

# Reflections on the teachings of the Bhagavad Gîtha.

## - T.K. Sribhashyam

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*Humanity holds in immortal reverence only those who have by the worthiness of their lives and by the wisdom of their thoughts and teachings deserved such reverence. My father, Sri T. Krishnamacharya was certainly one such person. I offer him my humble salutations.*

June 2010

### Prayer (Dhyâna Shloka)

*I bow to Krishna, the Guru of the universe, God, the son of Vasudeva,  
The destroyer of Kamsa and Chanura, the supreme bliss of Devaki.*

*I salute the All-bliss Madhava, whose compassion  
Makes the mute eloquent and the cripple cross mountains.*

One great particularity of the Githa consists in its open-mindedness and tolerance towards different teachings of divine wisdom and knowledge of truth. Sri Krishna's teaching has been to organise the various human communities into one peaceful, well-ordered and progressive whole in spite of the differences that might exist among each member of the community.

Another particularity of the Githa is that its teaching is one of synthesis, harmonisation and unification. It does not sow the seeds of separation, self-assertion and antagonism. That is why that the Gîta has a universal appeal. Sri Krishna's aim is to make the whole of mankind reach this holy destination in spite of its internal inequalities. In today's world, any religious and philosophical teaching which creates harmony, advocates toleration and conciliation is superior to any teaching that fosters disharmony, feeds self-assertion and provokes division.

In spite of the disparities that exist among men and among human communities in their inheritance, colour, creed and belief, the highest ethical and spiritual perfection is every man's right. The greatness of the Githa lies in its teaching not only of universal harmony and love, but also tender concern for and sympathy with man's weaknesses.

The Gîtha is a work the study of which is beneficial to one and all – young and old, learned and the unlearned, healthy or the sick, believer or the non-believer of God... It teaches us one of the most important lessons of life, the lesson of how we are to strive and to labour incessantly and be at the same time altogether unselfish so as to be helpful to our own moral progress. Sri Krishna offers us a solution to the problem of reconciling the life of active work and achievement with that of true renunciation and self-surrender.

All great religious or philosophical teachers in India and elsewhere have exposed their own doctrines regarding the great problems of life and death as well as that of God and the universe. They all have endeavored to maintain the truth of their teaching. But Sri Krishna exposes his doctrines without any partiality. He has clearly said that all ways of life, all forms of religious and systems of thought are good and worthy, so long as they are capable of strengthening the character of man and of enabling him to rise to higher levels of perfection and self-realisation.

Man's life here on earth is a pilgrimage to perfection. This perfection seems to be unattainable and beyond one's capacity as long as the divine goal of illumination is not reached. The role of any religion or philosophy is to guide the pilgrim to reach this goal of eternal bliss.

No way of life, no form of religion or no system of thought is good or perfect if it does not fit to the real needs of those who accept it as guidance in life. The value of religions and philosophies is not only dependent upon the truth and the wisdom contained in them and but also upon their suitability to strengthen and improve man's happiness, purity and nobility.

The greatness of the teaching of the Bhagavad Githa can be realised only when we understand and appreciate them in the light of our own reasoning and religious and spiritual aspirations.

**Fruits from the study of the Githa (*Phala Shurti*):**

*He who reads with devotion this sacred scripture, the Gîta,  
Becomes free from fear and sorrow, and attains the region of Sri Maha Vishnu.*

*He who meditates on the Gîta and practices Pranayama,  
Will also be freed from the sins of previous lives.*

(to be continued)

# Reflections on the teachings of the Bhagavad Gîtha.

## - T.K. Sribhashyam

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### Chapter 1

The venerable masters like Bhishma, Drona and Kripa were possessed of great wisdom and they sincerely loved justice and peace. Yet, strange as it may look, they took part in the war against the Pândavas.

Obedience or loyalty to constituted authority forms the main basis of order in the working of all human institutions. In the choice between the duty of obedience to such an authority and the imposition of one's conviction, human welfare does not depend on one's conviction but loyalty to the authority. All soldiers fighting for their country may not be convinced of the justice of the policy of their government on the war. Yet, during the war, they are obedient to the orders of the State. The unity of the army does not depend on the personal convictions of each and every soldier but on the loyalty of the entire army towards the authority of the State. The venerable masters who are in a way employed by the king Duryodhana show their loyalty to the King even if they were against this war.

