



The Steadfast Wisdom  
Vinoba

Translated by:  
Lila Ray



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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Steadfast Wisdom is an English rendering of the "Sthitaprajna Darshana" (Marathi), a compilation of the discourses given by Acharya Vinoba Bhave on the last eighteen verses of the second chapter of the Bhagavat Gita. The talks were given by Vinoba in Seoni Jail to his fellow prisoners in 1944 while he was incarcerated as a Satyagrahi in connection with the Indian Freedom Struggle.

The original talk in Marathi has been translated in many other Indian languages and have received wide publicity in the country.

The English translation is mainly based on the Hindi version of the book though the original Marathi has also been referred to by the translator during the course of her work. Mrs. Lila Ray is a versatile writer and has many English books, original as well as translated, to her credit. We are very thankful to her for her cooperation in this noble cause. Our thanks are also due to all those friends who have helped us in the publication of the book.

We express our profound sense of satisfaction at being able to publish this book about Steadfast Wisdom, an ideal which Gandhi strove throughout his life to reach.

## **ABOUT THE SECOND EDITION**

We have the pleasure of bringing about the Second Edition of the book. Mrs. Lila Ray has been kind enough to revise it.

30th January, 1973.

Publishers

## ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

**LILA RAY** :

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Social worker. Book designer.

### TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

In 1956, when I was obliged to discontinue my participation in Vinobaji's Land Movement for reasons of health, Asha Devi Aryanayakam suggested I choose one of Vinoba Bhave's books and translate it into English. I chose *Sthitaprajna Darshana—The Steadfast Wisdom*.

Three years later the translation was ready or serialisation in the Gandhi Marg. I wish to set on, record my gratitude to Shri T. K. Mahadevan for the care and consideration with which he handled the manuscript, checking, suggesting, correcting, throughout the period of its publication.

The Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan expressed their desire to publish **The Steadfast Wisdom** as a book. The services of both Marathi and Hindi experts were forthcoming. The manuscript was once more examined and revised. Shri Siddharaj Dhadha has been extremely helpful.

The result is, we hope, a translation that will have lasting value. In the case of a book as important as **The Steadfast Wisdom** the translator must take every care to be as scholarly as possible. The work is, in fact, best undertaken by a team. The assistance I have received from experts and laymen alike, through both criticism and constructive suggestion, enables me to state emphatically that this translation is a co-operative venture, the product of the joint labour of a group of people devoted to the task of making Vinobaji's commentary on those verses of the Gita which describe the Perfect Man available to the English reader in all the profundity and originality of his thought.

CALCUTTA :

Lila Ray

28th February, 1965.

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\* Captions of Chapters are the translator's choice.

## Chapter I

### THE QUESTION

#### (1)

1. A very famous part of the Gita describes the distinctive features of the Steadfast Wisdom. No other part of the book, in either ancient or modern times, has been so well known. There is a reason for this. The Steadfast Wisdom characterises the Gita ideal of a perfect man. The word itself belongs to the Gita specifically. It is not found in any earlier book and has been adopted freely in subsequent ones. Various alternative terms have also been used to describe the man of Steadfast Wisdom in the Bhagvad Gita. He is spoken of as the man of perfect action, *karmayogi*, one liberated in life, *jivanmukta*, a master of Yoga, *yogarudha*, a man of faith, *bhagvad-bhakta*, one beyond attributes, *gunatita*, a man of gnosis, *jnana-nistha*. In different passages of the Gita he is thus described in different ways. But these descriptions have been presented by others also. In the Gita they are spoken of in connection with the different spiritual disciplines. They are not alien to the man of Steadfast Wisdom, being aspects of his nature. The characteristics of this Wisdom have been included in these descriptions; as, for instance, in the fifth chapter, where the adjective, *Sthira-buddhi*, or steadiness of mind, is listed among the qualities distinguishing a Sannyasin or Yogi. In the Twelfth Chapter the description of a Bhakta or devotee is brought to a conclusion with the adjective *sthiramati*, steadiness of conviction. Without steadiness of conviction no ideal can be realized. The importance of this section, is, therefore generally recognised. The commentator, Samkaracharya, presents the characteristics of Steadfast Wisdom as a proof of the achievement of liberation in life, *jivanmukti*. This is, the only detailed consideration of the meditative aspects of the final ideal from the point of view of the seeker.

2. In order to understand the distinguishing characteristics of Steadfast Wisdom it is necessary to consider their antecedents. This is done at the end of the second chapter. The introductory analysis has been outlined in two parts: (1)

Samkhya—self-knowledge of Brahman and (2) Yoga, the knowledge, of union or the art of living according to self-knowledge. Samkhya. When knowledge fuses with art, wisdom or the awareness of Brahman is perfected. This is true of any or all knowledge. Take music for an example. Of what use will knowledge do to one who, though he learns the art of singing, does not practice it? On the other hand, a person may cultivate his voice but if he has no knowledge, his progress ends there. The same holds true with spiritual wisdom and, consequently, in human life. Man's knowledge of truth is concealed in his mind and becomes manifest in his action. His behaviour alone reveals to himself and to others the extent of his knowledge. Through it he comes to know himself. There may be a disparity between knowledge and practice, but there should not be any conflict between the two. And the gap must be reduced and closed as assiduously as possible. This is the task of the Yogic intelligence. Tulsidas imagined the heart of saint to be like the confluence of three rivers. Devotion or *bhakti*, he calls the Ganges and work or Karma, the Jamuna. Saraswati, the hidden river, he equates with *brahmavidya*, knowledge of Brahman. Thus he conveys to us the fact that *brahmavidya* is a hidden knowledge, a knowledge not evident to the eye, like the river Saraswati. It is brought out into the open, made manifest and articulated by the Yogic intelligence. This Yogic intelligence guides the seeker. Its foundation, the basis of this Yogic intelligence, is knowledge of the truth, Samkhya Buddhi. A house cannot be built without a foundation and a foundation without a superstructure is useless and without meaning. Fire is latent in a matchstick. In articulate. When the match is struck the fire flashes out, becomes manifest. An intelligence of fine penetration can perceive the fire while it is still latent. It is visible to everybody when it bursts into flame. All become aware of its power. Samkhya, and the Yogic intelligence are related to each other in a similar way.

3. The Yogic intelligence first shows itself in the determination of duty. Until duty has been determined no spiritual discipline can begin. Once certainty in regard to duty has been reached the next step is the concentration of one's energies in spiritual endeavour, sadhana. To rely completely up one's own efforts, unconcerned about the outcome, without a thought of reward, is

known as *sadhana-nistha*, complete absorption in one's sadhana. This is the second step. The third step is the achievement of inner equilibrium and a tranquil state of mind, i.e. *samadhi*. When *samadhi* becomes so stable that no distraction can disturb it, when it is unshakable and unchangeable, the Steadfast Wisdom is achieved. The person of Steadfast Wisdom is one over whom no impulse, thought or even the Veda-Vachana, i. e. the commandments of scriptures, has any influence, and whose *samadhi* is unswerving and steady. There are, therefore, four steps in the practice of the art of living in the light of the Yogic intelligence: (1) the determination of one's sadhana; (2) concentrated effort with no thought of reward; (3) equanimity or *samadhi*; (4) consolidated *samadhi*, undivided, unchangeable, unshakable and natural. This is the Steadfast Wisdom.

4. The yogic intelligence leads us ultimately to the Steadfast Wisdom. It was this statement which gave rise Arjuna's question. In order to know what the Steadfast Wisdom is like, he asked Krishna:

**What is the description of the man who has this firmly founded wisdom, whose being is steadfast in spirit, O Keshva (Krsna)? How should the man of settled intelligence speak, how should he sit, how should he walk?**

*sthitaprajnasya ka bhasa samadhisthasya kes'ava*

*sthitabhih kim prabhaseta kimasita vrajeta kim.*

(Gita II: 54)

In reply Krsna describes the Steadfast Wisdom and this discourse is the subject of our study.

(2)

5. It is necessary for us to understand the meaning of the word *samadhi* before we can understand what Krsna says. This is a word which gives rise to much confusion. The self-oblivion of meditation is commonly thought to be *samadhi*. But this is *dhyana samadhi*. If to be in the condition called *samadhi* means not to be aware of anything but what one is meditating upon, there would be no occasion for Arjuna's question. He asks how a person in this condition speaks



and behaves. Several commentators have, for this reason, divided their study of one who has the Steadfast Wisdom into two parts. The first concerns itself with the conduct of a person in a state of *samadhi* and second with his conduct when not in a state of *samadhi*. Though this is ingenious it is none the less mistaken, for it overlooks the fact that the Steadfast Wisdom described in this part of the Gita is a different kind of *samadhi*. The *samadhi* that rises and recedes is the *samadhi* of meditation, *dhyana samadhi*. The *samadhi* of the person of the Steadfast Wisdom is of a different quality, being the *samadhi* of realisation, *jhana samadhi*. It neither rises nor recedes. 'No spell can bind one who has it'—this is the way in which it is described. In other words it is a stable, not a fluctuating, state. This *samadhi* of meditation, *dhyana samadhi*, is fluctuating. Though it may last for four or five days the possibility of its receding is always present, *jhana samadhi* is not like this.

6. The *jhana samadhi* of the person of the Steadfast Wisdom is not subject to fluctuation; it is not objective. On the contrary, it is reflective, subjective, enduring. The word 'reflective' frightens some people. 'Oh', they exclaim, 'that means sitting idle, inert'. But this is not so. To sit quietly without action is also to participate in cyclic activity. There is no movement of this kind in the Steadfast Wisdom. It is, comprehensively, in all senses; unmoving, stable, reflective. This, however, does not mean that meditation plays no part in it. A person possessing this wisdom will certainly meditate in his leisure or when considering some plan of service. But meditation is not its distinctive feature. This is shown in the durable nature of the realisation which accompanies it. For the attainment of Steadfast Wisdom the Yoga of action and of meditation are both effective means. But these means are not the Steadfast Wisdom itself.

7. *Samadhi has been commonly taken to mean the samadhi of meditation, because of the Yoga-Shastra of Patanjali. But Patanjali does not regard the samadhi of meditation as the final achievement. The Patanjali Sutras are excellently arranged and based on experience. The first three of the 195 are seminal. They are to the doctrine of Yoga what the first four of the Brahma Sutras are to the latter. The first sutra introduces the science of Yoga. The*

*second describes yoga as the means by which the movement of the mind is controlled. The third shows how the seer becomes stable in his own nature. These three lines concisely sum up the entire Shastra. Samadhi is not even mentioned/Yoga is acquirable and is described as the withdrawing of the outgoing tendencies of the consciousness. Samadhi, that is to say, the samadhi of meditation, is also a propensity that Patanjali speaks of using as a means to the attainment of the Yoga of the stilled senses. The steps in its attainment are: (a) sraddha, faith (b) virya, energy, (c) smrti, self-recollectedness, (d) samadhi, equanimity, and (e) prajna, wisdom. To start with, there must be faith. From it springs energy. Faith and energy together lead to self-recollectedness. This finds its fullest expression in enthralled meditation, the samadhi of meditation. From this emerge sprajna, wisdom, and I call wisdom yoga when it becomes steadfast. Patanjali places prajna, wisdom, after samadhi, as the step which follows it. And he has taken this word prajna from the Gita. In the verse preceding Arjuna's question, Krsna tells him that he will achieve Yoga when his buddhi, intelligence, is permanently set in samadhi. To Patanjali yoga is the final objective. He speaks of prajna, wisdom, as a means of achieving it and indicates that samadhi is a means of attaining wisdom. When samadhi, as meditation, merges into a natural, eternal and permanent state it is called prajna. Thus the thought of the Gita is brought into accordance with the sutras of Patanjali.*

### (3)

8. Rationalism finds its supreme expression in the concept of the Steadfast Wisdom. Intellect, the pure intelligence, is regarded as the instrument of cognition. The intelligence that is free from the distorting influence of anger, hatred etc. is the true means of acquiring knowledge. A person says, 'Such and such a thing does not seem good to my way of thinking'. "Do not say 'my\* way of thinking," says the Gita. Forego the adjective 'mine\*' and see what the intelligence in its pure state has to convey. There is egoism in the feeling behind 'me' and 'mine'; there is bias, subservience to conditioning, bondage to circumstances. Are you an egocentric intellectual or just an intellectual? Freed

from bias, distortion, impulse, *samskara*, the intellect become stable, steadfast. By this is meant that it becomes straight, upright, unshakable. There is no wavering. In the tenth chapter it is said, 'he achieves unfaltering *yoga*. This means the same thing. There must not be the slightest wavering of the intelligence, any hesitation or agitation, anxiety uncertainty. Such an intelligence can meet the demands of cognition. Then alone may it be called 'intellect'. The word 'Steadfast' has another obvious implication—*buddhi*, intelligence, must be entirely straightforward, simple, direct. There should be nothing crooked about it. A spindle must be straight in order that fine thread may be spun with it. It is only useful if it is free from roughness and is perfectly straight. The same is true of the intellect. The best symbol for an intelligence endowed with the Steadfast Wisdom is the spindle of a spinning wheel. A straight spindle is called 'true'. There is a great deal appropriately implied in this word. A spindle, without any deviation, which is straight, is true, sure. An intellect must be as true, as sure.

9. A distinction must be made between the flaw of crookedness and the flaw of unsteadiness. Together they constitute a single flaw. The symbol of the spindle will make this clear also. A spindle which is not straight is not steady. So it is with the intellect. A straight intelligence is a steady intelligence, a sure mind. Crookedness and unsteadiness, though in effect the same, must nevertheless be thought of separately. Considering them closely we find that unsteadiness is a fault of the intellect and crookedness a fault of the mind. The mind is, from one point of view, a part of the intellect. But, for the convenience of study, they are taken separately. The mind of a baby is entirely straight, open, direct, and a baby, therefore, learns very quickly. Straightness is, for the acquisition of knowledge, the most important quality. Without it sure, certain and immutable knowledge cannot be had. The name Arjuna itself means 'the One-with-a-straight-mind.'

10. The word *prajna*, wisdom, as used in the Gita is the carrier of special meaning. *Buddhi*, intelligence or intellect, is a common word. Intellect changes according to the impulses of man's mind. It takes on the various colours of his

imagination and feeling. The intellect, thus coloured, cannot reach any sure conclusion. Only an intellect which is not subject to feeling and imagination, which is free from distortion, preferences, aversion and the colouring of propensities, is helpful in the acquisition of knowledge and is, in itself, *prajna*, Wisdom. Wisdom, *prajna*, is neutral and impartial. It fixes its attention upon the true nature of the thing contemplated and draws conclusions accordingly. When the intellect is subject to changing colouration many mind arise out of the one. An intellect is compassionate when affected by compassion and when affected by envy it becomes the repository of hate. These types of intelligence draw man in many directions, harassing and confusing him, disturbing and upsetting him, shaking him to the roots. Such multiple buddhis are incapable of showing the way. Pure intellect, wisdom, *prajna*, has no colour of its own and for that reason it, and only it, can arrive at correct conclusions. Pure intellect is a thermometer. A thermometer never has fever itself. It is for that reason that it can measure the fever of others.

11. Some have more and some less intelligence. This is not considered important. Emphasis is laid on the purity of the intelligence. A spark may be effective even though small. It can burn a big pile of cotton whereas a piece of coal, even a large piece, will be smothered by it. The question of *buddhi* intelligence being more or less does not arise. A tiny spark of pure *buddhi*, a mere speck, is sufficient. The special significance of the power of the *buddhi*, lies in just this. But this is not the case with physical force. Whether a man as thin as a palm can ever develop into a wrestler like Gama may be justly doubted. For a person of small intelligence, to give the kind of leadership required in the administration of a state is not possible, but it is possible for such a person, even an uneducated person, to attain to the Steadfast Wisdom. A basketful of intelligence is not necessary for that. A spark of *prajna*, Wisdom, is enough.

Though weightier and more ample intelligence may do much work in the world and bring about many changes, the power to set the three worlds aflame with fire belongs only to the spark of *prajna*.

## Chapter II

### NOT CONTRARY TO LAW

(1)

12. We have considered Arjuna's question. And we have pondered over the implications of the terms *prajna*, Wisdom, and *samadhi*. Wisdom does not mean intellect. The intelligence is exclusively concerned with conclusion. *Prajna* has the characteristic of being firmly poised. It stands upright, i.e. it is endowed with precision and integrity. We have also seen that *samadhi* here does not mean the *samadhi* of meditation, *dhyana samadhi*. It is useful to explore the implication of *samadhi* a little further. It is composed of three parts: *sam*, *a* and *dha* as a root. The word *samadhan* has the same derivation. Equanimity the heart is *samadhi*, *samadhan* indicates balance. When the weights in a balance are equal, they are steady, in equilibrium and are said to be *samatula*. The scales are equally weighted. If the consciousness attains a state as steady, as quiet, as evenly balanced as a pair of scales, we know that it has attained a state of poised equanimity. Then it has reached an inner balance. This equilibrium is a permanent condition. It is never upset. Later, in the Sixth Chapter, this state is compared to a lamp burning in a windless place. This is called the *nirvana* of the lamp and is to be understood as a condition in which the flame of the lamp burns steadily, without a flicker. It should not be taken to mean the extinguishing of the lamp. The peace which descends upon the lamp when it is extinguished cannot be attained as long as we are in the body. *Samadhi* means a tranquility of consciousness, a peace of mind, which can be experienced in the body, in life; and which, once achieved, does not waver. In this way Arjuna's question has been answered by the word *samadhi* and this is explained by Krsna in this verse:

**When a man puts away all the desires of his mind, O Partha (Arjuna), and when his spirit is content in self, then he is called stable in intelligence.**

*prajahati yada kaman*

*sarvan partha manogatan  
ātmany eva'tmana tustah,  
sthitaprajnas tado' cyate. (Gita II: 55)*

13. A scientific definition of *samadhi* is offered. The word *ucyate* is precise. The definition is comprehensive and full. That is to say, it has two aspects, the negative and positive. This duality completes it; for, both aspects are present. Take for instance the term *ahimsa*. In its negative sense it says 'kill not'. In its positive, affirmative sense, it means that love should be our method. Taken together these two senses complete the single meaning of the word *ahimsa*. Similarly the phrase 'when he foregoes all desires' is the negative aspect of *samadhi* and 'becomes content within himself' is the positive aspect. These two, taken together, define the state of being called *samadhi* in a subtle and exact way.

14. 'The foregoing of all desires' is here given as a prohibition, a forbiddance, a negation, a denial. The heart is made up of the substance of desires and the negative denies this substance. A palmist once happened to see my hand. "I don't find any heart line on your palm," he said. "God be praised," I responded, "if that is so." In my opinion a man need have only intelligence, *buddhi*. It is better not to have a heart of the kind described. The heart must be assimilated into the mind and lifted out of the unstable flux of uncertainty. The heart is a bundle of desires. Desires must move in tune with intelligence. There should be no hiatus between the head and the heart. There should be no conflict. The mind should speak and the hearts obey. The mind's work is to arrive at a decision. The mind is the legislator; it makes the rules. The work of the heart is to put the rules into practice, to enforce the laws, to act as the executive. The heart ought not to usurp the powers of the mind, nor encroach upon its jurisdiction. Let each do its own work. Does the tongue do more than decide whether a piece of candy is really sweet or whether it is bitter, whether it is edible or inedible? It is not the tongue's function to decide how many pieces of candy may be eaten. It should not dare to concern itself with that problem. The heart should follow the guidance of the mind. By degrees it should

immerse itself entirely in the mind. Desires are like wrappings around the heart. Remove them one by one and the bundle will disappear entirely. Thus it becomes possible to say that the heart has merged with the mind, lost itself, become one with the mind, in form, in feeling and in being. This is the real destruction of the heart. It does not imply the destruction of the power of the mind. The complete identity of heart and mind is implied here, and the heart follows the guidance of the mind without any protest. To give effect to decisions there is no need to destroy the power of the heart. This power must be kept intact. But desire has to be rooted out. The foregoing of all desire in this complete fashion constitutes the negative aspect of the interpretation of the Steadfast Wisdom.

