahimsa, put up with all troubles with a pleasant mood; be straightforward. Seek a real Guru and serve him with your whole heart. Keep your body and mind pure. Do not waver; have a strong determination. Practise control of the mind, do not be running after sensual pleasures. Try to rise above the body idea. Open your eyes and observe the facts of life— birth, death, disease, old age, and the like. Study the world and do not be attached to your so-called home, wife and children. Let happiness come or misery, do not lose

courage, be always still and calm. Have faith and devotion in Him. Resort to a quiet and solitary place. Do not mingle with worldly-minded people. Make a study of books such as the Gita, the Upanishads and try to understand the spirit behind them.

Thus only, you will come face to face with Him, the Self. This is Aparoksha-jnana.

You become merged with the Lord and like the salt doll become one with the Ocean.

OM TAT SAT