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Mercy, charity and love even when selfishly exercised, are laudable. But it should be borne in mind that this kind of mercy or charity or love with a selfish motive is lower in character, as it is apt to lead us along wrong paths, preventing us from acting with a higher value. Only disinterested mercy, charity and love are capable of bestowing on our soul the salvation of everlasting freedom and blissfulness.

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Those who selfishly seek pleasures and wealth cannot enjoy in a completely selfish way all that they seek and acquire. No man is in a position to live absolutely selfishly and altogether for himself, so as to be totally unrelated to the persons and society around him. Our capacity to live well and to enjoy our life is largely dependent upon the strength and the intimacy of our relation to the society wherein we live. Unless we unite ourselves with the people around us so that they share our joys and sorrows, our power to enjoy life would be sterile.

Man can never be altogether selfish in his aims. It is impossible for his life to be confined within himself. Even a highly selfish man, with his love for wealth, power, fame and pleasure cannot find any satisfaction in life without the company and sympathy of others. It should be our common tendency to appreciate and share the joys and pleasures of others.

Punishment is a rod, *Danda*, for securing the welfare of mankind. It can be compared to medical treatment: just as all medical treatments have to aim at the final cessation of disease, so too all punishments have to be so given out in such a way as to make them disappear from the human society.

It is not the action itself that determines sin. Actions should not be judged in themselves and by means of their immediate consequences but by means of the motives behind them and the distant consequences which they are calculated to produce.

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A spiritual life is based on renunciation and non-resistance. But there is a difference between the non-resistance of a strong man, and that of a weak one who cannot retaliate. Yet if all men and women in a society or at least a great majority of them act by the temperament of calm serenity and unselfish un-worldliness, then the doctrine of non-resistance will form the best ethical ideal for such a society. Such a society will be able to easily change the minority that is selfish and often intent on provocation to establish serenity and unselfish un-worldliness in the entire society which in turn might stimulate other societies to follow such a principle.

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The responsibility of an individual to conduct himself aright in life is proportionate to his knowledge of what is right and what is wrong. The responsibility of an ignorant man who through his ignorance does what is wrong cannot be measured with the same consequences as that of one who knows what is right and what is wrong but nevertheless does what is wrong. Yet, the conduct which is based on wrong or insufficient knowledge is often quite as culpable as that which is want only mischievous. Therefore, we have to make sure of the truthfulness, accuracy and adequacy of our knowledge, before we accuse any one of the responsibility.

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*Dharma*, virtue is that which is done under the prompting of scriptural injunctions, or that through which both prosperity here **and** salvation hereafter are to be obtained. The development of the social and moral progress of mankind is not possible without the aid of social and family virtues.

Culture, character, courage and self-sacrifice are like carefully cultivated garden products, and the *Dharma* is like the fences that protect our garden. Human beings do not live on the products of a wild field.

The physical constitution of a man is in a large extent responsible for his mental and moral make-up. The Indian Philosophy makes a distinction between the soul and the material body in which it resides. The manifestation of the activities of the body is not determined by the soul but by the profile (*Prakrithi*) of the physical body even if anatomically and chemically there may be no fundamental difference between the bodies. The difference between two individuals is due to the subtle quality of the matter that constitutes the two bodies which the Indian Philosophy calls *Guna*, classified into *Sathva*, *Rajas* and *Thamas*.

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Man has no greater enemy or no greater friend than himself and surprisingly in both the cases, he neglects himself. His real struggle is not to avoid getting into a hell but to avoid creating one in him. It is in this struggle that man has in him his best friend or his worst enemy.

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Every one is duty bound to act according to the rules and regulations laid down by *Dharma*. The right duty is to act unselfishly to accomplish good unto him and to the society.

Even if we should not act or do anything against *Dharma*, it is not said that we should give up all **legitimate** enjoyments in life and all worthy wealth well acquired. We have the freedom to utilise honourably the opportunities of enjoyment which life affords to us on the condition that those opportunities come to us in accordance with a plan of life without violating the principles of *Dharma*.

*Dharma* is eternal; but pain and pleasure are transient.

The soul is eternal, but the reason of it being in this body is transient.