15. Let us consider the constructive aspect of this definition. 'When his spirit is content in itself' defines it. The Steadfast Wisdom is content. Inner vision gives it more satisfaction than any outward show. In truth, what we behold with our inner eye is more pleasing and more beautiful to the sight than anything we behold externally with our ordinary eyes. A poet's description of what he sees is very much more delightful than the actual thing he describes. The ideal inner world of the poet is more delightful than the actual external reality. This inner vision is one of the positive signs of the Steadfast Wisdom. This Wisdom is revealed in its entirety if the two characteristics given herein are present. One who has achieved this Wisdom foregoes all desire and the spring of contentment rises within him. No happiness is to be found in a bundle of craving. This has been impressed upon him from the outset. Surely it is worth our while to consider whether any real pleasure or permanence is to be found in desire, is it not? Experience does not prove that the fulfilment of desire leads to lasting peace, contentment or tranquility. On the contrary, desires unsettle the heart and make it restless. This restlessness fills us with disquiet; the yearning of unfulfilled desire burns like a fire. There is no reason to fear that we shall lose the refreshing coolness of contentment when desire has been eliminated. Desire creates an illusion of satisfaction in its fulfilment. This is only an illusion. The satisfaction of a desire brings happiness because, to put it in another way, the desire is eliminated. To fulfil a desire is one way of getting

rid of it. A little thought will show that happiness is found, not in the desire itself, but in freedom from it. It is for this reason that we say that the two signs of the Steadfast Wisdom are (i) the complete foregoing of desire and (ii) contentment born of the perception of one's true nature.

16. These two signs are not merely the affirmative and negative aspects of the Steadfast Wisdom. They convey other meanings also. One is the primary and the other the secondary aspect of Steadfast Wisdom. To forego desire is the disciplinary aspect. The second sign, inner contentment, results from this primary discipline. The first is preliminary and the second is the sequel, the product of the discipline.

**When the soul is no longer attached to external contacts (objects) one finds the happiness that is in the self.**

*Bahyasparsesu asaktatma  
vindaty ātmani yat sukham (Gita V: 21)*

The Gita describes this state in these words. Elsewhere it says that as the inner vision grows the waters of desire dry up proportionately. This means that *atmadarsana*, the cultivation of the inner vision, constancy, is the spiritual discipline which brings about the destruction of desire. Self-contentment therefore appears to be the most fundamental quality. Contentment of spirit is not visible to the eye. What can be seen is the foregoing of desire. For a person not to have any desires is the outward sign of inner contentment. We may, therefore, call it the fruit of contentment. To argue about which of these two indications appears first is meaningless. To do so would be like entering into an argument as to which is the first, the seed or the plant. The inner vision and the giving up of desire are the cause and affect of each other.

(2)

17. What is indicated here is the total elimination of all desire. A desire pricks like a thorn even though it may be a thorn of gold. A knife can kill even though it be a golden knife. And so the Gita concludes that, one and all, desires must



be eliminated without exception. The Gita is, however, cited as raising no objection to a certain type of desire. The following is produced as proof.

**In beings I am the desire, which is not contrary to law, O Lord of the Bharatas (Arjuna).**

*dharmdviruddho bbiitesu kamo'smi, bbaratarsabha*

(Gita VD: 11)

It is necessary to consider the matter critically. There is actually nothing contradictory in these two statements. The first sentence (Gita n: 55) indicates the ideal to which we are to aspire. The other speaks of the attainment of the ideal and the means leading to it. Four methods are commonly used. They are: (i) *vistaraka prakriya* or diffusion; (ii) *ekagra-prakriya* or concentration; (iii) *suksma-prakriya* or refinement; and (iv) *visuddha prakriya* or purification.

#### (i) Diffusion

18. Desires are personal, individual. A desire may be given a general, a social application in order to destroy it. This is the way of *Karmayoga*. Suppose, for instance, a gentleman living in a certain village wishes to educate his son. He can found a school in the village. He can, in arranging for the education of his son, arrange to educate other boys in the village also. His desire is thus given a social character. Let me give another example from ancient practice. When a person felt a desire to eat meat he was directed to hold a *yajna*. The person who holds a *yajna* may eat what remains when everyone else has been given his fill. Women follow a similar custom daily in their homes. Housewives eat what is left after everybody else has been fed. Little but the labour often falls to their lot. But their personal desire is, in this way, enlarged to include the welfare of the whole family. It is dissipated through the *Karma* or duty. By this method desire is progressively enlarged and diffused, its scope made more inclusive and in the process of expansion it is thinned out to nullity.

#### (ii) Concentration

19. Compare the desires in your heart and determine which of them is the strongest. Then concentrate upon it, letting all the others go. Nothing else

should occupy your mind. Suppose, for instance, that among a scholar's many desires is the desire to study the Veda. He finds that this is stronger than others. He will then go to live at the house of his guru and study, nourishing himself with whatever food his guru may give him. He may, as a result, lose all taste for a certain type of food, say, sweets. The recognition and acceptance of a single desire as a fixed resolve and the organisation of one's entire life around it the method used by *dhyana-yoga*. All students in whom the desire for knowledge is keen make use of it. They subordinate all other desires to the desire to learn and undergo a great deal of hardship in order to fulfil it.

**Where will those who crave happiness find knowledge? Where will those who seek knowledge find happiness?**

*sukharthinab kuto vidya  
kuto vidyarthinab sukham.*

Thus wrote Vyasa. When we announce that happiness, convenience and knowledge are all simultaneously provided in our students' hostels we take an attitude diametrically opposed to this. It is a mistaken attitude. If one thinks too much of happiness one cannot put one's mind on study. Therefore examine your desires, determine which is the strongest and concentrate all your energies on its fulfilment. This is also the process accepted by modern experimental scientists. They give their entire attention to the experiment in hand, eliminating all other considerations. This is called *dhyana yoga*, the Yoga of meditation. Centre your attention upon one desire, and let all other desire go. Last of all give up the central one also. When concentration is completely achieved you will be able to free yourself from it. (iii) Refinement 20. This is the method by which coarse desires are supplanted by progressively finer ones. You may, for instance, love clothes and like to be well-dressed. To dress up your inner self is much less vulgar than the decoration of the body. It is more refined. There is an enrichment, a taste, even more refined still, that of decking the heart with virtues. More fragrant than the perfume which scents the body is the fragrance of a mind animated by a keen intelligence. More fragrant still is the scent of a heart endowed with all the virtues. "See how my

loving mother Vithai (God) has dressed me," cries Namdeva at the beginning of one of his psalms. A delightful description of the clothing of the inner self follows. It is decked out in finery as a doting mother decks her child in beautiful clothes. Inner adornment adds more to the beauty of life than any outer adornment can. Forego the coarse decoration of the body and turn your attention to the finer adornment of the soul. Happiness lies, not in desire, but in the satisfaction of desire. A coarse desire is difficult to satisfy, for in order to do so outer objects must be obtained. A finer desire is less difficult to satisfy for all that is required is available within oneself. In this way a desire which is turned inward and subtilised can be satisfied and through being satisfied, negated. This is the method followed by *jnana yoga*, the way of discrimination, knowledge.

#### (iv) Purification

21. In this method no distinction is made between personal, individual, desires and social desires or between outer and inner desires, fine or coarse. We differentiate only between desires that are good and desire that are evil. Keep the good and get rid of the evil. When you desire to eat something sweet eat mangoes instead of candy. Candy may be harmful and give rise to a craving for indulgence. Mangoes are good for health and the act of substituting them for candy may also add to your pleasure in natural goodness. In this method we do not speak of the destruction of desire from the outset. We merely suggest that good desires be substituted for evil ones. Examine your desires and determine for yourself with the help of your own intelligence, which are good and which are bad. Our opinion is proof enough for us. To determine the nature of some desires the assistance of science can be taken. But with or without the- help of science the person who feels a desire must find out for himself whether it is good or bad. The mind is gradually purified by the elimination of bad desires through the process of replacing them by good ones. A bad desire is eliminated when a good one is put in its place. The attempt for the satisfaction of the good desire does away with it. Eventually, therefore, no desires at all are left. This is the method of destroying desire by purification.

22. Of these four methods of eliminating desire the last, the method of purification, is the safest, the surest. Therefore it is the best. This method is followed primarily in *bhakti yoga* i.e. the way of devotion. Other methods confer strength but they also involve danger. In the method of diffusion an individual's desire is expanded from the individual to include the community. But what if the desire itself be evil? If a person craves drink, he will, according to this method, open a drinking club for the public. That will bring about not only his own downfall but a social decline. A desire is not purified merely by extension to society. The same danger is inherent in the method of concentration. Ruin results if the desire upon which a person concentrates all his energies is an evil desire. The concentration of one's consciousness is the subject of *yoga-sastra*. Patanjali warns us that before concentration is begun the art of self- control should be practised. Otherwise a calamity may ensue. The Yoga of meditation can bring disaster instead of liberation. In both socialisation and intensification (concentration) there is power, strength, great forcefulness. But this power can turn men into devils. Even the method of sublimation of desire is not without danger. The refinement of a desire does not necessarily make it pure. The most terrible consequences may result if a man is possessed by lust and indulges it in a disembodied form. Therefore, the method of purification which is followed in *bhakti yoga* is the least dangerous. It is for this reason that. Tulsidas wrote:

**Bhakti is self-sufficient. It has no need of assistance from anything.**

*bhagati sutantra avalamba na ana*

Bhakti, devotion, is required in order to avoid the dangers associated with all the other three methods but Bhakti itself does not require the assistance of any of them. Other methods develop strength, it is true, but they also involve danger. Strength on the one hand and safety on the other. There is the difference between strength and devotion, Bhakti. Bhakti without strength may be weak but it will not be evil or calamitous.

Strength without Bhakti can, on the contrary, invite calamity. Bhakti will under no circumstance lead to disaster. Therefore, the method of destroying desire

by purification, the method followed in *bhakti yoga*, is, from every point of view, desirable and safe.

**In beings I am the desire which is not contrary to law:**

*dharmaviruddho bhutesu kamdsmi.. (Gita VII: 11)*

## Chapter III

### WHY AND HOW

(1)

23. The meaning of Steadfast Wisdom has been fully explained. In the three verses which follow a persuasive description of its implications is given. In the first verse the description is psychological.

**He whose mind is untroubled in the midst of sorrows and is free from eager desire amid pleasures, he from whom passion, fear and rage have passed away, he is called a sage of settled intelligence.**

*duhkhesu anudvigti amanah sukhesu vigatasptiiah,  
vitaragabhayakrodhah sthitadhr munir ucyate (Gita II 56)*

The pivotal word *uchyate* is present here also, but no comment is called for as the interpretation has already been given. We have been told of the need to root out all desires. This is not an easy thing to do. Therefore, this verse speaks of the less difficult attributes of the Steadfast Wisdom. One should not allow the heart to be perturbed by unpleasantness or sorrow. To be perturbed means to be frightened, to be irritated or to be overcome with anxiety. This meaning is inherent in the word, "*udvega*": "*ud*" means "up" and "*vega*" means "movement". One should avoid the plight of oxen going uphill, the straining, the suffering. Sorrow must be borne with patience. It must not force us to our knees. Joy, like grief, should be received wakefully, alertly. Men do not want grief to come to them nor do they forget themselves easily when it is upon them. It can be borne with patience. But men do delight in happiness. And it easily makes them forget themselves. Therefore pleasure is not without danger. The craving for pleasure is the result of an erroneous idea of happiness. It is wise to carefully restrain the heart when pleasure comes. Patience is demanded at the approach of sorrow, restraint at the approach of pleasure. One must check oneself to avoid entanglement. When an ox goes downhill it begins to run. Our feelings tend to run in similar fashion when we

experience pleasure. And they must be held back for the same reason. This is not too difficult. It is easy compared to the rooting out of desire entirely. Here we are referring to desire in both its aspects, the aspect which yearns for pleasure and the aspect which shuns unhappiness. Both must be controlled.

24. Desire has two aspects and three consequences: hunger, anger and fear. Hunger arises from pleasurable sensation. Anger springs from an unwelcome sensation and fear is intense aversion. The attachment to life itself, the desire to live, is a very special attachment. This desire is strongly rooted in our hearts. Fear and anger are therefore thought of as separate emotions. Fear is born when our desire to live is assailed. It is instinctive in all creatures. When life is threatened with destruction fear rouses itself. Unjust and tyrannical people take advantage of it in many ways. They terrorise men to make them slaves. The prop of their power is this fear; it is more effective than cannons, guns and other weapons of war. Therefore it is necessary to make a special, separate effort, to undertake a specific sadhana, to eliminate fear just as a special, separate effort is required to eliminate hunger and anger. When these three, hunger, anger and fear, have been destroyed, wisdom can grow steady and become stable. These emotions attack the intelligence (buddhi) and disturb it. It is for this reason that we are advised to do away with them. The psychological attributes of the Steadfast Wisdom are thus described in this verse. In the verse which follows we are told the manner in which self-restraint can actually be practised in our work, *karma yoga*.

**25. He who is without affection on any side, who does not rejoice or loathe as he obtains good or evil, his intelligence is firmly set (in wisdom).**

*Yah sarvatra 'nabhisnehas tat-tat prapya subhasubham  
na' bhinandati no dvesti tasya prajna pratisthita.*

(Gita II: 57)

Do not let your heart become entangled. Let not the mind cling to anything or seek a shelter. A man's heart is usually set on something. For one it will be books, for another it will be a farm. Keep your heart detached. In the preceding verse we are admonished not to grieve when losses come to us nor to

exult over our gains. In this verse an easier method is shown to us. We are not told not to take pleasure in happiness. We are only told not to let it overwhelm us to the point of self-forgetfulness, not to exult in it, not to congratulate ourselves overmuch. Take pleasure in happiness by all means but do not clap your hands and shout aloud. It is nice when a son is born. Be pleased but do not distribute sweets. It is nice to get married. There is no objection whatsoever. But do not engage a band. Similarly one feels badly when bad things happen. There is nothing wrong in that. Feel badly. But do not give way to remorse or grief. Do not allow it to affect your mind. Deep emotional disturbance often leaves its mark on the mind. The mind must remain inviolate, the intelligence unobstructed. Chanakya said "If I must lose everything, I shall accept the loss. But let my intelligence remain unclouded." It is thus that a Karmayogi conducts himself in practical affairs. Nor is it difficult to do this if there is any depth at all to the feelings.

No effort to control a man's feelings will be of any avail whatsoever if they are no deeper than those of a monkey. Monkeys chatter when they are happy and grind their teeth when they are angry. Let us not be like them. If your feelings are at all deep, this method of controlling them will not be difficult.

26. To make the idea of control more explicit the example of a tortoise is cited in the next verse.

**He who draws away the senses from the objects of sense on every side as a tortoise draws in his limbs (into the shell), his intelligence is firmly set (in wisdom).**

*Yada sambarate ca' yam kurmo's hganiva sarvasah  
indriyani' ndriyarthebhyas tasya prajna pratisthita*

(Gita II: 58)

Pull your senses away from worldly things the way a tortoise pulls its appendages into its shell at the first indication of danger. At other times it puts them out and moves about. A man also, when he finds himself in a dangerous situation, should withdraw into himself and thus shield his senses. At other times, when they can be used to his benefit, he can release his senses and let



them move about. This method is an even easier one. Come away from a place that seems dangerous to you. Let your senses range freely when there is no apprehension of danger. What can be simpler? Even an animal understands it. That is why tortoise is chosen to illustrate it. The Gita argues that if a creature like the tortoise can protect itself in this manner can a man not do so?

(2)

27. As here described this appears easy but it is, for us, difficult. It depends upon habit formation. If a small child is trained in this way from the beginning, the teaching of the Gita becomes a part of his nature, a part of him. It is merely a matter of habit. Some people think that the teaching of the Gita goes against man's nature. This is not at all the case. The natural tastes, of a small child are pure. We force him to develop a liking for many wrong things by making him sample them. We inculcate in him artificial and perverse tastes. Things which are naturally pleasing and congenial to a small child are to be preferred, says the Gita. Do them. We spoil the tastes of children by giving them wrong training from the beginning. This has to be corrected later by contradictory instruction. It seems difficult to control our senses only because they have been corrupted in the first instance by wrong education. If good habits are formed from the start, the regulation of our senses becomes easy. "The nature of my senses is such," writes Jnandeva, "that my eyes do not turn to see what should not be seen, nor my ears turn to hear what should not be heard." Why should this seem difficult? If I see a fire burning must I put my hand in it? If for any reason, it becomes necessary for me to put my hand in it I shall have to do so deliberately. When we know for certain where danger lies our senses refuse to approach it of their own accord.

Normally it should appear very difficult to make our senses move about freely in a dangerous place. Bad instruction has given rise to the opposite state of affairs. The unnatural and difficult seem to us simple and natural. What can the Gita do about it? The Gita has shown us a way which, from its point of view, is easy even for a child to follow. There can be no doubt that, given

normal and natural social conditions, the conquest of the senses within their fold ought not to be difficult.

28. Two methods of sense control are commonly recommended restraint or sublimation and repression or suppression. Let us consider both of them. The senses can be suppressed only for short periods of time. To master them requires life-long effort, a discipline comprising the whole of life. Suppose for instance, I like to eat candy. It is not wrong to eat candy. But to indulge my craving to excess is bad. Therefore, I stop eating it entirely for a time. The need for my doing so is the need to establish a habit, to form my own nature in a way that will enable, me to control my own tastes. To establish my control, to assert my mastery, I suppress my senses for a time. It is not a sin to eat candy. It may even, in a certain state of health, become necessary to eat it. But in order to maintain my control over my pleasure in eating sweets I discontinue eating them totally for a time. Afterwards I resume eating them cautiously, in due measure. This is what I mean by self-control. Another example is silence. Silence is adopted for a fixed length of time in order to facilitate *sadhana*. Sweet and just speech is a permanent device. Similarly, fasting is an occasional practice while moderate eating is a permanent one. People can be judged by these things. A Gujarati proverb runs, "Men are tested at the dining table and in bed." All the weaknesses of human nature are revealed when men sit down to dine or take to bed with some illness. It is easier to overeat and even to fast than it is for men to habitually limit the amount of food they take. They prefer the extremes to the formation of the habit of moderation. The formation of the habit of moderation is more difficult for them than taking the consequences of going to extremes. Self-control means holding the senses to the way of moderation. In order to maintain that control the senses have, on occasion, to be forced to the extreme of repression. The value of repression is obvious but it is not something that is practised daily.

29. Repression is occasional and control permanent. The difference between the two which we have pointed out here is difference of degree, of intensity,

resulting from an inner condition. Viewed objectively it will be seen that repression, like control, can have a permanent effect. Fasting is, as we have said\* occasional while moderate eating is a daily habit. But suppose a person develops the habit of having his meals at a fixed time every-day. Such a habit is beneficial. He will not eat anything offered to him at any other time. This is repression but obviously it is a permanent, not an occasional, condition. The same is true with regard to silence. Ordinarily silence is a temporary condition but occasions to withhold speech, repress the urge to say something, occur daily. Not to say what we feel like saying, not to give the answer we wish to give to people who speak to us, is at times necessary. Restraint of speech then becomes a daily practice. We are, in fact, forced to use both control and restraint every single day. The difference between them, therefore, is merely a difference of degree. They are actually the same. They have a common factor, the discipline of the self. Once this difference, the difference between control and repression, is understood we can forget it. But the word for control, *nigraha* needs further elucidation. There is no suggestion of compulsion in it, is there? One suspects there is. But the phrase 'control of the senses' was not intended to mean compulsion. Meaning does not adhere unalterably to a word. Many words derive their meaning from the manner in which they are used.

30. Description of the chief characteristics of the Steadfast Wisdom and its three subsidiary attributes is now complete. In the following verses the simpler means of controlling the senses is explained in greater detail. The Gita considers this control so important that it refers to it again and again. In the Third Chapter, after a study of Karmayoga, there comes a special part dealing with the conquest of the senses. The scientific and philosophical aspect must be discussed in detail. Science answers the interrogative 'How?' and Philosophy answers the interrogative 'Why?' How we can master our senses and why we should do so, that is to say, in what manner this mastery is related to the Steadfast Wisdom, we shall now consider.