Do not give up *Dharma* out of the desire for enjoyment or out of fear or covetousness

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**Fruits from the study of the Githa (*Phala Shurti*):**

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Becomes free from fear and sorrow, and attains the region of Sri Maha Vishnu.*

*He who meditates on the Gîta and practices Prânâyâma,  
Will also be freed from the sins of previous lives.*

(to be continued)

# REFLECTIONS ON THE TEACHINGS OF THE BHAGAVAD GÎTHA.

- T.K. SRIBHASHYAM

## Chapter 2 (1<sup>st</sup> Part)

The true discipleship consists in the disciple's serious earnestness to know what *Dharma* is and in the conviction that his peace and happiness depend on it. True discipleship consists in the disciple surrendering himself to the master. The teaching imparted will not produce best results if the disciple offers any resistance, even unconsciously. Even if the teacher is good, great and wise, it will be hard for him to exercise and confer the required illumination on the mind of the disciple if there is any taint of distrust or hypocrisy. Reverence for the teacher is a very highly valuable quality in the life of the disciple who is true and worthy. The teacher's good temper is of great value in making his teaching reach the mind and heart of the disciple. If the teacher is easily irritated by the assertive arguments of the disciple, then invariably such a teacher becomes repulsive and the mind and the heart of the disciple will not open freely to the teacher. Under such a circumstance, it becomes impossible for the teacher to impart anything of value into the disciple's mind. At the same time, it does not mean that the teacher does not allow the disciple to develop his own reason and judgement.

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The soul is immortal, immaterial and real. The feelings of pleasure and pain, of sorrow and of joy which are unreal and transient come forth from the relation the body has with the sense objects. The body is subject to birth, growth, decay and death. The very essence of our existence is **that** which was same in the past, that which is in the present identical to the past and that which will be the same in the future. The changes in the past, present and future is what constitutes the body but not the soul. The soul remains the same unaltered being from the beginning to the very end of every one of its embodied states of existence. The sensations of heat and cold and the feeling of pain and pleasure and those that give rise to these feelings are not constant and eternal. The embodiment which is at the source of our feelings and sensations is not real. We have to put up with these sensations and ought not to make them as the criteria of our life.

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Owing to *Karma* the soul becomes associated with a body and becomes subject to the influence of the transient material contacts which give rise to pleasure and pain. Owing to this association of the body that the soul is mistaken to be born and to die. It is only when this association is severed that it becomes possible for the soul to be *seen* in its own nature. When we freely fall victims to the tendencies arising from these material contacts, then the bondage of our soul in matter is confirmed. On the contrary, if we live our life in such a

way that the pains and pleasures, resulting from the contact of our soul with the body do not at all trouble us and if we exhibit our will and strength of character to look upon all pains and pleasures with equal indifference, then we put an end to the associated bondage of the soul to the body.

This association is due to the *Karma* of the embodied soul arising from the activities of its previous conditions of life. The theory that the soul has had other bodies at other times to dwell in is the cause for its present association with matter. This association may continue in the coming conditions of rebirth owing to the *Karma* produced in the present and past lives. Where the past actions are responsible for the present one, the present with the past will in turn become responsible for the future actions. If an embodied soul chooses and manages to live a life of perfect unselfishness and non-attachment to the fruits of work, then it is possible for the soul to get rid of the limitations of cause and effect and become free from material bondage.

Since that which is real can endure, the body being subject to changes is not real and hence cannot endure. Soul is what is real and essential in our existence.

The distinction between the soul and the body is that the soul pervades the body while the latter cannot pervade the soul. Furthermore, the soul is indestructible, eternal and immeasurable. This knowledge is called the knowledge of discernment between the body and the soul.

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Death of a body does not mean the destruction of the reality of our being. The soul being the reality is not destroyed at the death of a physical embodied body. Death itself is nothing more than a particular variation in relation to the nature of the soul's embodiment, whose very existence is intended to fulfil the soul's destiny. The body is simply an instrument by means of which the soul has to work out its own liberation from the bondage of *Karma*. From the standpoint of *Karma*, the object of an embodied human life is that each soul may be enabled to work out its own destiny and ultimately realise its natural condition of absolute freedom from bondage of matter.

Death is only a natural and necessary precursor of a new life, just as the death of the seed is inevitably involved in the birth of a new plant and its life. Even as the inner potentiality of the dying seed determines markedly the nature of the new plant and its new life, even so the imprinted impressions of a soul's dying embodiment has a determining effect upon the nature of its new embodiment and its new life.

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Sri Krishna says that the soul is eternal (*Nitya*), all-pervading (*Sarvagatha*), firm (*Sthānu*), immovable (*Achala*) and everlasting (*Sanāthana*). He also gives some negative qualifications which are appropriate to matter: the soul cannot be cut, it cannot be burnt, it cannot be made wet, and it cannot be dried.

The soul is eternal in the sense of its being free from annihilation, a kind of destruction producing in nothingness. Even if the matter, in its abstract sense, is indestructible, yet, it undergoes mutation whereas a soul would not undergo mutation. The soul was the same in the past, it would be so at present and it would be the same in the future – it is eternal in time.

Soul is all-pervading and as such it pervades the universe. It is present in every being of the universe. So long as its oneness with the Supreme Soul is not realised, the notion of

multitudes of souls will be established. In fact, it is the aim of every human being to realise this oneness through the practice of Yoga.

The distinction between the individual soul and the Universal Soul can be well understood through the analogy of the spatial expanse which is limited by the earthly wall of each and every pot and the great outer expanse of space which is unlimited. If all the pots are broken into bits, then at once this differentiation disappears. Similarly, the all filling and unlimited Universal Soul is the same as the limited individual soul. The fundamental difference is that the later is conceived under limited conditions while the former is free from any conditional existence.

Logically, the fact that the soul is all-pervading confirms necessarily that it is firm and immovable. The firmness of soul is with regard to its freedom from changing in relation to past while its immovability would be in relation to its incapability in undergoing any change in the future.

Similarly, the unchanged and the unchangeable soul has to be everlasting, that is to say, it is everlastingly the same in nature, indestructible and immortal.

Naturally, our material embodiment is deprived of these five qualifications.

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To put in very simple terms, what constitutes the contents of our consciousness is the result of our perception of matter and material thing. In this sense, if the matter were unthinkable and unknowable (as the soul), then our mind would be very nearly blank. Even if the soul is unthinkable in the sense that it cannot be perceived and conceived in the way we perceive and conceive matter, it is possible to perceive the soul if we undergo some specific psychological discipline which is usually termed Yoga.

The realisation of the soul is therefore a particular kind of experience which cannot be put to words in the same way as we can describe our experience of any material object. If we want to know the real nature of the soul, we have to practice Yoga of Patanjali which provides us that state of mind which alone is capable of showing the real nature of the soul.

Language develops out of the normal and ordinary experiences of human beings to satisfy their common and ordinary needs of mental expression. They are different from those of the realisation of the soul. So, no language is capable of adequately expressing this transcendental experience of a Yogi. All verbal descriptions of the soul would be not only strange but also inadequate.



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It is not the act in itself that is either sinful or virtuous. Man commits sin by violating his duty, either by deliberately not doing his duty or by wantonly doing what is not his duty. Thus, the real source of cause of sin or virtue resides in the violation of duty.

The good name of a man is dependent upon the goodness of his life, which consists largely in his doing all his duties in life in the manner in which it ought to be done. Worthy men are often unjustly censured quite as much as unworthy are undeservedly honoured. The eternal disgrace of an evil reputation for unrighteousness is what all men of honour must dread, much more than the death itself. Most of us have a natural tendency to exaggerate the merits as well as the demerits of others, so much so that when we begin to think well of someone, we think very well of him and when we begin to think ill of someone, we think very ill of him. The end result is that we are not truthful to ourselves.

In all actions one should take into consideration the relation between his own interests and those of the other people with whom the action is connected. So long as there is no open conflict between the one's own interests and the interests of these other people, one may consider his action as just, wise and good. Even if every one of us is free to make the best use of our own endowments and opportunities, we should not unfavourably overlap the sphere of another man's activities.

To be free from sin, we should not only perform our action properly and dutifully, we should also develop total absence of internal motives of self-interest in our actions.

To acquire a sense of duty, one has to raise above all personal desires and aversions by becoming free from the misleading influence of pleasure and pain, of gain and loss and of victory and defeat.

The moral value of steady and well-aimed effort consists in its enabling the mind to be firm and keeping it free from all those deviations that are caused by temptations. If we use our mental energy fully for the performance of our duties, it becomes possible for us to succeed to a large extent in commanding the needed power for concentrating the mind. To keep our mind in one and the same condition always we should not let our mind wander from motive to motive and from object to object.

We should discharge our duties always well, and be at the same time free from the attachment of ownership in relation to all the advantageous results which may accrue from the proper discharge of those duties. One who works with selfish motives is rarely satisfied with what he gets and is ever on the lookout to enrich himself more and more even at the expense of others.