## Chapter IV

### THE REFUGE

#### (I)

31. The features which characterize the Steadfast Wisdom have been fully set forth in the first four verses. Now we must turn our attention to the science and epistemology of sense control. The science will be dealt with in the first three verses that follow. The methods so far given have been the comparatively easy ones. Firstly, we have been advised to forego desire, secondly, not to permit the consequences of desire, that is, not to allow desire to grow into craving, fear or anger, and thirdly, in the event of consequences appearing in spite of our efforts, to keep them under control and to prevent them from affecting the reason. Finally, we are advised to withdraw our senses, not to allow them to wander about. The four categories into which these methods have been classified indicate how spiritual discipline is to be begun. The last method, the withdrawal of the senses, is described as the simplest. The Steadfast Wisdom cannot be attained before the highest step in *sadhana* is reached. No one should make the mistake of supposing that it can. However, sense control, in itself, maintained through restraint and suppression, is not enough to win this Wisdom. Not even to the extent of the control? No, for this control does not suffice to give complete mastery of the senses, it does, however, make it possible for us to root desire completely out of our inner selves. For the strength that comes with the realisation that our senses will behave as we wish them to behave enables us to go farther and eliminate desire altogether. This is necessary. The senses are not, in my opinion, completely mastered until this has been accomplished. The training of the senses is an extremely subtle process. The idea is formulated in one verse. Here is the beginning of the science of sense restraint.

**32. The objects of sense turn away from the embodied soul who abstains from feeding on them but the taste for them remains. Even the taste turns away when the Supreme is seen.**

*visaya vinivartante niraharasya dehinah  
rasavarjam rasdpy asya param drstva nivartate*

(Gita II: 59)

The desire to enjoy objects of sense remains after these objects themselves have departed. They depart from one who abstains from indulging his appetite for them. But once the Supreme has been seen desire also departs. This is the meaning of this verse. Let us not imagine that we have mastered the senses when we have succeeded in pulling them away from objects of sense. By abstention is meant here not only the restraint of the tongue but of appetite in all its forms, in its widest sense. The word appetite is used in its symbolic meaning. The first step in our *sadhana* is the control of the desire to savour things of the senses. It is not the end but the beginning. For by the restraint of our external senses we win the strength and the fitness which enables us to cast all desire out from our inner selves. Real discipline, inner discipline, starts at this point, our *sadhana* will only come to an end when our inner appetite, all pleasure in flavour, has become completely desiccated. The strength for this is developed through the practice of the control of the outer senses. That is why the Gita has included the control of the outer senses among the distinguishing features of the Steadfast Wisdom.

33. To the philosophical mind it is sufficient to say: "Forego all desire." Nothing need be added. The exposition of the Steadfast Wisdom opens, therefore in philosophical language. But the ways of a teacher are different from the ways of the seer. A teacher keeps the preparation and ability of his pupil in mind when he addresses him. He tells the pupil plainly that he will not get his diploma until his course of study is completed and at the same time instructs him daily. That is to say he guides the pupil with simple lessons and a compassionate concern for his welfare so that the pupil is encouraged to hope and persevere while at the same time the dignity of the doctrine is maintained. The Gita is permeated with this compassionate concern. The example of the tortoise is the first lesson. When one lesson has been mastered a new one is taken up. Step by step the Gita guides us. Saints and seers, filled

with concern for us, have even assured us that if a person calls upon God just once in full devotion he attains a glimpse of liberation. The direction of his life is changed. He turns to God. That does not mean he has reached his destination. But hope grows when a man knows where he is going. The task of the teacher, the guru, is to encourage him to hope more and more until he attains his goal.

34. The chief thing is that we must not relax our efforts until all desire has dried out of our hearts. Why so long? Some may protest that the suppression of our outer senses for such an extended period of time will result in hypocrisy. This argument will entangle those bent on self-destruction. Whether a sadhaka is hypocritical or not, whether his *sadhana* is false or genuine, is immediately apparent for he must keep on trying until he has attained. Some disparity between his conduct and his thoughts will inevitably remain. His mind may wander when he sits down to pray. It may be said, "He does not really pray. He is only pretending." Only a sadhaka can be accused of pretending to pray in order to impress people. But he does not do that. He does not intend to deceive, so why should he be accused of doing so? Some have tried to interpret this verse of the Gita as meaning that it is hypocritical to suppress the outward senses until the mind has been brought under control. But that is not correct. It might have been possible to interpret it that way if the verse had read: *rasastvasya param drstva nivartate*. But '*raso*' pi' is written here. The importance of maintaining control over the external senses is stressed by the word '*api*' with the word '*rasa*'. Implied also here is the idea that control of the external senses is not sufficient by itself and desire must be uprooted altogether. The effort to maintain control of the external senses until desire entirely eliminated may fail, it may prove futile, but it is not charlatanism. The control of the senses has two aspects, a rough or crude aspect and a subtle, discerning aspect. Both kinds of control must be practised if we are to arrive finally at the basic definition of the Steadfast Wisdom.

35. The finer, more subtle control of the senses is not accomplished until all desire has disappeared. How can it be done? The answer is that this is brought

about by a vision of the *ātman*, of the supreme, *para-tattva*. *Para-tattva* means the doctrine of *para*, the other, that which is the farthest from us. Actually it is the doctrine not of the other, the most distant, but of the closest, of that which is nearest. Not *para-tattva*. The idea commonly held is opposed to this. The reason for the currency of the erroneous concept is our faulty reckoning. We begin our computations from the physical plane, the body, the flesh. The body is the most external part of us. Yet we think of it as being the most intimate, the closest part. Next comes the heart, the natural disposition. After that the buddhi or reason. And after the buddhi we place the *ātman*, the soul. In consequence of such reversed reckoning what is the closest to us becomes the farthest away. The Gita itself points this out in the following line: *indriyaniparanyahuh indriyebhyah param manah*. Here the word 'Para' is used in the sense of 'Supreme' and 'best', most subtly. The *ātman* is these things. Until we have a glimpse of the *ātman* the mastery of the senses is not perfect. That is to say, we have been led right back to the first verse.

(2)

At this point it might be objected that we have been roundly cheated with hopes of simpler methods of spiritual discipline. We have been seduced with candy only to be faced with a birch rod. Inner desire cannot be done away with so easily. How are we to go about it? The way we are to go about it is now described. However, this objection is first formulated by the Lord in this verse:

**Even though a man may ever strive (for perfection) and be ever so discerning, O son of Kunti (Arjuna) his impetuous senses will carry off his mind by force.**

*yatato hy api kaunteya purusasya vipascitah  
indriyam pramathini haranti prasabham manah.*

(Gita II: 60)

This means that the senses are capable of leading astray even the most conscientious and diligent of men. Manu has a saying with similar implications. Many commentators take it to mean exactly the same thing.

**The senses are powerful. Therefore be careful even with your mother, your sister and your daughter. Given the opportunity the senses carry away even the learned.**

*matra duhitra va na viviktasano bhavet,  
balavan indriya-gramo, vidvarhsaniupi karsati.*

37. This is what Manu says. This is not, however, exactly what the Gita says. Manu instructs common men how to conduct themselves, indicating certain social limits of behaviour. According to his own point of view and in the light of prevailing conditions he lays down a safe rule of conduct for general use. He says in effect that a man should not trust himself beyond a certain point. It can by no means be assumed that he will always be able to control himself. The approach in the Gita is psychological. What it writes is for sadhakas. There is no trace of mistrust or doubt. The Gita does not say that the sadhaka is incapable of controlling his external senses. The ability to control them, to pull them away from objects of sense, is assumed. The Gita acknowledges that the senses can be withheld from objects of sense at will. Moreover, it insists upon the necessity of doing this. Manu does not expect so much. He is content to admonish the common man to be careful. The Gita has a different purpose in view. It presents the psychological proposition that the senses, even after they have been withdrawn from the outward objects of sense, turn upon us and harass our hearts and minds. They try to fasten upon our thoughts. This sometimes is the cause of a mental indulgence which takes place even against our will. Sense control, in the more subtle sense, is not possible in such circumstances.

38. This happens even to those who watch their thoughts with the utmost care. The word '*api*' must be read into the verse in two places, "*yatato hy api vipascitah api*". The word '*vipascit*' is formed of '*vipah*' and '*chit*', '*vipah*' is the accusative plural form of '*vip*', '*vip*' is the root of the word for wisdom, '*vipra*' is a similar word, *vipra* means one who is wise, '*vipascit*' means one who is wise with a great wisdom. Even for such a one the mastery of the subtle senses is a



difficult spiritual discipline. For these senses attempt to lead even his thoughts and feelings astray. This is what the Gita wishes to tell us here.

39. Man has two strength of knowledge and the strength of forbearance. There is no third. Now the seeker may say, "I have availed myself of both these and found that, in spite of them, the senses are able to excite our feelings and wax strong. How hard it is to manage them!" By a wise and careful man we mean a man armed with both knowledge and endurance. At the beginning of the Second Chapter such a man is described as '*dhi ret*'. The word '*dhira*' is used in two senses. '*Dhi*' means intelligence and '*dhira*' means one who is intelligent, wise. But knowledge by itself does not enable a man to succeed in his spiritual *sadhana*. A man may be wise and yet unable to survive. He cannot continue in that condition. Man has to endure unending trials, put up with tribulation and win through. Is knowledge enough? It is difficult to say so. The remade of a certain scientist has become famous. He was made to suffer terribly because he had declared that the earth revolves. "Bring me your paper," he cried, "I shall sign what you want me to sign." He was asked to sign a statement that the earth does not revolve. Unbearable pain forced him to comply. But when the paper was actually presented to him he said, "What can I do? Even though I deny it the earth revolves, revolves, revolves." Knowledge must be reinforced by the power to endure. Endurance is as necessary as intelligence. This meaning is also implicit in the word '*dhira*'. In order to obtain it we must trace the origin of the word to the root '*Dhr*'. '*Dhir*' means '*dhrtiman*', one who is patient, enduring. The Gita uses it in both of its meanings.

40. In the beginning of the Second Chapter the Lord says that a man equipped with both patience and wisdom is thereby enabled to survive the tests of heat and cold and other ordeals, thus becoming worthy of attaining *mukti*, liberation. But he also adds that the senses are able to trap even such a person. If the senses can defeat even such a one, if they are not always obedient even to him, we may feel most discouraged, we may feel that there is no hope for ourselves. Objectors will protest that the discipline of the senses is being made impossibly difficult. The Gita deals with the questions they raise. How to proceed from this point is told us in the verse which follows.

## Chapter V

### WHOLEHEARTEDNESS

#### (I)

41. We have seen that what the Gita tells us is different from what Manu says. It will be profitable for us to clarify the distinction further. The heart is situated midway between the mind and the senses. Who would master the senses must master the heart also. The heart is not amenable by nature. The Gita advises us to restrain the senses first. As the senses are mastered the heart is not mastered to the same extent as a matter of course. The contrary is the case, for the senses as they are detached from outward objects, tend to turn inward and assail the heart. The sadhaka knows this. He separates himself from his impulses. He knows that his feelings are being attacked. He neither surrenders nor co-operates. The language used in the Gita makes this clear, '*haranti prasabham manah*'. The senses strongly assail the heart of the sadhaka and seek to draw it after them'. The Gita says, 'the heart of the sadhaka is swayed but not the sadhaka himself'. Manu tells us that the senses, in their excitement, sway even the sage. They draw after them not only his heart but the man himself. '*vidvamsamapr karsati*'. They turn to attack the heart as they are brought under control. A way has to be found to stop them. This is difficult even for a sage and for the sadhaka. This period of transition is a time of great danger and struggle. The impulses run after objects of sense. The sadhaka gives them no encouragement, to check them he exerts himself to reach a state so stable that his heart will cease to be attracted by them. If all his knowledge and all his striving are inadequate what can he do? The answer is given in the verse which follows:

**Having brought all (the senses) under control, he should remain firm in yoga intent of Me; for he, whose senses are under control, his intelligence is firmly set.**

*tani sarvdni samnyamya*

*yukta asita matparah  
vase hi yasye' ndriyani  
tasya prajna pratisfhita. (Gita II: 61)*

42. *'tani sarvani samyamy matparah asitah is to be construed thus: 'yuktah san tani sarvani samyamy matparah asita'*. Control all your senses judiciously and consecrate yourself to God. The senses can and must be mastered by knowledge and perseverance. The necessity and the urgency and the urgency of controlling them must be realised. Trust to the way of self-control in order to do it. Control and repression are both contained in one word, *nirodha*, restraint. The Gita tells us that knowledge and perseverance give us the strength required to restrain the senses. But even after one has gained control over the senses by these rather crude means, his mastery is not secure until he has likewise won control over his emotional impulses. Human strength is not equal to the task of mastering the human heart. This is the threshold of submission to the will of God.

43. When a man reaches the limit of his human powers, hesitates and thinks of abandoning the field of battle, the need for faith becomes acute. Faith only finds entrance where effort is unflagging and exertion sustained. Our human powers, the powers that God has given us, find their last and supreme expression in faith and humility, culminating in these two virtues. The strength in us is the divine strength of Krishna, the strength of God. He bestows it upon us at the beginning, giving us a part and retaining a part as reserve. We mistake this God-given power for our own. It is not ours but God's. And the part that God holds in reserve for us belongs, conversely, to us and is ours. When we have fully utilized the share given us at the start, expending it entirely, we win the right to ask for the remainder.

44. If we do not utilise to their full extent the powers that we have, how can God give us the remainder? A father gives his son ten thousand rupees to start a business. If the son does not utilise the ten thousand in full, why should his father give him a lakh more? When his father finds that the ten thousand have been used to the best purpose, he says, 'The rest is yours. Our relationship with

God is similar. He is prepared to give us the strength. He holds in reserve for us. All that He requires is proof of the urgency of our need. God is gratified when a person is able to show that he has used up all his own resources and requires more. "This is the kind of enterprising devotee I like," He says. Never yet in the world, however, has there been a task to accomplish which the whole of God's strength has been needed. Man easily obtains from God as much strength as he needs and is able to use well. A time never comes when a man may despair or surrender. When he has used to the full all the powers he has been given he will receive more and greater ones. Why should God give him more powers if he asks God for them before he has utilised what he has to the full extent? God does not need to make a show of His works. Is His handiwork still unfinished? His creation is complete. He is eager to add to *your* glory, to *your* achievement. Keep on trying, applying all your powers to your chosen task. When you find that you can do no more by your own efforts, turn to God. He will give you the additional powers you need.

45. In discussions of the *bhakti marg* or the Way of Faith, it is the custom to cite the mythological example of Gajendra, the elephant. The story is as follows. The elephant tried to conquer by his own strength alone and God therefore refrained from coming to his assistance. The elephant was proud of his strength, and because of his pride God could not help him until his pride was destroyed. This is but right. Imagine an elephant who is not proud of his strength and imagine, further, that he prays to God for assistance constantly while refusing to do anything to help himself. This refusal is a kind of inverse pride. Why should he not do what he can with the powers that he has? Are these powers his own? Not at all. They are God's. It is not pride to use the strength one has in the consciousness that this strength is God's. Not to so use it does show pride. It shows lack of faith. It shows slothfulness. You refuse to make use of the powers which, though they are not yours, have been given you to use and, at the same time, ask for more. Use the strength that you have, with humility, for it belongs to God, and ask for more only when you have exhausted it. If you make the fullest and best use of what you have God will give you what you have not.

46. Here we find, in the final analysis, dependence, dependence upon God. Some may exclaim that this is, once again reliance upon an outside agency. To think so is wrong. Subjugation begins when one's own powers end. To think of dependence upon God as subjugation is to put an end to them. To trust in the power of God is not to subjugate oneself. It can become subjugation only if God is thought of as a stranger. God is not a stranger. Suppose you divide a coat-pocket into two halves, an inner and an outer, and put money in both halves. When the money in the outer half is spent you take money from the inner half. Both halves of the pocket are yours. Or suppose that you keep some of your money in your trunk and some in the bank. This situation is similar. God and you are two aspects of the same consciousness. You are a part. God is the whole. The consciousness of both is the same. It follows that His strength is also your strength. And so it is that to ask for and accept assistance from God is not subjugation.

(2)

47. Faith begins where our own efforts to master our hearts fail. Not until then does the need for it become acute. When a person can do no more by himself he grows anxious for help. Faith is born of this yearning. There is no yearning until this point is reached. Therefore faith is not present. There may be trust. Win control over your senses by the use of the powers that are yours. And when the senses, detached from external objects, turn to assail you inwardly, attacking your heart, ask for the help of God in combating them. To seek the help of God in such a pure and delicate task is called an act of devotion. To seek the help of God in our common daily affairs has become a habit. We mistake such ignorant behaviour for devotion. It is not devotion. What sort of devotion is it to pray to God for help in passing an examination? It is just childishness. Do you ask for God's help because your crop has not been good? As if God has not given you the power to solve all such problems! These are not matters in which we can seek God's help. It is not seemly to seek his assistance in relation to worldly things which we desire to accomplish.

48. Both parties to a war pray to God for victory. God has a will of His own. It is not possible for him to give victory to both sides. Yet we regard Him as subject to our will. We want Him to use His divine powers to bring about what we want. To make His will our will is the essence of Faith in God. We do the opposite. We want to win. We have made up our minds in advance. All we want Him to do is to grant us victory. Our prayer ought to be framed as follows: "May we win if our cause is a light and just cause. If it is not, let us lose. To lose will cleanse us inwardly." In the Mahabharata there is the following story. Queen Gandhari, out of sympathy with her blind husband, Dhrtarastra, had her eyes bound. Her son, Duryodhana, came to take leave of her when he went to war. She blessed him, saying, "May you win if your cause is a true and righteous cause!" Here we have a genuine prayer. Why should you pray. "O God, please restore to me what I have lost?" Your prayer should be couched in the following words:

"Whether what I have lost is restored to me or not, may I not lose my peace of mind." When a child is ill people pray, "May the child not die." What kind of a prayer is that? All must die sooner or later; this is a known fact. If one must pray for a child's life, pray that he may be spared *now* and add that you do not object if he dies at some other time, say, on the 28th. Your petition to God should be as precise as that. Who prays in such a fashion? Pray that the child may be spared mental and physical suffering at the time of his death.

49. First we make up our minds as to what is good for us and then ask God to give us what we want. That is to say, we treat God as if He is the servant of our understanding. A story in the Upanishads relates how a certain person with whom God was pleased was tested. "Ask a boon!" the Lord said to him. The man answered "How can I know what to ask for? Do I know what is good for me? You know all things. Grant me what is good for 'me.'" Thus was the man tested and not found wanting. He did not try to impose his own will upon God. It is fortunate for us that God is not prepared to act as we want Him to act. And when, on occasion, He does so it is probable that He wishes to teach us the consequences of intellectual pride, of intoxication with our own wills. We

accept the evidence of our own understanding as conclusive and expect God also to accept it. That is to say, we regard God as a menial who is obliged to carry out our orders. We admit that He is powerful. But He is, nevertheless, our servant. We are the judges, the assessors. It is we who are the dispensers of fate and He is merely the sheriff or, say, the Sub-Divisional Magistrate. The attempt to use God as an instrument of our will, a lifeless agent, is a sign of pride and it also shows rigidity. There is blasphemy in this attitude to God, as well as a denial of faith. This element of rigidity, a certain hardening, has, in the name of faith, entered into all religions. It does not show faith to seek the help of God in accomplishing what we desire. Over and over again the Gita strikes out at activity inspired by desire. It is as though the Gita is totally opposed to the pursuit of all such ends.

50. But here and there the Gita, moved perhaps by compassion, does say that if a person calls upon God with complete devotion his prayer may be granted although he prays out of desire. And his prayer is fulfilled. But this is exceptional. It is not the rule. One who turns to God out of passionate desire is given hope. The rule is that even one who prays for what is good must do so dispassionately. Passionate prayer is not vindicated or endorsed by the above concession. What is here expressed is the feeling that it is much for a person to turn wholly to God even though he does it out of desire. There is stupidity in passion and an apprehension of degradation. But there is scope for progress if whole-heartedness is present. It is possible to eliminate the passion, if you concentrate your whole being in an ardent prayer to God your heart can be cleansed by His touch. Ordinarily people do not pray wholeheartedly when they pray for something they want. They neither believe nor disbelieve wholeheartedly. When they are ill they fall at the feet of doctors and at the same time invite Brahmins to recite prayers. Their faith is wavering, impotent. The weakness of men's faith sends them to perdition. Passion belongs to a lower level of existence, undoubtedly, but it becomes tolerable when wholehearted devotion is joined to it, for passion then becomes a purifying agent. What we must really achieve is the fusion of wholeheartedness with dispassion.