All those who seek to reach the divine goal should take care that their lives are devoted, with a singleness of purpose, to the unceasing performance of high and noble duties unselfishly undertaken and equally unselfishly accomplished.

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The man of firm mind and steady wisdom is he whose mind has been made one-pointed through concentration and earnest devotion to unselfish duty.

If we compare the potency of our pleasures and pains which we actually feel in our lives with those we fancy in our mind combined with our hopes and fears, we will realise that the actual pleasures and pains which we experience are not so powerful to draw us away from our spiritual path. On the other hand, our fancied hopes and fears are quite capable of drawing us away from the right path, not to speak of our spiritual life.

There is a certain amount of correspondence between what is pleasing and what is good on the one hand and what is painful and what is evil on the other. It so happens in life that the ardent search after pleasure often leads a man to ruin, even as the voluntary acceptance of suffering and pain may well lead him to liberation.

Even if whatever is good is considered as pleasing and whatever is bad is considered as painful, we cannot say that whatever is pleasing is good and whatever is painful is bad. The force of fancy to create selfishness is much stronger than the force that is possessed by the actualities of life. To succeed in realising the true self in us, our mind should be guarded from the corrosion of selfishness. The feeling of internal satisfaction (satisfied in his own heart with himself) is a noble and a happy experience in itself.

*(to be continued)*

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# REFLECTIONS ON THE TEACHINGS OF THE BHAGAVAD GÎTHA.

- T.K. Sribhashyam

## Chapter 2 (2n Part)

External objects operate on the mind through our senses creating sensations in us. These sensations give rise to pleasure and pain which in turn give rise to attachment, fear and anger (*Râga*, *Bhaya* and *Krodha*). In ordinary life, we have a large number of sensations of various kinds. Whenever external stimuli produce sensations in us, we find that some of them are pleasant and that others are painful. Our natural tendency is to seek more and more pleasant sensations and to avoid the painful ones. The longing for the pleasure necessarily carried with in the feeling of aversion to painful feelings. So, *Râga*, pleasure, automatically implies *Dvesha*, aversion.

Steady wisdom and a firm mind are acquired when we cultivate the will-power to withstand the temptations of pleasure or pain to become free from longings and aversions. When we become impartial in our own personal appreciation of pleasure and pain, we will be freed from the clutches of fear or disappointment. Desire and aversion feed fear and anger. It is hard for most of us to resist the tendencies of desire and aversion which are respectively caused by pleasure and by pain. Through the practice of mental concentration and the exercise of steady will power, it is possible not only to prevent the common outward play of the senses in search of objects of external world, but also make the very perceptive power of our senses operate inwards to perceive our real self. So, to obtain a steady wisdom, we should cultivate this power of consciously withdrawing the senses into ourselves.

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We do not make our mind strong by merely depriving it of its food of sensations because it only makes us partially incapable of perceiving the sensations. Furthermore, we are only potentially feeding fear and aversion in us.

It is not sufficient to withdraw our senses from the objects, we have also to clear our mind from getting attracted to past likes and dislikes which is only possible when our mind is turned inwards to enable us to perceive our true self. It is our nature to counteract one relish by another, usually of a better one!

The most appropriate and effective means to subdue our senses is to make our mind become intensely absorbed in meditation upon our True Self or upon God as the supreme object of devotion and attainment. It is only such meditation which, by giving rise to the ineffable bliss of Self realisation or God realisation, can outwit our relish for pleasures of the senses.

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When the object of our meditation is other than God, then our mind becomes actively engaged in coveting the various pleasures of the senses even if they seem to produce mental strength in us.

That meditation the object of which is God is the only meditation capable of producing the great strength which is needed to perceive the Self or God.

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The sense of attachment acts in such a way that our mind desire that to which it has become so attached. Consequently, we not only become attached to what we cherish in our hearts but we also wish to enjoy all such pleasurable objects of the senses that are at the command of our fond of attachment. We have to bear in mind that anger is the result of disappointment caused by the non-fulfilment of a cherished desire. The stronger our attachment is to an object of pleasure or of enjoyment, the greater is our desire to obtain it. The more intense such desire is in us, the keener would be our sense of disappointment when such a desire is unfulfilled. And the keener this sense of disappointment, the more violently we react with anger.