## Chapter VI

### THE THOUGHT OF GOD

#### (1)

51. The control of the senses must, in the first instance, be accomplished by the sadhaka with the powers he has at his disposal. The senses can be controlled but not mastered by these powers. The mind must be free from hankerings for objects of sense. The powers at man's disposal, powers of discernment and perseverance, are, as we have seen, inadequate when the senses turn inward and assail the mind and heart. The powers of perseverance and discernment are known as dispassion and discrimination. By discrimination is meant the ability to perceive when the senses must be curbed and when suppressed. To put discrimination into practice with perseverance and patience is the task of dispassion. Craving for objects of sense can linger even after the senses themselves have been brought under control. To get rid of all hankering after objects of sense, turn to the greatest of all sanctuaries, God. Make use of the two powers which are man's discrimination and dispassion, and, in the process, establish yourself in God. Thus, in these three verses, we are shown the method by which sense mastery is attained and have it fully explained to us. The complete definition of mastery of the senses is freedom from desire by restraining and controlling the senses. Three adjectives are used to designate the triple discipline; *yatat*, striving; *vipascitah*, discerning; and *matparah* dedicated. The Steadfast Wisdom of the Gita is the joint product of these three. The science of sense mastery is summed up in this manner in these three verses.

52. But the language in which these verses are written has yet another meaning, a meaning different from the one explained. The dual powers man possesses are not equal to the immutable. It has to be set in something in order to be fixed, doesn't it? Where is it to be set once it has been collected together? It can only be set in a place where it can be steady. The answer is: set it in God. We are told here to devote ourselves wholly to God in order to



achieve mastery of the senses or to eliminate all hankering after objects of the senses; these are the negative, inhibitive implications and do not constitute the entire meaning. The sentence, "Master your senses and devote yourself to God" has also a positive, constructive meaning. Where do our impulses turn when they are checked outwardly? Inward to the soul. The soul is indicated in the word, '*matparah*'. When support is withdrawn from the senses the heart also is left unsupported, empty. It cannot remain long in such a condition. Therefore, it must be filled with the thought of God and the sustenance of God. When the heart is replete with the thought of God there is no question of its being assailed by the senses.

55. It has already been stated that, in order to complete the mastery of the senses, it is but tight to take the help of *bhakti* or devotion to God. But even this is not enough for, as we discover later, *bhakti* is not a spiritual discipline undertaken to achieve any purpose. It is spontaneous, itself its own purpose, sufficient unto itself. Devotion to God, *bhakti*, has no object external to itself, nothing extraneous enters into it. *Bhakti* is for the sake, of *bhakti*. We often hear phrases like art for art's sake, knowledge for the sake of knowledge, wisdom for wisdom's sake. These phrases are ill-considered. *Samkhya* settled the question long ago. An inanimate object cannot exist for itself alone. Neither does nature exist for the sake of nature. Nature exists for the sake of man; art exists for the sake of the soul; knowledge and wisdom exist for your sake. It is a mistake to say the inanimate exists for the sake of the inanimate. But in the case of *bhakti* such a statement is correct. It is not wrong to say that devotion to God is for the sake of devotion to God, because God is not an inanimate object. He is not external nor is He irrelevant. He constitutes one's very own essence, purified and cleansed. *Bhakti* and *bhakti* only is a worthy subject for our meditation. And for this reason it must be present in all our impulses and discipline.

56. A person is ill. An effort is made to cure the disease. Why must it be cured? The curing of the disease is not an end in itself. The end is the welfare of the soul. If it is necessary for the good of his soul that the patients get well his cure

is beneficial. If it is necessary for the good of his soul that the patient does not get well his cure will not be beneficial. One day I was talking with a man of science. He was skilled in nature therapy. "Can your system of medicine cure all diseases?" I asked him. He replied "According to our system of medicine all diseases are both curable and incurable." His answer was ambiguous. According to him a patient destined to die, dies. But he dies in peace. A curable patient gets well. He also gets well in peace. The point under discussion is similar. Our attitude in *bhakti* is something like that of the nature therapist. "If," we say, "it is God's will and conducive to the welfare of my soul, let my disease be cured. And if it is not the will of God nor conducive to the welfare of my soul for me to get well my sickness shall continue." The patient thus sets his mind at peace by leaving all worry to God. He knows that the one thing needed is devotion to God. He knows nothing else. Every outward labour he undertakes is done in order to achieve *bhakti*. He does not want to exploit or make use of *bhakti* for the accomplishment of any external purpose.

(2)

57. The Gita reserves a place for the *bhakti* which-arises out of desire, although it is secondary and extraneous to single minded wholeheartedness. Why? It is natural that this question should arise here. The answer is that if a person turns away from all supports other than God in order to attain something he desires, it must be assumed that he has made the supreme choice. To abandon all other supports and rely solely upon God is an act of no small worth. Therefore the person who does it is certainly striving to achieve the uplifting of his soul. The fact that he desires something is of secondary importance. Later, in the Ninth Chapter, the subject is carried a little further. We are told that the thoughts of one who worships God with Wholehearted devotion are purified instantaneously even though his conduct may be vile, "*kshipram bhavati dharmatma.*" His soul is straight away made righteous. Such is the power of wholeheartedness. A person is ill. He is anxious to get well. He places his entire faith in God. No Doctors. No vaidyas. He foregoes even medicines and special foods. "God will cure me," he says and turns to Him with

single minded devotion. God will cure him because of his faith or appear to him in person and gather him to Himself. To others it may seem that he has not been given what he wanted, his desire remains unfulfilled. But to one wholly and reverently devoted to God it will seem that the greatest good has come to him.

58. The example of Sudamadeva is most appropriate here. His poverty was extreme. He suffered. His wife sent him to Krishna. Krishna turned him away empty-handed. But he showed him the honour of accompanying him part of the way home. Sudamadeva had set out with only a little flattened rice which he had tied in the end of his shawl. It was quickly finished and he returned without anything at all. But he was happy. "My wife sent me to Him with an ulterior motive. But God is merciful. He did not fulfil my unworthy desire." Strengthened by this thought he reached his village. He found the entire village changed to gold! He exclaimed, "How great is the compassion of God! The entire village has been turned into gold! Not for me alone nor for my petty happiness has He done this, God has given. Let His gift be for the good of all." God gives out of His mercy. He also withholds out of His mercy. The excellence of a devotee is shown in a consistent and wholehearted consecration of his thoughts.

59. God gave to Eknatha the wife of his choice. Eknatha exclaimed, "How great is God's mercy!" With my wife's help I shall attain to God quickly." Tukaram's wife was unable to assist him in his spiritual endeavours. He said, "How great is God's mercy! If I had been given a wife to my liking I would have become too much attached to the life of the world." God showed His mercy in giving to one the wife of his choice; to the other He showed His mercy in not giving him a wife of his choice. To one who finds no wife at all God is also merciful and He is merciful to one who finds a wife and subsequently loses her. "Lord, the veil that hung between Thee and me has been mercifully withdrawn. We are united in Thy kingdom," Says Tukaram. The devotee sees the mercy of God in all things. Herein lies the excellence of the Way of wholehearted devotion.

60. Even though the purpose for which a person devotes himself to God is secondary and arises out of desire, his mind and his heart, his consciousness, will be purified through the grace of God because of his wholeheartedness. Or, to put it another way, desirelessness will supplant desire. Or, to put it yet another way, attachment turns into detachment. Desire, joined to wholeheartedness, is not narrow or covetous. It is found, on close scrutiny, to be a comprehensive desire for the general good. I shall illustrate this point with a small domestic example instead of a great one. A certain woman is wholeheartedly devoted to God. Her nose-ring is stolen. She wants it back. So she says, "Lord, restore my nose-ring to me. I have not withheld any portion of my faith from Thee. Why then has my nose-ring been lost? Why did anyone wish to steal it? I shall do nothing to look for it. I shall not inform the police. I do not suspect anyone. Grant the person who took it the impulse to restore it. If it is returned I shall rejoice and celebrate by distributing sweets. Half of them I shall give to the thief. I shall not look upon him with contempt. And I shall devote myself to Thee, Lord, more intensely than ever. If Thou dost not grant him the good impulse to return the ring I shall not be angry with him. I shall be angry with Thee. And because I am angry with Thee I shall devote myself to Thee more and more. There now, go, and do whatever it is Thou hast to do." Attachment and wholeheartedness, united, bring us to this point. And what actually is this imaginary woman's desire for her nose-ring? Does she not really want that the desire to steal should be eliminated from the world, that the world should be purified? The restoration of the ring is left to God's discretion. He will do what is ordained according to His law. We do not and we cannot know it. If we did, would we not be God ourselves? The woman in question will retain her faith in Him whatever He does. This example makes the consequences of uniting desire to wholeheartedness clear.

(3)

61. All this is not out of place in this context because it reveals that our real purpose is to establish ourselves in God. The mastery of the senses is secondary, and extraneous desire is of no importance whatsoever. Establish

yourself in God and do not become infatuated with objects of the senses. That is enough. All your desires will be washed away. This, in brief, is the very plain message of the Gita. Desires stir in the mind and heart. Do not allow them to find outward expression in acts. If one acts on one's impulses these impulses become irremovable. Therefore one should not so act. The desires of a sadhaka are not removed from the heart by the achievement of external control over his senses. They smoulder inwardly and continue to harass him. His consciousness is not allowed any peace. What is he to do? We are told that he is to dedicate desire itself to God. Ekanatha prayed thus to God. "May all the impulses that stir in my mind and heart take upon them Thy Form." This is the way in which desires can be transmuted. Desire becomes irradiated with God. This irradiation grows greater from day to day with the help of *bhakti*.

62. No man really desires evil. A man himself may not know this. Neither do others know it. He is seen to run and jump about in order to obtain the external objects he wants. He exerts himself in order to possess the material world. Now and then he is also seen to run and jump about in order to obtain forbidden things also. All his activity is actually no more than the yearning of a soul imprisoned in walls of flesh to become all pervasive, universal. The soul wishes to make itself one with the whole of creation. It is not at all at ease within the narrow confines of the body. This restlessness is what drives a man sometimes to drink. To the drunkard, those who follow the way of *bhakti* say, "Make God your wine. Imbibe the beverage of your devotion. Drink external liquor no more." We find this in Omar Khayyam's Rubayyat, *Vaso yatha parikrtam madira madandhahy* (A drunkard is careless about his clothes). In the cup of devotion, *bhakti*, one finds immutability. When desire is dedicated to God in this manner it takes on a divine character. Therefore God tells us to establish ourselves in Him. Do not be alarmed if desires for objects of sense stir within you: Avoid the temptation to indulge your pleasure in them. Place your desires at the service of God. Even anger and covetousness can be dedicated to Him. Aberrations and desires alike will become irradiated and transformed. All disturbances of the mind will subside and wisdom grow stable, quiet, unmoving.

63. If desirelessness, wholeheartedness and the thought of God are found even in the pursuit of material knowledge purification of the consciousness may be effected through it. No difference between the material and the spiritual world then remains. And this difference is not, in fact, a true one. To the mathematician Mathematics is God if his discipline arises out of this concept. Of a certain mathematician it is said that he discovered a new theory and confided this theory, a theory which was an addition to the treasure-house of the world's knowledge, to paper. The paper was lost but the mathematician was unruffled. He showed no regret. Such tranquility of spirit could not possibly be found in mathematics alone. It is to be understood that he studied Mathematics with a mind wholly dedicated to God. It may be that he never pronounced the name of God. That would make no difference to the quality of his worship. A spinner like myself becomes completely absorbed in his spinning. Somebody else may be equally absorbed in a pure form of social work. The senses cannot attack the hearts or disturb the minds of those for whom their work is as an act of reverent worship. No success attends the efforts of those who study science or anything else only from the viewpoint of material knowledge. The reason is plain. Material things, whatever they are, differentiate themselves from the spirit. How can the spirit lose itself in something which is not of the spirit even though it may try very hard to do so? If the object of one's striving is thought of as God there is no obstacle to one's losing oneself in it. One can immerse oneself totally.

## Chapter VII

### THE POWER TO KNOW

#### (I)

64. The outward indication of the Steadfast Wisdom is sense mastery. It is discussed at length in the ten middle verses. The science is dealt within the first three. Then the relationship between sense mastery and the Steadfast Wisdom is explained and the successive stages of its development given in due progression. The first two verses insist upon the importance of sense mastery to the Steadfast Wisdom and the next two give the steps which follow. The exposition of the theory of sense mastery begins at this point.

**65. When a man dwells in his mind on the objects of sense, attachment to them is produced. From attachment springs desire and from desire comes anger.**

*dhyayato visayan pumsah  
sahgas tesu' pajayate  
sangat samjayate kamah  
kamat krodho'bhijayate (Gitall: 62)*

One who makes no effort to control his senses, who is immersed in the contemplation of worldly things, grows attached to those things. Attachment means association. Out of continual association in thought with worldly things is born an attraction for those things. The mind becomest led to them. Out of this bondage is born desire, covetousness. The order is, firstly, thoughts of material things, secondly, association with them, and lastly, desire for them. There is no very clear demarcation between the three stages. They are, rather, three aspects of the same tendency. A large river is known by many names as it passes from its source to the sea but it has a single stream. These three are, similarly three names for the same movement. How can things made of clay differ from clay? From thoughts of worldly things we come to know them, that is to say, they take shape and definition in our hearts. A certain man, at the

insistence of a friend, accompanied him to a wine shop. The friend asked him to go a second time. He went. Again and again he went. This is called association. Little by little the act of frequenting the wine shop began to appear attractive. The man found it fun, derived pleasure from it and developed a liking for it. This is called desire or covetousness. Agitation of the mind is born from covetousness, says the Gita.

**craving begets wrath**

*kamat krodho'bhijayate*

66. Here we are not given a very clear lead however. The critics seem to find themselves in difficulties. The question as to how anger or agitation of mind is born out of covetousness has become very complicated. Out of agitation of mind springs infatuation and from infatuation comes falsification or loss of memory. Obscuration of the intelligence follows. This order of progression is not difficult to understand. What is not at all clear is exactly how agitation of mind is born out of covetousness. Samkaracharya, in his commentary, writes: "*kamat kutascita pratihatat krodho, abhijayate.*" Here he says that wrath arises when desire is frustrated. But if a way is found to avoid frustrating a desire, wrath should not arise. It is not always true, therefore, to say that wrath is born of desire. For it is not so born if a desire meets with no obstacle to its fulfilment. Gandhiji solved the problem by saying that desire is never satisfied. This is his explanation. Ordinarily speaking this is true. The desire to experience the world is never fully satisfied. Desire grows. It does not bring contentment. Once you have ten thousand you begin to want a lakh. When you have one lakh you begin to want ten lakhs. Then a crore. Numerical succession has no end. Neither has desire. Yayati's words have become famous: "A fire blazes up when a burnt offering is dropped into it and desire likewise blazes up when it is fed." Therefore, Gandhiji's explanation seems unanswerable. It is almost exactly the same as Sairtkaracharya's. Unless a limit is set to a desire it will inevitably meet with an obstruction somewhere or other. Wrath is in that case unavoidable. This seems to be the implication of what Samkaracharya



says. In the Gita desire is likened to an unquenchable fire. Satiation is inconceivable. A point is never reached when fire says it will consume no more.

67. There is no escape from disaster this way. But will wrath find entrance if a person modifies his outward circumstances to suit his desires or, learning from experience, modifies his desires to fit his circumstances? The possibility of desire being frustrated is much lessened if a harmony is established between our circumstances and our wants. An objection to the statement that wrath is born out of desire is here suggested. Ekanatha, in the Bhagavata, elucidates this point. "Desire," he says, "is either satisfied or not satisfied. Wrath springs from unsatisfied desire. Satisfied desire breeds covetousness." If this is so the word '*krodha*' must be taken to mean both wrath and covetousness in the widest sense. The following stage, delusion, arises out of both anger and covetousness. When the Gita tells about the three doors to hell it adds covetousness to desire and wrath. It is of course known from experience that both wrath and covetousness stem from desire.

68. The solution of our problem is to be found elsewhere. The word '*krodha*' has been used here in a special sense. Association with worldly things follows continual meditation upon them. This association means the acceptance of the objects we contemplate as they present themselves to us. These then become desirable, precious, and a yearning for them is born. This is covetousness. We have been told that wrath will most certainly follow. We are not told when it will follow. It is apparent, therefore, that the word *krodha* is not used here in the ordinary sense. The most common meaning of *krodha* is anger. It is not used in this sense here. The meaning is agitation of the mind, '*ksobha*', anxiety. According to comparative philology the root meaning of the word *krudh* is *ksobha*, disturbance. Nearly everywhere in Sanskrit its synonym, the root *kup*, is used in the sense of agitation of mind. With the birth of covetousness the mind loses its poise. Discontent ensues. Covetousness disturbs, the equanimity of the mind whether desire is satisfied or not.

69. Later we are given the affirmative, constructive, series of developments. From it we arrive at the following meaning. One who masters his senses gains

serenity and attains a state of equanimity. The word *krodha*, therefore, has been used here as an antonym for equanimity. A person becomes agitated when he begins to want something. This is discontentment. The source of this agitation is a feeling of emptiness, incompleteness—the feeling that without a certain object which I desire, I am incomplete, inadequate. This agitation pollutes the mind and heart. Clarity and purity are lost. In Sanskrit the word *prasanna*, serene, is used also to mean clear. Clear water is described as "*prasannam jalam*" Such is the water of the Deva tank at Singharh. If a stone is dropped into this water its course from the surface to the bottom can be plainly observed. By *prasannata* is meant both clarity and purity. Valmiki said of the water at the ghat where he was accustomed to bathe, "*akardamam idam tirtham sajjananam mono yatha*" (*its waters are as clear and holy as the hearts of the good*). The hearts of the good are in all ways clean and transparent, free from soilure. According to Jnandeva they are "*akardama*". "*Kardama*" means "*kleda*", "*kleda*" means matter extraneous to the water. Water is dirtied when matter extraneous to it is mixed into it and colours it. Water, in itself, has no colour. Therefore, it is clear, transparent. When the soul is in its own natural state it is transparent, *prasanna*. When the desire for some extraneous things is added to it, takes on the colour of that desire. It is dirtied. This is called *aprasannata*, opacity or lack of transparency. The admixture of desire destroys the purity of the soul. It is subjected to external influence, becoming subordinate to desire, thus losing its force. Disquiet follows, anxiety, restlessness. This gives rise to anger. The word *krodha* is used here to describe this condition. In its natural state the soul is as tranquil, as silent, as dark as night. Its virtues are as numberless as the stars.

70. When the soul is so replete in itself, possessed of so many virtues, why does man yearn to possess outward things? Why does he wish to engage in conflict and struggle in order to do away with harmful things and obtain good things? The reason is man is not aware of his soul; he beholds only things external to himself. The beauty of outer creation fascinates him. Ugliness excites annoyance. Neither beauty nor ugliness inhere in outward things. These possess only form. Attraction for them and aversion from them is the work of

our consciousness. Consciousness, our awareness, is subject to the senses. The bray of a donkey is disagreeable to our ears and we are aware of it as an unpleasant thing. Actually, it is neither harsh nor soft. It is as it is. To me it is disagreeable but a donkey likes it well enough. Assume, for instance, that I have a taste for music. Do I not impose my own likes and dislikes upon the sounds I hear when I decide that one is pleasant and another unpleasant? I do not say the sound is false. If I were to do so marxists would immediately exclaim, "You call the whole of creation a figment of the imagination!" That is not what I mean. The world is true. It is not the fabrication of anybody's imagination. And because it is not, I call it God's creation. But my idea of outward things, my concept is my own. The way I think about it or rather the way my sense- dominated awareness leads me to think is my own way. I develop an attraction for some things and an aversion for other things. And this attraction and aversion give rise to *ksobha*, perturbation of the mind and heart. When we become aware of the repleteness of the soul and come to know that it is self-contained, we remain content and tranquil. There is no feeling of inadequacy, or lack. The attitude will be: Why should I run after material things and agitate myself in order to be enslaved by them. Why should these things not run after me, seek me out? Why should I get so excited about them? They may be important. We are no less important. The soul is diminished by continual craving for outward things. Perturbation of the mind results. It is this perturbation which is here called *krodha*, wrath.