When we are angry, our mind loses its rationality, be it for a short time. Anger gives rise to loss of intelligence, and deprives us the power of reasoning. In the fit of anger, our mind becomes so full of confusion and bewilderment that it loses the strength as well as the clearness of its faculty of memory. We are definitely apt to lose our memory if we freely and frequently give way to anger. Loss of memory leads eventually to the destruction of intelligence. Without memory and without conceptual ideas, the mind would be nearly empty hindering intellectual activities. Therefore, when memory vanishes, the intelligence is almost starved to death and with its death we lose our rationality and our power to distinguish right from wrong. This would ultimately lead to the ruin of our higher destiny. We should therefore control our impulse of anger. All the ramifications of anger feed sooner or later our impulse of anger.

Conquest of sense activities is one of the means to avoid this vicious circle. Conquest of senses must be a voluntarily conscious and sustained mental effort. Weakening the power of the senses by the use of outer means may not put a stop to the inner longing for the enjoyment of the pleasure of the senses. We should learn to resist temptations and to overcome them instead of running away from them. The harm is not in perceiving the various objects of the senses so as to experience all the consequent pleasures and pains., **but** it is in becoming attached to the objects of sense-enjoyment. Similarly, the harm is not in feeling the pleasures and the pains which arise in consequence of such perception, but it is really due to the distraction which is caused by the desires and aversions arising from sensations. This type of distraction causes in us misery, sorrow and distress. Moreover, they make our vision of truth unreal and distorted. When we resist distractions, then our misery, sorrow and distress

vanish and our mind freed from all these bias, our intelligence becomes strong and worthy instrument to enable us to know the truth.

Our attitude towards our surroundings determines the internal peacefulness or agitation of our mind, so much so that our mind can make a heaven or hell of our life.

We become what we earnestly and seriously imagine ourselves to be and our mental peacefulness and our true happiness depend on it.

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The happiness that we acquire through peace of mind is not the same as the pleasure that the objects of senses produce in us. Such a pleasure is transient and becomes easily changed into pains or, it gives rise to pain. It is not very wise to consider such a pleasure as real and everlasting. Such an attitude only undermines our happiness and deprives us of our steady mind.

The happiness of the blissfully peace of mind is not disturbed by the pleasures and pains arising from the sensations of the senses, and does not allow itself to be carried away by the impulses of desire and aversion.

This supreme happiness born out of blissful peace of mind is what we should seek for in our life. For this purpose we have to make our mind free from the distraction of desires and aversion by appropriate practice of meditation and mental concentration. When our mental activities are tamed to give priority to those activities that produce peace of mind, then nothing will deprive us of our peace of mind.

While the experience of pleasures and of pains is quite normal in our life, we should see to it that they do not control our desires and aversions. Unless the anchored relish for the pleasures of the senses is completely dislodged, we will not conquer our senses nor will we have self-restraint

Our mind is of two kinds, that which is pure and that which is impure. The mind which aims at securing the objects of desire is impure and that which keeps itself away from such objects of desire is pure. Hence, mind itself is the cause of the bondage of our souls, as it is also of their final liberation. Mind which is attached to the objects of sense enjoyment gives rise to the bondage of the soul while that which is free from such attachment leads to the very salvation of the soul. Attachment would only lead to multitudes of desires that arise in our heart. Freedom from it necessarily implies freedom from all hankering after sense-enjoyment. In the absence of an internal freedom and moral purity, it would be difficult (nay impossible) to curb our selfishness or egotism.

Blissful peace of mind is the source of all true happiness. Without the acquisition of such a peace of mind, we cannot have real happiness.

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We may aim to acquire three types of happiness in our life:

- Happiness from our state of worldliness;
- Happiness by developing psychic powers through religious practices;
- Happiness through steady wisdom with the aim of self-realisation, living an absolutely disinterested life of unselfish duty.

Naturally, the third type of happiness is superior to all the others and which every one of us should aim at. It does mean that we should discard the other two types of happiness, but third type is that state which Sri Krishna calls *Brâmhi*, and it should be our highest object of attainment because it leads us to the state of 'Bliss of Bramha' (*Bramhanirvâna*).

## Bhagavad Githa, Chapter 3

Deeds in themselves cannot create the bondage of Karma. What creates is the motive with which we do our deeds. The possible exception is when we carry out their duties. They are not dependent upon likes and dislikes nor are they to be carried with selfish motives. Yet, even duties will produce the bondage of Karma if done with motives of selfishness.