**71. From anger arises bewilderment, from bewilderment loss of memory and from loss of memory, the destruction of intelligence and from the destruction of intelligence he perishes.**

*krodhad bhavati sammohah  
sammohiat smrtivibhramah  
smrtibhrams'ad buddhinaso  
buddhinasat pranasyati. (Gita II: 63)*

'*krodhad bhavati sammohah*'. When I was a child I used to declare, "Even when I am furious my mind is clear." The absence of any realisation that anger has

destroyed the peace of your mind is proof that your intellect is eclipsed. All the powers of the mind are not, however, destroyed by this delusion. The mind loses its edge, grows blunt and stupid. When this happens a person finds himself bewildered. He is confused and perplexed when he has to decide what his duty is. This is *sammohah*, delusion.

72. When perplexity and confusion appear, the memory grows faulty. Ordinary forgetfulness is not meant here. Memory is said to have become faulty when a person forgets himself. Memory does not mean keeping many things in mind. I shall call any person who repeats after me exactly what I have said an inanimate machine. I shall say he does not have the judgement to know what should be remembered and what forgotten. Discrimination and judgement are an essential part of memory. Why should I burden myself by trying to remember everything? Some things must be selected for retention and others discarded. The strength of memory lies in the power to remember what ought to be remembered and forget what we ought to forget. Therefore, by memory is meant constant self, the recollection of the *ātman*.

73. Man frequently forgets his soul. On the playing field he calls himself a sportsman. On the battlefield he thinks of himself as a soldier. When he looks at his son he regards himself as a father. He forgets completely that he is, in reality, pure, transparent, colourless soul, *ātman*, devoid of all titles and designations. He takes on the colour of the circumstance in which he finds himself. This is what is here called an error, a failure, of memory. In ordinary usage also this is considered a sign of failing memory. If a person babbles deliriously, forgetting himself, we say he is not in his right mind. The sea retains its tranquility no matter how much rivers may flood and destroy before they pour their waters into it. And the volume of water in the sea does not diminish when rivers go dry. What would we say if the sea, unmindful of its own depth and power, ran after the rivers? Would we not say the sea forgot itself? The same applies to us. I am witness to the whole of creation. If created things wish to run about, let them run after me. I shall not run after them. I am replete. I lack nothing. This realisation is memory, recollection. To feel a lack

in spite of this inner repleteness is to be forgetful, to have a faulty memory. If a king dreams of becoming a beggar it will be said of him that he has forgotten his royal state. This is similar.

74. When man forgets himself in this manner his intellect grows subdued and becomes the slave of the senses. When the intellect is enslaved by the senses or identified with sense objects it loses its basic poise. This is delusion. Our basic stability is forfeited when a person fails to remember his true nature, '*smrti bhrathsad buddhi nafah*'. Mind means the power to know. Only the mind has the ability to know the soul. To employ that mind in trifling matters for the enjoyment of material things is to deprive it of its natural and inherent right. Imagine that a mother places a ring on the finger of her son. The boy goes to a sweet shop and sells the ring for a few pieces of candy. This is like that. The mind is replete with beauty, replete with the power and strength of the spirit. Nowhere else is splendour of judgement found nor the spirit of discrimination. To use such a magnificent instrument for such a purpose is to spoil it. A very special power of the mind is the power to realise the presence of the spirit. When it concerns itself exclusively with material things it loses this power. Is this not its destruction?

However brilliant a mind cut off from the spirit may appear to be, it has, in fact, destroyed itself. This must be understood.

## Chapter VIII

### UNFALTERING MEMORY

#### (1)

75. The connection between mastery of the senses and Steadfast Wisdom has been shown in both the affirmative and negative aspects. Its devolution from sense-based thinking to the loss of intellectual equilibrium has been traced step by step. The eclipse of intelligence through delusion is the culmination. Its evolution, on the other hand, leads to the stability of the mind in the final stage. Proceeding in an upward direction we arrive at the stability of the mind, just as, on the way downwards, we come to its destruction. Our attention has been emphatically drawn to the terrible nature of this penalty. All is lost when the mind is lost. The soul is also destroyed. Nothing is left. This will become apparent later.

76. We have now studied all the lines of this verse in both their superficial and their deeper meaning. A solution for man based solely on the superficial meaning is arrived at too easily. A man may begin to think he has achieved the Steadfast Wisdom after very little effort. From parallel statement in the Upanishads we shall see that the Gita itself wishes to emphasize the deeper meaning. The Upanishads say:

**Purity of being comes from purity of food. An unfaltering memory springs from a pure state of being. The consciousness of one who has an unfaltering memory is free from all bonds.**

*"ahara suddhau satvasuddhih, satvasuddhiau dhruva smrtih, smrtilambhe sarva granthinam vipramoksah."*

By Food here is not meant only physical nourishment; the nourishment of the senses is also implied. You will remember that the word '*nirahar*' has been interpreted in this way. This is the process which we have described before as the pure method of devotion. The consciousness, our inner being, is purified if the senses are nourished on wholesome food and impure articles withheld.

Memory then becomes as steady as the pole star, as true. One's own awareness becomes immutable, and later all bonds of being fall away. The human mind is shackled by diverse conflicts and tensions. In English these are called complexes. By the purification of the mind is meant the elimination of all these complexes. Their elimination sets the mind free. Perception is cleansed and becomes as clear as an unblemished mirror. Within it is reflected the *ātman*.

77. Because so much is demanded of memory, *smṛti*, this word is not to be taken in its ordinary sense. Memory, in English, is a faculty that is cultivated at school along with, the power of reasoning. It means the power of retention. In the practical world it does not do to be absent-minded. The memory must be retentive. A slothful person, is often inattentive and therefore he is not efficient in his day-to-day life. Enough of memory may be preserved to serve for ordinary purposes if torpidity is not excessive. More is not usually demanded of the memory. But let no one imagine that memory of this kind can break the fetters of the mind. The power of memory, *smṛti*, spoken of in the Upanishads and in the Gita, is not a faculty so much as a state or condition of being. Its true nature consists of self-recollection. No matter how strongly beliefs and prejudices may assail the mind they cannot affect it as long as it is in this condition. An intellect which is always ready, alert, armed with the shield of spiritual recollection, can hold its own against these attacks, repulse them and behold the *ātman*.

78. Conversely the mind is deeply by prejudices and beliefs where there is self-forgetfulness. Any belief-or idea makes an instant impression upon a child's mind. We say the mind of a child is tender and clear. It is impressionable. The reason for this sensitiveness is the self-forgetfulness of the child. Any external scratch leaves a mark. We call this impressionability, susceptibility to belief, openness to influence. If the influence to which the child is exposed is good the child will be good. If it is bad, the child will be bad. The conditioning of the mind will reflect the nature of the influence. Such susceptibility, regarded in this way, is a most dangerous condition. When we say that wise men are like little children we do not mean that they are as susceptible to influence as

children. We mean that they are as natural, as free from artificiality as children, as devoid of hypocrisy, as straightforward. No influence need be feared where there is unremitting and vigilant self- recollectedness. Such a person remains himself even though he is seated in the market place. He has nothing to apprehend. He has safely reached the farther shore of self-preservation. No fence nor any charm is required to protect him because he is in no danger of forgetting himself. Moral codes provide protective fences for common minds. The circumstances here are quite different. A mind that is not aware of its own power to reason is unable to meet external challenges. In such cases the mind seeks refuge in artificial protection. However, without self-recollectedness all artificial devices are likely to prove futile.

79. It is, therefore, correct to interpret the word, *smrti*, as meaning the constant recollection of the *ātman*. This is proved in yet another way. We have seen how delusion distorts memory and how memory so distorted inevitably brings us to the disintegration of the mind. If the sequence is reversed and duly arranged the meaning here intended is further clarified. The reverse series is: memory is own when delusion is removed. All doubts are dispersed and the mind steadied. Arjuna, attempting to describe how he felt after listening to the Gita, uses exactly these words. He says:

**Destroyed is my delusion and recognition has been gained by me through Thy grace, O Acyuta. I stand firm with my doubts dispelled. I shall act according to Thy word.**

*nasto mohah smrtir labdha tvat prasadan maya cyuta  
sthitosmi gatasamdehah karisye vacanam tava.*

(Gita XVm: 73)

The meaning of the word, *mohah* and with it the meaning of the word, *smrti*, will also be further explained if we examine the particular delusion which afflicted Arjuna.

80. Arjuna, we find, was deluded by an erroneous idea of duty. By the word, *mohah*, is here meant confusion, in regard to the precise implications of his duty. Why? The thought that he would have to kin his own kinsmen in the



impending battle disturbed him violently. He lost his sense of proportion, his ability to see the situation in its right perspective. He was confused, he thought of some men as kinsmen and of others as non-kinsmen. A weak-hearted judge begins to entertain doubts about duty when his son is brought before him as an accused. He thinks it is best for his son to be acquitted. He hesitates and his feelings overpower him. He is unable to decide what to do. Arjuna was in a similar state. Of himself he says at the beginning of the Gita:

**My very being is stricken with the weakness of (sentimental) pity. With my mind bewildered about my duty, I ask Thee. Tell me, for certain, which is better. I am Thy pupil; teach me, who am seeking refuge in Thee.**

*karpanyadosopahatasvabhavah, prcchami tvam*

*dharma-sammudhacetah yacchreyah syan niscitam bruhi tan me,*

*sisyaste' ham sadhi mam tvam prapannam. (Gita II: 7)*

Arjuna was puzzled and perplexed regarding his sense of duty. The word, *mohah*, is used to describe his state. It is, therefore, obvious that wherever this word occurs in the Gita it should be understood in the sense in which it is used here.

81. When we consider the source of Arjuna's *mohah* or delusion, the meaning of the word *krodha* is clarified. This context should be noted. Arjuna was the victim of a delusion but he was not angry in the ordinary sense. He was not in the least angry nor was he upset. The thought that his kinsmen had come to fight against him filled him with sadness and this sadness was the source of his confusion. But the Gita says the source of confusion is *krodha*. This is to say the Gita equates the word *visad*, dejection, with the word *krodha*, using them as synonyms. The word, *vis'ad*, merits a little study. It consists of three syllables, *visa-da*. It is the antonym of the three-syllabled word, *pra-sa-da*. *Prasada*, as we have seen, is the root from which *prasannata* is derived. And we have already seen that *krodha*, in its truest sense, is the antonym of *prasannata*. Therefore both words, *krodha* and *visada* express deep emotional and mental disturbance.

82. Arjuna's delusion arose out of this disturbance. He tells us that this uncertainty, his confusion, was dispelled by the grace of God through listening to the Gita. As his doubts receded he regained his self-recollection. He was no longer perplexed. Arjuna says exactly this, in Upanishadic language. A clear light is thus thrown upon the word, *smṛti*. "All my doubts have been dispelled," he declares. That is to say, the complexes which shackled his mind have been removed. His mind is calmed, relieved, steadied, its balance restored. His intellect has become stable, immutable. He has attained to the Steadfast Wisdom. All this and more is implied in this passage. To interpret it in the usual way under the influence of the historical Arjuna is mistaken. No reference to an individual should be made and the deepest meaning of the words must be sought out and understood. The human mind is able to grasp the subtlest implications of a word and penetrate to the deepest universal meaning. There, at this depth, is to be found the best that is in man. Arjuna's words, '*sthito*' and '*smi*' mean I *have grown calm* and must immediately evoke the vision of the Steadfast Wisdom.

(2)

83. But the verse is not of much value to ordinary people if we confine ourselves only to the finer shades of its interpretation. Yet, if we content ourselves with little and take only as much as satisfies our immediate need, the road to further understanding, will be closed. Both interpretations must be taken and each applied when and where appropriate. Narada, in the *Bhakti Sutra* uses all these words in their more obvious senses. His sutra runs:

**Bad company must be shunned in every way. It brings disaster and the destruction of the mind through desire, anger, delusion and an aberrant memory. These propensities abide in the heart of man. They are like ripples on water. In bad company they gather momentum and become overwhelming like the sea.**

*duhsangah sarvathaiva tyajyah, kama-krodha, mohasmrtibhramsa-buddhinas a sarvanasa-karanatvat. Tarangayita apime sangat samudrayanti.*

As constructive an interpretation as is consistent with a progressive understanding of Narada's Sutras must be put on these lines.

84. Let us analyse the two verses we are studying a little more closely. The first begins with '*dhyayato visayan pumsah*' and concludes with '*kamat krodho bhijayate*'. The following line begins with '*krodhat bhavati sammohah*' and concludes with the destruction of the intelligence, *buddhinasa*. Why has this division been made? Is there any purpose behind it? Man's consciousness is divided into two parts, his intelligence and his mind. In the first verse we are told how the mind is assailed by thoughts of material things. The nature of the assault to which the mind is subjected is described in the second verse. Material things attack the mind. They do not make a direct assault upon the *buddhi*, the intellect. It may, therefore, at first seem that, though the mind is affected, the intellect is unaffected. Such a state does not last long, Precautions must be taken in time and the assault upon the mind checked at its source as soon as it starts. The first attack is made upon the senses. It is into our senses that material objects force an entry and obtain a foothold, fortifying their position. The attack must be repelled there. This is explicitly indicated in the Third Chapter of the Gita. We are told:

**The senses, the mind and the intelligence are said to be its seat. Veiling wisdom by these, it deludes the embodied (soul).**

*indriyani mono buddhir asya dhisthanamucyate.*

*etair vimohayatyesa jhanam avrtya dehinam. (Gitalll: 40)*

The senses, the mind and the intellect are the three strongholds of desire. The senses are the outermost. Therefore, the battle begins with them. This we have already noted.

## Chapter IX

### THE PEACEFUL HEART

#### (I)

85. We have traced the process which lead to the disintegration of mind. In the next two verses the reverse process is indicated. From our study of the way in which the mind is destroyed we have learned that the senses must be controlled both outwardly and inwardly. Only by doing so can the mind be saved. The question now arises whether a person who has knowledge of the *ātman* should continue to make use of the senses or not. The answer is given:

**But a man of disciplined mind, who moves among the objects of sense, with the senses under control and free from attachment and aversion, he attains purity of spirit.**

*ragadvesaviyuktas tu visayan indriais caran,  
atmavasyair vidheyatma prasadam adhigacchati.*

(Gita II: 64)

The senses yield to the yoke when *vairagya* (dispassion) is established. By means of senses which are subject to his will a man may move among material objects and use them while at the same time remaining serene and retaining his composure, *prasannata*. This verse implies that a wise man alone can live and move among his senses unafraid. For one to whose will his senses are not subject their use is perilous. A person in a perilous situation does not conduct himself in an unconcerned manner. The source of both attachment and aversion is in the use of the senses. The senses can be used in the way they ought to be used only by a person who has overcome their dangers. For him the sense life is also the life of the spirit. It is sufficient for him to nourish the senses in a way that does not give rise to hatred and fear. Mastery of the senses is indispensable to the attainment of *prasannata*, serenity. But this does not mean the senses are not to be used. There would be no need to master them if no work was to be taken from them. The chief point is not to allow

oneself to become enslaved. There is a difference between using a knife and being cut by one. To sharpen a pencil with a knife is to make proper use of the knife. To cut one's finger is to subjugate oneself to the knife. To employ the senses in the service of God is to sharpen a pencil with a knife. But to enslave oneself to them and permit them to destroy the mind is like cutting your finger.

86. The process by which the mind is destroyed has been more clearly shown in its successive stages than the opposite process. The explanation of the one illustrates the other also. Nor do all stages have equal importance. Three stages, the beginning, the middle and the end, or, in scientific terms, the prime cause, the impelling force and the effect, require special attention. Preoccupation with sense objects is the root cause. It produces restlessness, (I omit the word *krodha*) and this is the impelling force. The fruit is the disintegration of the mind. The reverse process is to prevent the germination of anger and hatred. This is primary. The impelling force is *prasannata* and a steadfast mind is the fruit. These are the three steps. The entire process can be deduced from them.

87. The meaning of the word, *prasada*, has been studied at length. The word often gives rise to mistaken notions. To equate it with *prasannata* does not entirely do away with these notions. *Prasannata* is normally understood to mean elation or joyousness. But *prasada* does not mean elation or joyousness and neither does *prasannata*. *Prasada* is neither elation nor dejection. People assume it means joy. Tulsidas describes the countenance of Rama in the following manner:

**When his Impending coronation was announced to him Rama's face showed no elation and it remained unclouded throughout the trials of a life of exile in the forest May the radiance of that countenance bless us with grace always.**

*prasannatdm ya na gatabbisekatas  
tatha na mantle vanavasa dukkhatah  
mukhambuja-sri raghunandanasya me*

*sadastu sa mahjula-mangalaprada*

Tulsidas uses the word *prasannata* here in the sense that was current in his time. For semantic accuracy I would recommend that '*prasannata yarn gatabhisekatakah!*' be read as '*prahrstatam ya na gatabhisekatakah?!*' He wanted to say that Rama's countenance was not affected by elation or dejection. This is truly serene vitality.

88. Serene vitality (*prasannata*) is the unruffled mind, poised, profound. Profoundly need not be stressed if it appears far-fetched. Serene vitality should need no explanations. It implies freedom from the duality of attachment-aversion. It indicates a simple mind, limpid, innocent. Serene vitality instantly dispels dejection and grief. This is its distinguishing characteristic. Suppose a person loses his son. He is grieved. Nothing relieves his sorrow. Suppose he sits down beside a stream. Little by little the pristine quality of the water communicates itself to his feelings and he grows calm. The effect of the flowing water produces a feeling of felicity. In order to express the import of serene vitality more fully the commentators aptly add the word well-being, *svasthya*. *Svasthya* conveys the idea of a sound mind in a sound body. By physical health, the canons of medicine tell us, we are to understand a balanced metabolism. By mental health is meant a balanced state of mind, equanimity. These together make up the exact meaning of the word well-being *svasthya*.

89. And in that purity of spirit, there is produced for him an end of all sorrow; the Intelligence of such a man of pure spirit is soon established (in the peace of the self).

*prasade sarva dukkhanam hanir asyo'pajayate.*  
*prasannacetaso hyasu buddhih paryavatisthate.*

(Gita II: 65)

All suffering is completely and permanently eliminated through the *prasannata* which is won by means of sense mastery. *Prasannata* alone can do this for us. Other methods may dispel some types of affliction and sorrow temporarily. Hunger is assuaged by eating only to reappear after a few hours. Sleep dispels

weariness but a time comes when sleep itself becomes tiresome. We have recourse constantly to numerous pleasures in order to alleviate various forms of afflictions. But *prasannata* takes up its abode at the source from which all affliction stems and, therefore, does away with it altogether. Scientific experiment has proved that unless the sensation of pain reaches the brain it is not felt. Similarly, affliction cannot disturb one in whose inner being the fountain of serenity is flowing. We need not be told that darkness is dispelled when a lamp is taken into a lightless cavern. It is more correct to say that darkness transforms itself into light. Sorrow is transformed into joy when the heart is totally free from blemish. For all suffering is caused by the previous conditioning of the mind, be that suffering of the body or of the mind.

(2)

90. When the inner being, *citta*, grows calm and acquires felicity, the mind steadies down and intelligence becomes steadfast without effort.

**For him whose heart is peaceful, reason soon attaineth equilibrium.**

*Prasannacetaso hyasu buddhih paryavatisthate* (Gita II: 65)

The Steadfast Wisdom is not long in coming after *prasannata* has been achieved. *Prasannata* confers the tranquility and vitality of mind which characterise a steadfast intelligence. The other methods employed to steady the mind do not produce more than a transitory unity in it, a passing moment of concentration. They are artificial and temporary expedients. Permanent tranquillity becomes the normal quality of a mind which has cleansed itself of its preoccupations. Tranquility or equanimity, once it has become the normal and natural condition of our inner being, is not easily, disturbed.

91. This is precisely the reason why children are capable of spontaneous attention. Look into the eyes of a child. They gaze intently at an object for a long time without blinking. We adults open and close our eyes at least ten times in the same interval. Even a yogi's gaze falters before that of a child. And this happens because of the purity of a child's inner state of being. Children are not equally fearless. When they are frightened they shut their eyes. The mind

of a child has been made the subject of much fruitless discussion by educationists. Some declare that a child's mind is restless, it is not the child's mind that is restless. The educationist's is. He inflicts his own restlessness upon the child, or, as the proverb runs, the thief becomes the complainant. Concentration, unity of attention, is not at all difficult for a child. Here, when we spin, the children become so absorbed in their work that their elders are astonished. What is there surprising about it? A steady, continuous movement is an aid to concentration. That is why it is practised by maintaining a steady flow of holy water over a lingam. When the initiate meditates beside a spring the movement of whose waters is continuous and unbroken his mind is quietened and collected, the continuous drawing out of a thread easily induces single-minded attention in a child and leads to contemplation and meditation. To say that this state cannot be maintained for long on account of the limited capacity of the child's brain is a different matter. There is no doubt that concentration comes easily to a child. How easy? If you put a bit of candy into a baby's mouth it will suck away at it completely oblivious of everything else, absorbed in the sweetness. It's crying will stop at once. A child's mother, when it cries, may say, "Look! Look! Just see how the crow is flapping its wings!" The child turns its attention to the crow and all its faculties immediately become engaged in watching it. It is absorbed in contemplating the crow. The ease with which children become absorbed in the contemplation of things is the reason children learn quickly, accepting them at once. The purity and cleanliness of their inner beings enables them to do it. The chief object of the practice of concentration is to achieve a permanent state of inner cleanliness. All else is secondary.

92. How can concentration or singleness of mind be achieved when the devil of desire dances inwardly? It is dawn. The spell of sleep has just left our eyes. Our being has been refreshed and strengthened by the daily bath. We are seated erect in graceful comfort and our eyes are half open. We softly chant a hymn. The vision of some divine image, or of a painting, or of a spring, or a radiance floats before our eyes; low music is a sweet and distant sound. Together these combine to facilitate the attainment of five or ten minutes of absorbed



contemplation. How can contemplation of this kind, contemplation induced by external aids, last? If *samadhi* is the natural state of the soul, the *ātman*, it must be a simple, spontaneous condition. External aids ought not to be required. It should exist and continue to exist whether a person does or does not do anything. Eating, drinking, moving about, looking after things is activity. Exertion is necessary to engage in these activities; one must work, make an effort. But *samadhi* is the basic, original, natural state of being. What need is there for exertion, labour, effort, in connection with it?

93. "*Samadhi* sets in six months after the purification of the inner being has taken place," says the Mahabharata. This must be taken to mean that Vyasadeva must have calculated that it took him six months from the time of this inner purification to attain *samadhi*. Why the botheration of a six months' wait otherwise? By six months does he mean 180 days? Would 179 days not have sufficed? It can only mean that the inner cleansing of his consciousness was not complete. If Vyasa himself were interrogated about this he would no doubt answer that what the Gita says is correct. And the Gita tells us that *samadhi* follows instantly upon the complete cleansing of the mind. A state of this kind, a state in which all exertion ceases, can, it is needless to say, be achieved only when all effort is abandoned. It comes of its own accord, spontaneously. My brother, Balkoba, complained that he could not sleep however hard he tried. I told him he could not sleep because he made an effort to do so. Sleep will come of itself when one stops straining after it. The case is the same in regard to singleness of mind. True concentration, natural singleness of mind, only comes when one gives up struggling and straining after it. Efforts to achieve concentration rebound, recoiling on the consciousness by way of retaliation. After a brief period of quiet absorption perturbation again appears.

94. This is not to say that concentration cannot be practised with the assistance of external aids until we reach a point when it has become our natural and normal condition. A seeker may certainly derive advantage from external aids in his spiritual discipline. And he should certainly make use of them. The Sixth Chapter of the Gita, therefore, lists them in brief for the

sadhaka's convenience. The early morning is the most suitable time for the practice of spiritual exercises. The hour is propitious; as if it almost embodies the highest virtues. Darkness has gone. The light is yet to come. The day symbolises the *rajasic*, i.e., the kinetic qualities, the night, the *tamasic* (indolent) ones. The hour of twilight belongs to the *sattva* qualities, i.e., qualities of knowledge and light, standing for the equanimity of the *ātman* and peace. Therefore, the dawn and the evening hours are chosen by custom for the performance of the sandhya (evening and dawn) services. The landscape is lovely at this time, unfolding in all its purity. It is the appropriate moment to exercise one's power of concentration, if we waste the precious hour of dawn we shall have lost the whole day. The dawn is, unquestionably, the best time for meditation. But to support the mind in its meditation by resort to external aids is different from the building up of its inherent powers of concentration until they stand as erect and strong as a wall. In the last analysis, we, therefore, find that the attitude taken by the Gita is the correct one. When the inner being is cleansed, when it is freed from all disfiguring passions, it will stand upright of itself, strong with its own strength. Patanjali also gives us the same instructions. According to him control of the mind and of the senses is the foundation of right meditation. Control of the mind and the senses is the way of the cleansing of the heart. One need not strain after concentration or steadfastness or intelligence when one has developed the serene vitality born of a pure heart. *"For him whose heart is peaceful, reason soon attaineth equilibrium."*

## Chapter X

### EQUILIBRIUM

(1)

95. When, through the mastery of the senses, serene vitality is achieved the intelligence becomes steadfast. Lack of such mastery and the consequent disintegration of personality leads to inner disruption. The mind thus loses its equilibrium. This much we have learned from our examination of the processes involved in both these developments. The advisability of sense control is apparent. Is it such a calamity if the equilibrium of the intelligence is disrupted? In case such a strange question occurs to anybody the answer is given in the lines beginning "*buddhi nasat pranasyati*". A question of this kind really ought not to be asked nor should it be answered if it is asked. Yet the Gita gives the answer. An entire verse is devoted to its explanation. Even a boy can understand "*buddhi nasat pranasyati*". Then why is a special effort made to explain it? The question is utilised to state afresh the basic value of life. The idea that all value is based upon a steadfast mind and mastery of the senses must be firmly implanted. Benevolence, inner quietude and the felicity of inner grace—these are the most priceless values of life. And all the three are endangered when the mind lacks stability. Therefore, a steadfast mind and its accompanying mastery of the senses are of equal value. They have a distinct and independent value of their own. No guide can point out anything else of equal value both to the health of the individual and to the well-being of the society as a whole. These five things are brought together within two short lines and I, therefore, call them the Five Jewels:

**96. For the uncontrolled, there is no intelligence; nor for the uncontrolled is there the power of concentration; and for him without concentration, there is no peace; and for the unpeaceful how can there be happiness ?**

*nasti buddhir ayuktasya  
na ca' yuktasya bhavana*

*na ca' bhavayatah santir  
asantasya kutah sukham (Gita II: 66)*

This is the verse. Literally it means the unharnessed mind is neither anchored in reason nor is it geared to purity of feeling. Without such feeling there is no inner quietude, and without it, no happiness. This is a concise and absolute statement. It is good to explore its implications further. The opening words formulate the logical conclusion of all that has been said so far. 'Ayukta' means one who lacks inner harmony, a man who is not his own master. Intelligence lies in self-mastery. Lack of self-mastery shows lack of intelligence. This is the inference. This phrase, therefore, merely sums up what has gone before, "ayuktah kama-karetja phale sakto nibadhyate." In the Fifth Chapter, the Gita tells us that the man who is not his own master is enmeshed by his impulses, trapped by the desire for reward. These statements bring out the import of the word 'ayukta'. 'Ayukta' means one who is attached, caught up in his cravings. Literally it means unskilled. Skill here indicates the skill of self-control. Regard this as the key to life. Once you know whether an individual or a society is governed by self-restraint or self-indulgence you will have found out the truth about their way of life. Therefore, this must be called the primary or chief value of life. The second value, imperturbability of mind, or a steady intelligence, derives from it.

97. The verse presents no difficulties up to this point. But the next phrase seems fragmentary. It says that one who is unharmonised has neither reason nor feeling. This statement is incomplete. The Gita apparently intends to say that *bhavana*, feeling or concern, is the third value. From it comes peace and from peace comes happiness. The values have been set out in this order, unless feeling is taken into account there is no peace and without peace there is no happiness: the necessity of reflection or concern is made plain if we put the matter this way. The series, beginning with self-mastery and ending with happiness, is as follows: self-mastery, concern, peace, happiness. Why is *buddhi*, intelligence, thrust into the middle? No connection between feeling or concern and the intelligence has yet been established. The word *buddhi*,

therefore, appears irrelevant in this context. Self-control is indeed essential, but it is necessary to establish its value rationally. However, the reference to feeling still remains unsupported. Therefore it is necessary to state that '*nasti buddhirayuktasya, nacabuddhyasya bhavana*'—without self-control there is no intelligence and without intelligence, feeling or concern has no basis. Taking the verse as we find it today, we must assume that this is the meaning intended and construe it accordingly. Therefore, in the first line, we must add in our imagination, the word '*ataeva*'. It will then read: "*na'sti buddhir ayuktasya ataeva na ca ayuktasya bhavana.*" The meaning thus becomes, "Without self-mastery there is no intelligence, without intelligence no feeling, without feeling no peace, without peace no happiness."

(2)

98. How is it that a link was omitted when the steps from self-mastery to happiness were set out in due order? The question is sure to arise. The answer is that the Lord Krishna has here used *buddhi* and *bhavana* as identical, interchangeable. A special philosophy is contained in this idea. By *bhavana*, concern, is meant matured intellectual perception, the ripening of the intelligence. When the intellect is thus harmonised it is no more in need of a concept for direct apprehension, which is *bhavana*.

99. About some things our ideas are so definite that no thought is required. For instance, when a person hears that a murder has been committed he will exclaim, 'How dreadful!'

This is feeling. He is concerned. Such feelings are deeply ingrained in the social mind. They do not demand rethinking. Human society made its assessments long ago and arrived at specific conclusion. Any person belonging to any sect in India may be asked, "Does wine not benefit us at all? What is the harm if one drinks in moderation?" The reply will be, "I don't know anything about such arguments. I don't understand what you are talking about." The issue was settled by our ancestors. "There is more loss than gain in liquor," says the Koran. The subject was a matter of argument for the authors of the *sastras*. But no room is left for argument once a mature conclusion has been reached by

means of the intelligence. This mature conclusion is feeling—*bhavana*. It is a self-evident truth.

100. Ideas which are the fruit of intelligently conducted experiments are conducive to social progress when they are taken up and put into practice by society. In war many people are killed. It might be argued that, since they are killed anyway, why should they not be eaten? Good meat, fresh meat! The question will not arise if dietetics or medical science assures us that human flesh is unsuitable as food. It may well be, however, that human flesh is easily digestible by human beings and good to taste. If human flesh is cooked and eaten like the flesh of other animals the deficiency in our food supply may be largely met. Soldiers may kill with doubled zest if the idea gets round that to eat the flesh of a man killed in battle is permissible. But, in spite of all these and other considerations, it has been decided once for all that human flesh is not to be eaten. This feeling against cannibalism has become deeply rooted. Behind this feeling is the voice of reason founded on experience. It is bad enough for men to kill their fellow men, but it is worse for men to eat human flesh. Much more havoc will be wrought if they begin to think it permissible to do so. Society will sink into new depths of depravity. The idea that human flesh must not be eaten is so firmly embedded in man's mind that there is no room for argument. This is the very best example of benevolence. A climate of social peace and harmony prevails in a society that cherishes such exalted sentiments. Unrest is constant and disturbances continual in a society in which intelligence has not reached maturity, in which uncertainty and hesitation arise at all times, where considered judgements have not been reached.

101. As a result of historical experience certain sentiments have taken root in the social mind. Social life is regulated by means of them. Social equilibrium is maintained thereby. But not all these sentiments have been arrived at rationally. They must be re-examined and sorted out by the light of intelligence. That part of them which is found to be essentially intelligent will be retained and the unintelligent parts discarded. A sentiment should not be uprooted entirely. It should be purged of impurities, and developed. No values

will be permanent in society if this is not done. Anarchy and unrest will be rampant. It will be difficult to maintain any sort of balance. We have given several example of good social concepts. The addition of one or two more will make the implications even clearer.

102. Our society has come to regard the eating of meat as not very desirable. A number of castes and communities have given it up altogether. In course of time the people of these castes came to regard themselves as superior to others. The matter did not end there. Other castes came to be regarded as untouchable. Other considerations were also involved in this crystallisation of high and low, but the disapproval of meat-eating has undoubtedly played its part. It is good that meat-eating should be given up. But the sense of superiority and inferiority associated with it must be eliminated before the idea can be generally accepted and strengthened.

103. Another idea of the same kind prevalent in our society is the importance attached to gifts of food as alms. The gift of food is regarded as the best and least blame worthy of alms-giving. The social expression of this sentiment today is, however, distorted and reprehensible. The core of the sentiment nonetheless deserves to be preserved. Good can be cherished and strengthened after defects of practice have been corrected. Every hungry person has the right to be fed and it is an undeniable social obligation to supply this primary need. This is the concept behind the superior merit of gifts of food. Gifts of food reach people simply and directly. Into other kinds of help agencies and middlemen enter. Vigilant watch must, of course, be kept to see that food is not given to the well-fed, that the gift is not in excess of the need and laziness encouraged. The basic concept must be retained and the methods of applying it in practice corrected in order to be beneficial in their effects. Herein we find an intelligent approach to social problems.

104. There are certain to be many diverse sentiments in any given society. Peace will prevail if these are purged of falseness. If they are not so purged there will be unrest and trouble. Nobody wants unrest. Various artificial and violent programmes are even adopted in the name of peace. This is what is

happening today. If peace is to be maintained in society by natural and normal means our sentiments must be upright and put into practice correctly. Confused sentiments be clarified. This is the only way. The responsibility of determining the correctness or the falseness of a sentiment belongs to the man of Steadfast Wisdom. He is able to distinguish the false from the true because his mind is stable and is not swayed by irrelevant considerations. The visual arts, music, aesthetics, entertainment, religious observances and so forth all come within his purview. These must have scope for adequate expression if the life of a country is to develop. A country passes into decline when the prevailing ideas about these aspects of culture are distorted. Social disorder follows. Obviously our approach must be firmly based upon the Steadfast Wisdom. This indeed is the scientific attitude, which includes self-knowledge, physiology, natural science, physics, mathematics, the science of contemplation and so forth. Peace follows of its own accord when our social ideas about all these things are based upon Steadfast Wisdom. No artificial or violent devices need be employed for its maintenance. This kind of society will be non-violent. Its constitution will be imbued with the spirit and harmony.

105. For such a state of society to come into being a consensus of social opinion must exist which entrusts the responsibility of guidance to men of Steadfast Wisdom. In a society where a sufficient degree of good sense has not been developed or evoked by its elders, leadership is bound to pass into the hands of people of unstable mind. In a society led by men of Steadfast Wisdom social ethics will be based upon self-control. The factual truths of life will be scientifically ascertained and made known to the public. When the arts become the process of sublimating and developing the sentiments of the heart and when they seek the support of scientific knowledge a social order will result which is conducive to social equilibrium. Only thus can contentment and peace be established.



## Chapter XI

### THE TOUCH OF GOD'S HAND

(I)

106. The word, *bhavana*, as sensibility or feeling, needs to be analysed a little more closely. In the terminology of Indian medicine the word denotes pulverisation. In order to enhance the potency of a drug it is ground to powder. Homeopaths pulverise their drugs. It adds to their efficacy. The finer an ingredient is ground the more efficacious it is; its strength increases. The strength of intelligence also increases as it is made finer. Little by little it is transformed into *bhavana*. Because the man of Steadfast Wisdom has a deepened perception, his life becomes a spontaneous expression of feeling, concern. It fills his life to the brim. There is another distinction between *buddhi and bhavana*. The intellect does not do more than indicate direction. Feeling provides both direction and the appropriate movement. Intellect becomes *bhavana* when it becomes capable of working and being worked upon. In order thus to transform the intelligence it has to be stirred. The idea in the phrase, '*sarva bhutesu ca ātmanam*', the idea that the spirit animates all living things, is not a matter of intellectual dispute to a man of Steadfast Wisdom. It is an emotional realisation. Therefore, he feels a tender concern for all society. This tender concern is as natural and spontaneous as the concern of a mother. Social service becomes spontaneous action. The life of a man of Steadfast Wisdom is irradiated with intelligence, but there is no reason to imagine that it is, for that reason, deficient in emotion or deep feeling, for we have seen that the Steadfast Wisdom is a synthesis of intelligence and love. The life of a man of Steadfast Wisdom is rich with feeling because it is also illumined by discernment.

107. There is reason for some misgiving. The word *bhavana* is often used nowadays in a sense which is the opposite of the sense in which the word *buddhi* is used and contrasted with it. We speak of one person as predominantly intellectual while of another we say that he is a person with

strong emotions. We use these expressions to imply an imbalance. By saying a person is predominantly emotional, it is suggested that his mind is not fully under control. *Bhavana* is used here with reference to the mind. But according to the Gita the word *bhavana* indicates a quality of feeling in the heart. The Gita does not use the word *bhavana* to describe a limitation of the mind but to describe a certain quality of sensibility. As a matter of fact, the Gita does not make any distinction between the heart and the mind. The innermost part of the mind, its core, is feeling according to the Gita. By '*hrd*' the heart, is clearly meant the inmost part of the mind: '*hrdi sarvasya dhishtitam*' and '*isvarah sarva bhutanam hrd dese' rjuna tisthati*'. When we refer to a person as dominated by *bhavana*, what we really imply is that he is biased. A feeling which is not subject to reason is certainly a bias. The Gita has no use for such. On the other hand when we speak of a person as predominantly intellectual, what we wish to suggest is that his faculty of logical reasoning has been developed while his heart has been neglected. The quality of mind of the man of Steadfast Wisdom is of a completely different kind. He surrenders his intellect to his heart. He has integrated his intellect with feeling through a process of refinement. Thus is achieved a fusion of reason and emotion.

108. The process of achieving this fusion of reason and emotion has so far been considered in a general way. It will now be useful to give special attention to three of the means by which it is accomplished, i.e., *japa* or the repetition of a verbal formula, *dhyana* or meditation and *acharana* or practice.

The first is *japa*. *Japa* does not mean the mechanical repetition of a mantra, *japa* is an act of simultaneous recollectedness in thought and word. The words help recollection but must have their counterpart in the heart to be fully effective. Meditation is an act of inner discernment, an act which *japa* preserves and renews through verbal formulation. *Japa* is distinguished from meditation only to this extent. In other respects they are the same.

The second is *dhyana* or meditation. It means identification with and total absorption in the act of contemplation discernment, judgement.

*Acharana* or practice, the third way, consists in the reshaping of the whole life in accordance with the first two, *japa* or *dhyana*.

The fusion of reason and emotion may, therefore, be achieved by (1) *japa* or recollectedness, (2) *dhyana* or meditation and (3) *acharana* or daily practice.

109. This process can be studied from yet another standpoint. The intelligence of a man of Steadfast Wisdom is rooted in the spirit. When, as a result of constant, repeated and vigorous meditation, spiritual knowledge becomes a part of our nature, it is transmuted into devotion. Therefore, the word *bhavana* also means *bhakti*. To say that perception takes the form of love is to say that knowledge takes the form of devotion. When a perception takes on a definite shape and form it becomes so agreeable that the mind constantly returns to it. When this happens it is clear that perception has become love. It is also clear that there is no peace without love or devotion. When a perception becomes very dear the thought of it revolves constantly in the mind, the heart enfolds it and is held as if by a spell. No disquiet can then touch it. A tree is green and fresh if its roots are constantly watered. Similarly, if the spring of perception flows in the inner depths of being, if it takes the form of love, and is constantly watered with love, life stays fresh and vigorous. Trouble is transmuted into triumph, loss into gain. Peace waxes strong. Perception and devotion are thus seen to be inseparable, indivisible. Without perception there is no devotion; without devotion, no peace; without peace, no happiness.