To an intellectual thinker, it would occur that to take care of the mind that thinks and feels is morally more important than to take care of the deed that is to be striven for and done. But to a practical man, to whom actual living of the life is more important than it is to an intellectual thinker, the actual work of life would be of much greater importance than intellectual reasoning. Work without the help of thought is as productive of harm as mere thought which is unassociated with work.

Every theory has to lead to the formulation of the correct practice, and correct practice in its turn has to give rise to the proper apprehension of the truth of the theory. In other words, without any reflection on the theory, practice may precipitate us into pitfalls, and without the support of practice, theory may end in mere dream or delusion.

The imprint of Karma and its correlated tendencies may get themselves woven into the very constitution of our body. They may become such an essential part of our very structure as will influence all our functions in life, physical, physiological, or psychological. These imprints may become ingrained in the mind itself, so that, when the mind is primarily modified by those tendencies, the structure of the body gets adjusted to the nature of the mind within.

According to Krishna, in the relation between the mind and the body, the mind is the master and the body the servant. When the body is inactive, the activity of the mind is in itself enough to give rise to bondage. If the physical activity is not associated with the mental taint of selfishness, then it would not give rise to bondage. If we want to obtain freedom from the influence of Karma, it would not be possible by merely being idle or doing no work.

If we believe in the life of passive inaction as the means of attaining salvation and we do not work at all, still, we are not free from the inner attachment to the pleasures of the senses. The passion in the mind, which seeks the pleasureable objects of senses, will burn within him. The only control we exercise is just on the organs of activity.

One who performs actions as is natural, necessary and unavoidable would keep the mind free from all interested attachments to the pleasurable objects of the senses.

It is quite as possible to make the mind unattached, as it is impossible to make the body wholly passive and utterly inactive. It is a physiological fact that the body is ever active until few hours after death. It is impossible to bring to a halt these activities whereas

it is possible to stop the mental activities and yet be alive. The active man with an unattached mind is on the true road which leads to the goal.

Work can cause the bondage of Karma, and it can remove it also. When we undertake to do a work, which is not obligatory, we often do so out of interested motives. That is why, *niyata karma* or obligatory duties are distinguished from *kârmya karma*, work with motives of interest and desire. However, when obligatory work is done with interested motives, they also produce the taint of Karma.



When our only delight is in our own self, we are as selfish as the one who is engaged in the intellectual self-realisation. Both are satisfied with themselves and are pleased with themselves. They think that there is nothing to be gained in this world apart from the self-centered satisfaction. They are different from those who live to serve and worship God and carry out all their duties as acts of divine worship. Those who are convinced that whatever they do is really service rendered unto God, will attain self-realisation. The selfish man distinguishes the work which is advantageous to him from that which is not so. He utilises this distinction in his life feeling that he gains more by doing the work that is advantageous to him, and by not doing those that are not advantageous to him.

Freedom from all selfish attachments is not in itself enough to enable one to attain unto God. One has to live the life of work. To learn to look upon life as a means of serving God, and to do everything that we do in life as an act of divine worship, are conducive to develop unselfishness in us.



When God incarnates, there is no compelling power behind Him forcing Him to become embodied in matter. In relation to Him, embodiment really implies no bondage of Karma. He does not have to strive for Liberation. He does not have to use his material embodiment for enabling Him to free Himself. The pleasing objects of the senses are not the things He desires to seek and obtain. So too, there is no need for Him to undergo the disciplines prescribed for us, the embodied soul. He is born with self-mastery. The physical and physiological tendencies have no compelling power over Him. His will is both law and fact in His universe. All His qualities are complete. He has no unfulfilled desire.



A learned man is not the one who has much book-learning or one of any very specially trained intellectual cleverness. He, who has learnt to distinguish the real from the unreal, striving for spiritual emancipation, is the man of true wisdom. His freedom from selfish attachment, and his desire to guide the world on the path of purity and progress distinguishes him from the unlearned man, who is selfishly attached to the work he does as well as to the results that accrue from that work. A man of knowledge



may not always be a man of wisdom; but a man of ignorance can very well be a man lacking in wisdom.