(2)

110. Happiness does not mean the pleasure of the heart and mind. Pleasure has little to do with happiness. Happiness is abiding, pleasure transient. Man is not necessarily moved by pleasure and pain. Many people today are suffering mentally and emotionally for the sake of their country. They find happiness in such suffering. This is because suffering is sometimes salutary, as it is when accompanied by a sense of benignant service. What is sweet or bitter to the tongue is not necessarily sweet or bitter to the person. Medicine is bitter to the taste but pleasant to the patient. When something is good for a person he

joyfully accepts the suffering that accompanies it. The desire to bang one's head against a wall, a sense of excess, of overflow, is not a sign of health. If a man cannot cope with his own vitality, that vitality is a disorder. Health means physical equilibrium. Health is one thing and excessive physical exuberance another. In health there is a sense of well-being. Uncontrolled virility brings grief, regret. Neither gives the pleasure which excites or thrills, real happiness. True happiness is something else. It is to be found in peace, not in a disturbed or agitated consciousness. Its source is tranquility of spirit. From this tranquility, a tranquility which means perfect composure, comes realisation and from realisation comes *bhakti* or devotion. Peace and unsullied felicity follow in due course.

111. The pleasures of the senses are a distraction. They cloy, bringing surfeit. Repetition palls. Variety is wanted. Inner felicity knows no surfeit. It contents us forever. It knows no satiety. Music, no matter how sweet it may be, would be boring if played all the twenty-four hours. This is equally true about colour. For some time it is pleasant to watch the play of colour but the eyes grow weary of it. For relief they turn to the colourless sky; for the sky does not tire the eyes. This is why God is thought of as being like the sky. The difference between the spiritual happiness of the *ātman* and other kinds of happiness is comparable to the difference between the tranquil, neutral blue of the sky and other bright colours. By spiritual happiness is meant an unbroken happiness of being. Nobody thinks of himself as having ceased to be altogether. One may wish to be freed of the body. Or one can imagine that to reside in such-and-such a place is unpleasant. But no one thinks of himself as not existing at all anywhere. It is not possible for a person to be fed up with his own existence. All other happiness is extraneous to it. The sense of separateness is a departure from it.

112. In the Yoga sastra the pure existence of *ātman* is symbolically described by *kumbhak*, the pause between inhalation and exhalation. This subtle, elusive moment between inhalation and exhalation is the moment of neutrality, the middle point of equilibrium, of non-involvement in process, which we must

understand as pure existence. The act of indrawing the breath is complete while the act of releasing it has not yet begun. A crude effort to prolong this moment is made by some misguided sadhus, a practice called '*dirgha kumbhak*'. There is no need to prolong it. What is needed is to understand the condition of the *ātman* which the example of breath-control symbolises and to retain that understanding as a permanent realisation. The act of breathing does not do more than illustrate this condition. Many similar illustrations can be given. Jnanadeva gives several at one place in the *Amrtanubhava*: 'The night has ended but the day has not yet begun'; 'The autumnal floods of the river have subsided but the dwindling of its waters that comes with the summer has not begun.' The act of respiration is an illustration just as these are illustrations. If '*kumbhak*', breath-control, has to be practised for physiological reasons, do so. But from the spiritual point of view attention must be focused upon the pause between inhalation and exhalation, the moment of nullity which has no particularity. Life itself, as a whole, must be kept free from particularity. No qualifying adjectives should be retained which label a person this or that. In the basic and natural, tranquil condition of man which remains when all virtues and vices have been removed; happiness to be found. In order to distinguish this tranquil felicity from other kinds of happiness it is referred to as inner happiness, that is, eternal happiness. It is true happiness because it is real happiness. This is described in the word '*saccidananda*'. This is happiness attained when Wisdom is steadfast. Therefore, the life of one whose wisdom has been stabilised is a happy life.

114. The question will arise here that if the intelligence is not applied to affairs other than spiritual, how are these affairs to be managed? Take the example of a person who deals in skins. How will he do business unless he applies his mind to it? And how can he apply his mind? If his intellect, his *buddhi*, is to be focused inwardly, how can any outer affairs be pursued? The intelligence that deals with ordinary affairs is only one of the powers of the mind. It can be termed reason. There is no harm in directing it toward outward activities. But the innermost part of our awareness of ourselves must be firmly anchored in the *ātman*, steadfast and unshakable. Spiritual realisation must

not all be spent in outward affairs. Of course, it is difficult to use ordinary intelligence in outward affairs and at the same time remain merged with the *ātman*. But the difficulty does not excuse us from making the effort. Success attends unremitting effort. Effort must prevail.

114. I have found a way out of this difficulty. Outer challenges should not be allowed to produce an immediate effect. The response can be delayed. Check it for the moment. If someone cuts a joke do not laugh at once. If someone smacks you do not burst into tears. Consider that you have felt the touch of God's hand. If tears spring to your eyes later, let them. When news of your mother's death comes to you, control yourself at first. Do not give way to grief. Do not allow your equanimity to be disrupted. When your heart and mind are mastered to this extent the rest will follow.

## Chapter XII

### MINDFULNESS

#### (I)

115. In the next verse the necessity for self-control is stressed again from yet another point of view:

**When the mind runs after the roving senses, it carries away the understanding, even as a wind carries away a ship on the waters.**

*indriyanam hi caratam*

*yan mano' nuvidhiyate*

*tad'asya harati prajnam*

*vayur navam ivambhasi (Gita II: 67)*

When the senses go astray and the mind also is led away by them, reason cannot retain its poise and equanimity. When the mind joins the senses the two together are overwhelmingly strong and the reason is deflected. It does not, however, become inactive. Intelligence cannot become unintelligent. It is perverted. Thus it is more harmful than stupidity. If the mind joins forces with intellect (buddhi), the intellect is reinforced, and the senses are compelled to submit to restraint. If the mind defers to intelligence and the senses yield to the mind, all outward activities are harmonised with the inner spirit. If, on the other hand, the mind follows after the senses and intelligence is entangled by the mind, unbecoming action results. This is justified by perverse arguments. In such circumstances behaviour is misconduct.

116. The process by which intelligence is destroyed has already been discussed. Its beginnings in the attack made by thoughts of material things upon the mind are studied in one verse. The birth of delusion, etc., and the effect it has on the mind is examined separately in another. This is what we are discussing now. When a horse's reins are in the rider's hands and the horse is controlled by the reins, the rider reaches his destination without any difficulty. On the other hand, if the horse controls the reins and the reins control the rider, there is no

hope of his ever arriving. The Kathopanishad explains the situation this way. In the above verse a boat is used to illustrate the same point. The intelligence is like a boat which can carry us safely across rivers. If, however, the boat is at the mercy of the wind it cannot help us to reach the other shore. When intelligence is at the mercy of the mind it loses its power to guide. Shipwreck follows.

117. If there were any way to prevent the intellect from being affected when the mind runs after the senses, we could let the mind go its way. And we could assume that it does not really matter if the mind runs after the senses and inclines to material things, when the intelligence and the *ātman* are sufficiently strong and united. The reason would be able to remain anchored firmly to *ātman*, the spirit. Some people do claim that their intellect is not affected by their participation in sensual enjoyment. They assert that their thinking is not conditioned by sensual objects. But this is delusion. It is not possible. It can only become possible if we detach ourselves and remain unattached; when the senses, the mind and the intelligence, all three unite. For the *ātman* is completely unattached and separate. Between the *ātman* and *buddhi* there is a void, a space in which it is possible to erect a wall. But this wall can be erected only after one has attained to the Steadfast Wisdom. It is called Vedanta. It is admittedly difficult of attainment but not impossible. There is no space between the *buddhi* and the mind. They are interdependent, contiguous and continuous. Therefore, although it is possible to imagine a situation in which the *buddhi*, mind and the senses form one entity and the inner being, *ātman*, forms another entity; no such division can be made between the *ātman* and the *buddhi* on the one hand and the mind and the senses on the other. The mind may be subject to the senses and *buddhi* subject to the mind; or the mind subject to *buddhi* and the senses subject to the mind. We are told here that the second of the two alternative courses is better and more conducive to our welfare.



(2)

118. But if no more than this were contained in this verse it would not amount to much. There must, therefore, be a more special meaning, we must seek it out by close study. Jnanadeva is explicit. What this verse gives, according to him, is a warning. Man cannot afford to be inattentive and slack even when he is far advanced towards Steadfast Wisdom. Jnanadeva says that even a man who has attained true perception will be overwhelmed by sorrow if he allows himself to be inattentive. Why should such a person be inclined to indulge the whims of the senses? If he, through negligence, or mistaken confidence, or through curiosity, or by a lapse, slackens the reins of the senses, they will get the upper hand and drag him along after it. When we consider how Jnanadeva reached this conclusion we realise how astute he was. This verse does not tell us that the mind drives *buddhi* as wind drives a boat. It says that wisdom, *Prajna*, is so driven, the word, *prajna*, has been used instead of the word *buddhi*. Is this use of it without significance? Jnanadeva derives his interpretation of this passage from the presence of the word, *prajna*. The mind can never, in any circumstances, be unleashed. The admonition given by Ramdas in the '*manache sloka*' also tells us that even when we have won all that is to be won, we must not relax our watchfulness. We must keep our grip on ourselves even after we have found the mystery. Do not let go. Constant vigilance is essential. That is to say, we are told to keep hold of the reins even after *buddhi* has attained stability.

119. In another place, however, Jnanadeva says something slightly different. When the river approaches the sea its current slows down. After the defeat of an enemy the conqueror's hold on his sword loosens. From this the conclusion is sometimes drawn that a person who has wisdom has no need for discipline. In this passage there is a warning. How can these contradictory statements be reconciled? They are reconciled in the vigilance which is the second nature of the wise. Samkaracharya expresses this in a different way in the *Brahma Sutra*. He asks: "How can a man who has achieved spiritual realisation behave in an indiscriminating manner? Does not such a manner betray egoism?" This

statement is significant. One attains to the Steadfast Wisdom through the practice of self-control. Restraint has become second nature. How then can such a one be caught in a laps? For one of Steadfast Wisdom there are no rules to be constantly remembered, nor does he have to restrain himself consciously. He does not think of rules as external to or separate from himself. The sun's movement is not governed by an external force of nature, neither does the Ganga flow by an outer compulsion. The sun rises because it is its nature to rise. The Ganges flows because it is its nature to flow. Thus it is with the man of Steadfast Wisdom.

120. Is restraint of the senses a burden to him? On the contrary, senses which are not controlled are burdensome to him. Suppose a person, through arduous study, masters the science of mathematics. He has become an expert mathematician. Will he, for that reason, say that for him the rules of mathematics are no longer valid? Will two and two cease to make four for him? Will they make three? Can he imagine such a thing? His mathematics ends where such a thought begins. Therein lies confusion. As long as sense-control is burdensome it is disagreeable. To a sadhaka it is not disagreeable. Sense-control will in the beginning be difficult for a sadhaka. It will inevitably be restrictive. That is why restraint is called *tapa*. The heart will chafe. How can there be any purification without some pain? But if at the outset sense-control is painful the sadhaka must not be deterred. On the contrary he submits willingly. Provisions for his journey do not burden a traveller. If sense-control is not irksome to a sadhaka, can it be irksome to one who has achieved the Steadfast Wisdom?

121. Sense-control, when it is an established habit, is second nature to the man of Steadfast Wisdom. Sense-control is the basis of Steadfast Wisdom. So it does not seem likely that the man of Steadfast Wisdom will be slack or inattentive in the matter. A wood-cutter can lop off all the branches of a tree except the branch upon which he is standing. How can he cut that? The man of steady mind cannot strike at sense-control. To do so would be suicidal. This is all Jnanadeva says. This does not mean that a man of Steadfast Wisdom has to

exert himself constantly to maintain sense-control. But, assuming that it is at all possible for such a man to relax his control, Jnanadeva says he will undermine the basis of his wisdom if he does so. This he cannot do. Here is the deeper implication of the verse we are considering.

122. On the one hand it is said that a man of Steadfast Wisdom does not need to engage in any *sadhana* or to practise vigilance. On the other hand such practice is said to be a vital observance even in his case. These opposite assertions are reconciled if we remember that self-recollectedness is the normal state of a man of Steadfast Wisdom. The contradiction can be resolved in another way also. For many thousands of people a state of normal and natural awareness is not more than an aspiration. The attainment of a complete understanding of Steadfast Wisdom while incarnate in the flesh is, though not beyond our human powers, virtually impossible for most. The higher the sadhaka rises in his realisation the more acute his understanding becomes; but he seldom arrives at a point at which he can feel that his understanding is total. This is beneficial. For as long as we dwell in a body there is need for scope to develop. Not only that, the very fact that we are incarnate in the flesh at all, is evidence of the incompleteness of our development. We delight, as Tolstoy says, in the unending game of hide-and-seek between the object of our meditation and ourselves, as meditator. No sooner does the sadhaka feel that he is about to touch the goal than the goal itself recedes beyond his reach. This is the glory of *sadhana*. It is proper to tell the seeker what to expect. This does not imply that realisation is unattainable. It is attainable by divine grace, but the sadhaka's achievement vanishes the moment he begins to think he has won and can safely relax. He must never do it. It often happens that, as a swimmer approaches the shore and is able to touch it with his hand, he slips back into the water. It is not enough to touch the shore. Only when the swimmer has planted his feet firmly on the shore is he out of danger. Therefore, the seeker cannot relax his self-control till the end.

(3)

123. The necessity of sense-control has thus been fully explained in all its aspects. There can now be no objection to the use of the word '*tasmāt*:

**Therefore, O mighty-armed (Arjuna), he whose senses are all withdrawn from their objects, his intelligence is firmly set.**

*tasmād yasya mahābāho*

*nigrhitāni sarvasah*

*indriyāni' ndriyārthebhyas*

*tasya prajñā pratisthitā* (Gita II: 68)

By the use of the word '*tasmāt*' (consequently) the original proposition is reaffirmed. In the science of Logic this is called '*nigamana*', deduction. The basic proposition is set forth at the beginning; arguments are then advanced in its favour and the proposition is reiterated at the end as proved. This is logical procedure. When it is followed we arrive at a conclusion. It is the Q. E. D. of Euclid. That is to say, the matter is settled. The Gita does not follow this procedure strictly. There is no need to harass the minds of ordinary people by excessive rigidity. The Gita adopts the simpler technic of dialogue, although *sastric* proprieties are kept in mind as the subject under discussion is the theory of sense-control. Another verse has for this reason been added. What has been said before in the verse "*yada samharate ca'yam*" is reiterated here with the difference that the metaphor of the tortoise is omitted. This is the *nigamana*.

## Chapter XIII

### MOTIVELESS ACTION

(I)

124. Two of the sections into which the characteristic features of the Steadfast Wisdom are classified have been considered. Now we must look at the third, final section. The first section contains four verses. In it the Steadfast Wisdom is defined. Three verses of the second section give the science of self-mastery. Its theoretical basis is expounded in the following seven. The nature and effect of the stability which constitutes the Steadfast Wisdom is analysed in the third and last section. We are given a clear idea of its nature in the first three verses. The last verse explains it as a state of being.

**125. What is night for all beings is the time of waking for the disciplined soul; and what is the time of waking for all beings is night for the sage who sees (or the sage of vision).**

*yd nisa sarvabhutanam  
tasyam jagarti samyami  
yasyam jagdrti bhutani  
sa nisa pasyato muneh (Gita II: 69)*

This is the first verse of the last section. Literally it means that a man of Steadfast Wisdom wakes while others sleep and sleeps while they wake. Obviously this is to be understood symbolically, not literally. Taken literally it will be found to refer to station masters, thieves and others whose professions keep them awake at night. Gandhiji has taken some trouble to find an appropriate literal meaning. He says that ordinarily men pass the night in sensual pleasures, falling asleep towards morning. The man of wisdom, on the contrary, sleeps peacefully in the early part of the night and wakes before dawn, rising to pray and meditate. This meaning is certainly suitable and useful. But he did not consider the literal meaning to be the most significant.

He was aware that the verse has a deeper meaning. Later he expounded the verse in his own way.

126. The symbolism used in this verse gives the attitude of a man of Steadfast Wisdom to life. There is a great difference between the way an ordinary person regards life and the way a man of Wisdom regards it. Their attitudes do not converge at any point; they are like two parallel lines. The attitude of the man of Wisdom is the reverse of the other. As Mira Bai has sung in one of her songs, '*ulata bhai more nayanana ki*' (My vision has turned topsyturvy). His attitude is actually the straight one: his vision direct, not the reverse. It is the worldly standpoint which is the reverse of the real. But because the majorities think and speak of the wise man's attitude to life as inverted, it has come to be accepted as such. Why provoke a needless controversy? Mira Bai, therefore, accepts what they say and describes her own attitude as an 'inverted' one. When a person's basic concept of life is different, this difference will be reflected in all the activities of life.

127. For example, food is essential for the body. A man of Wisdom does not abstain from food. He eats like any ordinary man. Outward activity appears to be the same. But the attitude of a man of Steadfast Wisdom and an ordinary man to what he does, his conception regarding diet, etc., are not the same. The meal of a wise man is like a sacrament. It is a rite performed for maintaining the bodily instrument. The Upanisads and Sanikaracharya speak of it as therapeutic, like medicine. Gandhiji referred to it as the payment of rent for the house in which we dwell, or, as scientists say: a machine must be kept oiled if it is to work properly. The man of Wisdom feeds the body in order to keep it healthy and capable of work. The indulgence of appetite plays no part in his dining. In the dining of others there is gormandizing. They are interested in food and take pleasure in it. Much time, thought and labour are spent in the preparation of dishes pleasing to the taste. How elaborate the organisation, how great the fuss! Women, who constitute half of humanity, are wholly occupied in the preparation of food. Men are as greedy as children.

128. It is the same with sleep. Sleep is as necessary to bodily life as food. For most people sleep is identical with sloth, with dreaming, with oblivion. Each night brings the loss of some knowledge. But the sleep of a man of Wisdom is dreamless and innocent. His powers of discrimination and understanding grow during deep sleep. The seed is hidden in the soil. It sprouts. We see it grow. New insights grow in man during periods of deep sleep. Thus there is a qualitative difference in sleep. In the case of one person sleep is conducive to waste and sloth. In the case of another it may be a refreshing repose in fundamental nature. Outwardly the two states may appear similar but there is a radical difference in quality.

129. In matters of daily conduct it is the same. Many social and moral codes have been founded on imagined insult and honour. A wise man is not aware either of honour or dishonour. Men almost never deal simply and openly with each other. At every step they wrap up their manners in hypocrisy and artificiality in the name of politeness. In public assemblies a man shows himself in one guise, at social functions in another and in still another at home. On festive occasions he is different again and yet another person on the playing field. Lives are everywhere costumed, disguised with simulation and dissimulation, sham. A man of wisdom is simple, natural, straightforward, open in his manner. It is for this reason that even his daily life is so different from that of others, the reverse of theirs.

(2)

130. Here we have, in our way, extracted a meaning from the imagery of the Gita but what does the Gita itself say? It does not appear to say anything. It seems to be content with the figures of speech it uses. But this is not actually the case. The Gita, as a *sutra*, concludes when the chief features of the Steadfast Wisdom have been given, in its Second Chapter. Therefore, all that has been discussed upto this point is summed up in this verse. We have discussed three things, firstly, the intelligence of the *samkhya* without attributes, secondly, the attendant *yoga* and its virtues and, lastly, the

combined effect of these two. The essence of the three is presented here in the form of a metaphor.

131. (1) By the *sāmkhya* intelligence is meant knowledge of the true nature of the *ātman*. Why is so much emphasis laid on this knowledge from the very beginning? This is done because it refers to the true perception of oneself. The *ātman* is not strange or alien to us. Who then perceives it? What is the true nature of perception? We must begin with first things first. The Gita says, "The *ātman* neither slays nor is slain, neither does it cause to be slain." Man's acts are performed in three ways: he is the doer, he causes to be done and he is the object of what is done. The *ātman* is not concerned with any of these. The *ātman* is neither the doer nor the deed, nor the object. The verb "to die" has been used to illustrate this statement. We are told that the *ātman* is not involved in any of these activities. In Samkara's commentary this freedom from involvement in action is reflected as clearly as in a mirror. Knowledge of the actionless dynamism of the *ātman* is like light. To regard the *ātman* as the doer is, on the contrary, darkness. This darkness envelope the lives of all living creatures in a kind of blindness. But the life of the man of Steadfast Wisdom shines with the steady light of the *ātman*. This is the primary meaning of the verse under discussion. Man imposes upon himself innumerable burdens, tying himself in knots with thoughts like the following: "I have done such-and-such a thing. My work is good. I am the son of so-and-so. I own such-and-such property. This is what I look like. I am so many years old. I belong to such- and-such a caste". And so on. A man of Steadfast Wisdom knows that all this does not concern him. His sole concern, his *dharma*, is to establish himself firmly in the *ātman*. This is the difference between his life and the lives of others. What can it be called if not the difference between light and darkness?