Our nature consists of two different aspects; one is often called the higher nature and the other, lower nature. They are also termed as spiritual and carnal. Because of these two aspects, our life is also subject to the mixed influences of flesh and spirit. Generally, the influence of the body is apt to be stronger in our life. It is so strong that it keeps the higher influence (spiritual) entirely in the background. Where the flesh is allowed free scope to assert itself, there the spirit is forced to retreat. Wherever the spirit is encouraged to assert itself, there the flesh is rendered weak. Generally, the carnal life is aggressively strong. Moreover, the social surrounding tend the carnal life to be more antagonistic. It is necessary to assert the influence of the spirit against that of the flesh by reducing the impact of *i-ness* and *mine-ness*. Philosophic wisdom and religious faith help us to put into practice these principles. Even if philosophical wisdom leads to truth, it is not reliable without the support of faith, faith that God is the ultimate agent of every work.

The senses have a tendency to pull down the life of man to the lower nature and it is the will that has to pull it up to the higher nature. We are subjected to these two opposing forces owing to the very necessities of its continuation. As soon as the will shows signs of giving way, the senses will become aggressive and assertive so that in the end the will almost ceases to exist and we become a slave of our senses.

Unless the power of the will is safeguarded from the very beginning, it is apt to be weakened and even destroyed. A steady and wakeful control of the senses is necessary to avoid accumulation of Karma.

Religious life insists on a full and hearty recognition of the unrivalled superiority of God as the Lord of the Universe. There are people whose feeling of *ahamkâra*, *i-ness* is so great they cannot bring themselves even to look upon God as the real and ultimate agent of all the work they do. The intensity of their *i-ness* contaminates their blood with envy and makes them rebel against superiority of any being, leave alone God. Religious life is impossible without faith; and true faith can find no place in the heart which is defiled by envy. One who walks in the path of spiritual life should, therefore, be free from all forms of envy.

All of us are not born with the same endowments or inherited capacities. The Gunas of the Prakrithi constituting our embodiment determine the Guna of the work that we do in life. Life offers opportunities for the inborn potentialities to become actualised in the visible form of work and the results.

Nature compels us to seek bread and water and to eat and drink it; but she does not compel us to seek and to enjoy all the various delicacies of the culinary art. It is the love of pleasure and the abhorrence of pain that make the weak will wishful. It is the wishfulness of will so produced that makes mankind stray behind the boundary laid

down by Nature. We sin only when we stray beyond this boundary and wander about in the limitless fields of pleasing fancy and sense allurements. Nature is sure to cause our soul to become subject to bondage. *Desire is never appeased by the enjoyment of the objects of desire, but is made to increase all the more.*



It is the will that determines the aim of life: whether that aim is to secure personal advantages in the form of pleasure, power or profit, or whether it is to the service of mankind and the salvation of the soul. A wise man will certainly choose the service of man and the liberation of his soul.

It is the will that directs the attention. It is the faculty of intellection (Buddhi) that points out to the will the object towards which it has to direct the attention. The mind (Manas) cannot cooperate with the senses, unless it is itself directed by the intellect first and is then stimulated to act by the will. All our experiences would be of no use in guiding us, if the intellect does not operate upon what the senses and the faculty of attention have produced together.

Although mental attention and concentration are directly under the control of the will, still it is the intellect which makes the operation of the will rational and consistent with all the ordinary laws of Nature.

Psychological experimentation and analytical reasoning are the processes that are needed to realise the reality of the soul. The first one is what is often called Ashtânga Yoga or Dhyâna Yoga. The aim of Dhyâna Yoga is to make us get into that state of extreme mental concentration during which we will not be responsive to external stimulations. Yet, we are not absolutely mindless as to be unconscious of our own existence. Apprehension of such a pure consciousness establishes the reality independent of external stimulations.

When our sense organs feel and perceive, when our faculty of attention is steadily attentive, when our intellect classifies and generalises our mental contents actively and effectively, even then something more is needed to integrate our experiences. We simply feel that the experiences are *mine*. In fact, this sense of *mineness* in relation to our experience is something without which we cannot *at all* conceive ourselves as a being.

When the senses and the faculties of attention and intellection perform their functions fully and in due harmony, all that we can have is only that kind of experience, which is directed and rationalised from moment to moment. To unify these various momentary experiences we require the faculty of memory and also the instinctive conviction of self-evident certainty in regard to the rememberer of past experiences, that is ourselves. It is a fact that we who receive the impressions of experience are the same as the the one who revives those impressions inasmuch as the revived impressions are felt by the receiver, who is at the same time conscious that we are ourselves their reviver.

It is logical that this unifying basis of consciousness forms the true source of our inner power – the soul.