132. (2) The Yogic approach puts the dilemma thus: If, because the *ātman* is inactive, you cease to perform any outward labour you run the risk of falling into the clutches of apathy and inertia. If, on the other hand, you labour, you run the risk of becoming involved in the toils of worldliness. The Gita shows us a way out. The sense of self-importance, of being the actor or the agent or the



Object of action, must be smashed to pieces whenever it waxes strong. Where does egoism entrench itself? In respect of the fruits of labour. "I have laboured and therefore have a right to receive the fruits of my labour." In statements of this kind the sense of ownership, of personal possession, appears. To forego all claim to the fruits of one's labour is to renounce egoism, to give up one's pride. No sense of hurt will remain if all hope of receiving any reward for one's labour is renounced totally. The Gita says, 'You have realised that the *ātman* is totally uninvolved in any manner of activity. Your labour is therefore not yours. The reward also is not yours. From whence shall it come?' This habit of thought cannot be cultivated by merely abstaining from action. The realisation of the inactive nature of the *ātman* starts, not in the refusal to work, but in the renouncement of all claim to the rewards of work. In the Gita we are given our very first elementary lesson in the methods of acquiring this attitude. The incentive to work is in no way impaired by renouncing the rewards of labour. Moral and social codes give us the right to enjoy the fruits of our labour. But as a follower of the Gita you should abide by its teaching. This teaching is your portion. You inherit it as a son inherits from his father and are called upon nobly to renounce the fruits of your labour.

133. The famous passage in which the Gita points the way to the renunciation of reward for labour is this:

*karmany eva'dhikaras te ma phalesu kadacana* (Gita II: 47)

The exact meaning is very seldom understood. It is taken to mean a man has the right to work but not to the reward of his work. In reply to the question as to why this should be so we are told that it is because the rewards of labour are not in man's hands. They are determined by numerous external factors. This is fatalism. Even so it is not totally without justification, but the arguments advanced in its favour are not conclusive. If the reward of a man's labour is not in human hands neither is his labour. Both are governed to some extent by external factors. The rewards of labour have the same basis as labour itself. If a man has the right to work he also has a right to the rewards of his

work, at least partly. If a man has no right to the rewards of his labour he has no right to labour either. This interpretation, therefore, is not correct.

134. Then what does this passage mean? To find the meaning we must take the help of Sanskrit grammar. '*Ma phalesu*' is written here, not '*na phalesu*'. The present tense 'asti' or 'bhavati' is not used after 'ma'. Here the correct verbal form is 'astu' or 'bhavatu'. Accordingly 'is' is replaced by 'should' which is admonitory or advisory in its import. The passage then becomes: '*karmany eva te adhikarah astu, phalesu ma astu*'. What do we get when the passage is corrected according to the rules of grammar? You have the right to work and, therefore, to the fruit of work but renounce all right to the fruit while retaining the right to work. How is this justified? According to the Gita this is the logical import of its teaching that the one who labours is not the labourer. If you wish to experience this state of total non-involvement renounce the fruit of action totally.

135. (1) The attitude of the man of Steadfast Wisdom in this respect is radically different from the attitude of ordinary men. The ordinary man works only for what the work brings him. If there is no prospect of a reward, he refuses to work. Some go a step further. If reward can be had without labour they seize upon it eagerly; if, however, work is unavoidable it is accepted as a necessary evil. On no account do they forego the reward. This attitude is the chief cause of the unrest that is so widespread today. The number of those who try to obtain the fruit of labour without engaging in any labour themselves is not small. It is a practice that is not confined to a few dishonest people. Government after government, in country after country, is doing it Nazism, Fascism, Capitalism, Imperialism and other similar ideologies have been built upon this ignoble attitude. This is true not only of the present day. Though today we see it in an extreme and exaggerated form it is an attitude which has been in existence almost continuously from very early times. The Gita, for this reason, refers to it as an *asuric* device and devotes an entire chapter (Sixteenth Chapter) to the denunciation of it. Thus the exploitation of the fruit of other people's labour has become an evil feature of modern society, Social

and ethical codes, therefore, lay emphasis on the rule that a workman is worthy of his hire. Thus men who benefit society by their labour will have their merit justly recognised. Deserving men will be duly rewarded. The law-givers have insisted that this practice be followed in a sane society.

136. (2) The Gita, however, takes its stand on a higher plane. Whether its stand is, therefore, considered workable or not, it must be understood in its correct context. The Gita advises one who wishes to overcome the ego to voluntarily forego all claim to the rewards of his labour. Dedicate your labour to God, to Society, let go of it, but in no case claim it for yourself. You must do this not because someone asks you to, but because it is in accord with your principles. The *ātman* is not affected by any action and to approach that state of being you must renounce all thought of reward. This realisation is the basis for the teaching of the Gita, the teaching of selfless action. The introduction of this doctrine at the outset of the Gita is considered by many to be quite pointless. Karma Yoga, they think, should have been expounded first. This is a mistaken notion. The Karma Yoga of the Gita is the corollary of self-knowledge. It is not primarily a directive for action; it demands the renunciation of its fruit. Without the part devoted to the knowledge of the *ātman* the doctrine of the renunciation of the fruits of labour is meaningless. Renunciation of labour itself is not possible because, though one may be the true aspect of the *ātman*, for the time being one is confined within fleshly walls. Work for reward is, on the other hand, incompatible with the true nature of the *ātman*. As long as the body is retained there is no respite from labour itself. This is an impasse. The Gita shows us a way out through the renunciation of the fruit of action. The doctrine of rewardless work is derived from the inactive nature of the *ātman* according to the rules of rhetoric just as theorems are derived from a proposition by Euclid. Let us take a second look at the verse in this context of *karmayoga*. It can be interpreted to mean that people ordinarily are not as alert to their duties as they are with regard to their rewards. The man of Steadfast Wisdom is wakeful to his duties and forgetful of reward. This is another appropriate interpretation.

137. (3) There is a third interpretation of the verse. The three interpretations are basically one and the same, differing only as perspectives. In describing the mastery of the senses as one of the chief characteristics of the Steadfast Wisdom we have seen that the indulgence of the senses results in the disintegration of the intellect and that self-control is essential to mental stability. Accordingly a man of Steadfast Wisdom is awake to the need for restraint and sleeps over indulgence. Ordinarily a man does exactly the opposite sleeping over self- control and keeping alert to opportunities for indulgence.

138. These three interpretations are brought together here in a single figure of speech. If we examine the three words: '*pas'yan*', '*muni*' and '*samyami*', we shall discover whether our understanding of this passage is correct. By the word, '*pasyan*', a man with knowledge of the *ātman* whose mind is rooted in the *Samkhya* is described. The word, '*muni*', stands for the Karma Yogin and the word '*samyami*' expresses the steadfastness of the wisdom which unites the two foregoing, the wisdom which is the subject of our discourse. Thus these words are in harmony with the three interpretations we have given. The most obvious meaning of the figure of speech used in this verse is however, that a man of Steadfast Wisdom has an outlook on life completely different from that of the ordinary man. These three interpretations must not be taken separately. United in a single concept they apply to life as a whole. However, if one delves deeply enough he will find that each of the three, by itself, is also comprehensive in its application.

## Chapter XIV

### IN IMMENSITY

(I)

139. In the verse we shall study here the Steadfast Wisdom is described in yet another way. Let us understand the verse first.

**He unto whom all desires enter as waters into the sea, which, though ever being filled is ever motionless, attains to peace and not he who hugs his desires.**

*apuryamanam acalapatistham  
samudram apah pravifanti yadvat  
tadvat kama yam pravisanti sarve  
sa santim apnoti na kamakami (Gita II: 70)*

The first sentence ends with *apnoti*. The second sentence is *na kamakami*. By *apuryamanam* is meant that which is constantly filled from all sides but which never exceeds its boundaries or leaves its own place. When the word *apt* is inserted the passage reads as follows: *apuryamaram api acalapatistham*. All waters flow into the sea. The sea accepts them taking them to itself, but it neither overflows nor leaves its place. Likewise, the man of Steadfast Wisdom accepts the desires that flow into him from all directions but he is not disturbed by them. He stays in his place and keeps within bounds. Therefore he is at peace. Those who run after their desires are not at peace. This is the literal meaning of this verse. It is beautifully composed but a little obscure.

140. First we must give attention to the meaning of the word '*kam*'. It is used in the singular when the chief characteristics of Steadfast Wisdom are indicated. Elsewhere it is used in the plural. In the phrase: *sangat sanjayate kamah* the word is in the singular. Basically desire *kama*, is a disturbance and out of it arises a multitude of impulses. In the plural, the word is used twice, both in the beginning of '*prajahati yada kdman*' and again at the end '*vihaya kaman yah sarvan*'. In both instances it means desires, *kamana*. Desires, being emotional in

their inception, can and should be renounced. It is imperative to do so. That is precisely what the man of Steadfast Wisdom does. In the present verse also the word is plural but it does not stand for desires. Etymologically it denotes pleasurable objects, sense objects which inspire desires. In the Upanishad also '*kamah*' is used in this sense. Yama tempts Nachiketa by saying. "I shall give you all that is desirable and enjoyable in the world." In the passage under discussion it is also used in this sense. The word '*kamah*' has three distinct meanings. (1) the original root impulse which is a disturbance, (2) desires and (3) sense-objects which are desirable. Material objects are thought of as auxiliary to desire because they awaken desire in the heart and mind. But the objects are not themselves the sources of the desire they awaken: they are only the symbols. The source of desire is not in the object but in the inclination of a mind conditioned by past and new experiences, traditional modes of conduct, habits and tendencies. It is thus that objects become symbols of desire.

141. All created things enter continually into the Steadfast Wisdom just as all the waters of the earth flow continually into the sea. Sounds present themselves to the ear, visual objects to the eye. But even as all waters are absorbed into the sea and partake of its nature, becoming one with it, so likewise are all things received into the Steadfast Wisdom, merged with it, and take on its nature. Whatever the eye beholds, whatever the ear hears, all that is perceived by any of the senses, is transmuted into the true nature of the *ātman*. The heart and mind remain unaffected. The influence of material things is felt as attraction and as aversion. Whether these influences arise because of the mind or because of material objects the fact remains that material objects cannot be eliminated. If, to safeguard sense control, we decide to destroy material objects altogether we shall have to destroy the entire world. This is neither possible nor necessary. For, even though such objects enter into the consciousness of a man of Steadfast Wisdom through the senses they do not disturb him. His equanimity is unaffected. In this lies his greatness. Material objects need not be shunned. It is the craving for them that needs to be eliminated. This has already been achieved. He has no need to run

away from anything. He retains his composure even though placed in the midst of material splendour. The moralists will here be troubled. Is there no room for discrimination as to what is or what is not acceptable? This verse is not concerned with ethical priorities, it underlines the freedom which knowledge makes possible.

(2)

142. The composure of a man of Steadfast Wisdom may be described in two ways. For him to act at all, even in the purest manner is, from one point of view, impossible. From another point of view, even forbidden acts are possible. He abstains from all action on the one hand and, on the other, all action is permissible to him, bad as well as good. His condition can, therefore, be described in opposite terms. We say that he does nothing. He does not lift a finger. He does not bother even to do good. We also say he can set the three worlds on fire. These statements are not contradictory. This is the kind of the part he plays. It is further clarified by the paradoxical interpretations put upon it by the various commentators. Samkaracarya is a famous exponent of the doctrine of *mukti* or liberation and therefore favours the renunciation of all activity. He says it is impossible for a wise man to do anything, adding; "A wise man may participate in all things, even forbidden things, and yet not be either the agent or the doer." '*sarva 'karmanyapi nisiddhanyapi kurvanah.*' Will a wise man really do a thing that is forbidden? We are told that here ethical and unethical matters are not the subject of our discussion. The greatness of spiritual knowledge is being described. If Samkaracarya is asked what a Wise man should do, he will answer that, in his opinion, a Wise man should do nothing, not even a good of pure act. He does absolutely nothing. He will not even move. If the commentator is accused of going to the other extreme he will again answer that he is describing the true nature of wisdom and is not concerned with ethics. That is to say, in one case he has described the greatness of Wisdom and in the other its true nature. In its true nature Wisdom is inactive; it does nothing. And its greatness lies the fact that it is not subject

to good or evil. The ethical code of a man of Steadfast Wisdom is situated between these two extremes.

143. What does this statement precisely imply? It is a bit difficult to give an exact answer. The more highly developed a society becomes the more penetrating will the insight of its wise men be. Wisdom will grow clearer, more definitive, proportionately, as society grows in experience. That is to say, within the frame-work of detachment, standards, of conduct will continue to change. If society is more advanced today than it used to be, the wise men of today are wiser than the wise men of old. To say so may seem presumptuous. The truth of such a statement is, however, obvious when one thinks about it. The progressive development of wisdom is a relative form of expression. It is external, not inner. The inner features of the Steadfast Wisdom will always be the same. Its equanimity is enduring and stable; it is imperturbable. This is what distinguishes it from all other things. Such a man shows his understanding in his behaviour. The ethics he follows is derived from his realisation of truth. There is no way or codifying his conduct in a permanent set of rules that all can understand.

144. Some exponents of the Bhakti school and of Karma Yoga have caused confusion because they have given play to their imagination instead of turning to their deepest perceptions. Thus some Bhaktas regard Shri Krishna as an adulterer and seek to excuse him by declaring that he remained detached nontheless. Perhaps the depth of their devotion transmutes alleged adultery into dispassion! It is the same with advocates of Kanna Yoga. They assert that the man of Steadfast Wisdom regards every person as endowed with divine grace and still indulges in bloody wars. Their arguments may do credit to their powers of imagination but they do less than justice to their understanding of the way of life of the man of Wisdom. The Bhaktas quote the Bhagvata and the Karmayogins quote the Mahabharata. Both claim to have found support for their theories. But the real test is the experience of today, of society at the present time, of our own experience. Observations based on this experience alone are of value to us. They are valid, of course, only in relation to the



present, the time closest to us and do not apply to the future. If, however, the inner features that characterise the Steadfast Wisdom are the same at all times, in the past, present and future, as we have seen that they are, we can find out what the ethics of this Wisdom is also, in the present and the future. In the verse, "*yā nisā sarva bhutānām*" we are told that realisation is the ethical guide.

(3)

145. The meaning of this verse gives rise to apprehension in some and particular satisfaction in others. Moralists are afraid that a strange ethical idea has been presented in it. If a man of Steadfast Wisdom behaves as suggested no morality will remain. And others find particular satisfaction in it because\* they think, once a man attains to the Steadfast Wisdom he can take all things to himself, like the sea, and may behave in any way he likes, without any inhibitions. This verse does not, in fact, give any cause for either apprehension or satisfaction. The man of Steadfast Wisdom, as we have seen, remains unperturbed in the midst of the enticements of the senses. This is characteristic of his state of being and has nothing to do with ethics. The verse may be construed in yet another way, a way that seems to be more appropriate. The emotional realisation of identity with the whole universe is what is important to such a man. Though the Steadfast Wisdom is one and the same for all, the approaches to it are many. One approach is that of the Karmayogin, another that of the Dhyanyogin. '*yā nisā sarva bhutānām*' gives the approach of the Karmayogin, the approach through conduct. The alertness of his conscience is described, the wakefulness of his mind. He is vigilant in matters of right and wrong. The duty of a Karmayogin is to discover the good and single it out for acceptance by rejecting the bad. The verse which uses the metaphor of the sea gives us the approach of the Dhyanyogin. Here we contemplate the Steadfast Wisdom in all its vastness and meditate upon its immensity. The whole cosmos is encompassed by the nobility and sweep of the vision. In its immensity all is good, all pure, all auspicious.

146. In fact evil does not have a separate existence of its own. Evil takes its rise from goodness. By evil is meant the shadow of good. A shadow does not destroy anything, nor does it bring about differentiation. On the contrary, the outlines of an object are thrown into relief by a shadow, and become more sharply marked. A picture drawn on white paper without colour will not be visible to the eye. The paper will stay white. Good, by itself, remains unexpressed, invisible. It will have no form. Evil appears out of the desire to give form and expression to good. A man's shadow has no value of its own; it is not worth anything. There are, say, fifty prisoners. They have fifty, a hundred, or a hundred and fifty shadows. When the prisoners are counted no one counts a hundred or a hundred and fifty. A shadow is not a hundred or a hundred and fifty. A shadow is not a separate entity; it does not exist in its own right. It is, essentially a lack. In order to describe darkness we say it is the absence of light. We do not say that light is the absence of darkness. Darkness itself is not an object. Light is. Darkness is useful in that it makes us aware of light. The function of evil is to reveal the good. Therefore, evil does not alarm a wise man. The goodness of his nature is not destroyed by it. He knows that evil is helpful to good. It makes it clear and distinct. To his way of thinking, a way which takes all things into consideration, good and evil are alike acceptable. To his way of thinking, good and evil, added together, equal good. In mathematical terms the equation is:  $\text{good} + \text{evil} = \text{good}$ . This is so because  $\text{evil}=0$ . What need is there for this zero? Why is it wanted? Because it makes for precision. Zero has no value of its own. It indicates nothing. But put a zero after 1 and it becomes 10. Placed beside 1 it enhances the value of 1. Even evil seems somehow beautiful because it enhances the beauty of the good.

147. If anyone, misled by an evil inclination, thinks this doctrine a convenient one and proceeds to confound good and evil he does so to his detriment. Good mixed with evil is evil. Rice with which poison has been mixed is poisonous. Therefore, whoever attempts to establish an ethical code by confusing good and evil takes the path of self-destruction. A man of wisdom looks at the matter differently. He refuses to accept evil. He is not in the least enamoured of evil. He discriminates between evil and good in all he does.

But there is a difference between what he does and how he regards what he does. His view of the world is such that he sees no evil in it. Of the bad as well as of the good he says, "Come to me, both of you. You are mine." If evils protest, saying, "We are evil," he answers, "You are not as bad as you claim. Call yourselves good." If they continue to insist that they are bad, he purifies them. His way of looking at the world enables him to transmute bad into good. To him evil is a mistake, an error, as unsubstantial as a ghost. "There are no ghosts," a teacher may say to his pupil, and yet the child's mind may not be able to assent. He goes home and says to his mother, "There now! Look at that! That is a ghost! Of course ghosts exist!" His mother says, "Take this. This charm will protect you from it. I've killed it with a spell." The child's fear is dispelled. The wise man says, "All of you are good. There is nothing wrong with you. There is no flaw in you." To those who persist in saying that they have erred, he says, "I shall give you a *mantra* and show you the way to spiritual discipline." He does this only to exercise evil. Evil is unreal, *sadhana* is unreal, the destruction of evil is unreal. Good only is true. One who sees nothing in the world but good finds peace.

## Chapter XV

### THE DELIGHT OF THE GAME

(1)

148. He who abandons all desires and acts free from longing, without any sense of mineness or egotism, he attains to peace.

*Vihaya kaman yah sarvan  
pumamscarati nihsprhah  
nirmamo nirahamkarah  
sa santim adhigacchati (Gita II: 71)*

This verse brings the discussion of the Steadfast Wisdom to a conclusion. The discussion opened with the injunction to renounce desire. It is brought to a conclusion with the same injunction. The total renouncement of desire leads a man to a state of desirelessness, which is the basis of inner poise. This is the last word, *sprhah* means desire or craving. It has been renounced unequivocally. What then is the need for referring to it once again? There is no repetition, for *sprhah* here means the deepest and most fundamental of all desires, the desire to live itself. This special reference may be illustrated by a parable. A householder invited some Brahmins to a dinner. At the time of the dinner, the householder enquired if all the invited guests had arrived. On being assured that they had come he enquired if the Sannyasis had also arrived and was once again assured that all the guests had come. The Sannyasis were included among the invited Brahmins. The point of his second enquiry was to give courteous recognition to their special status. Likewise, even after renouncing all desires it is necessary to specify that the primary urge for survival, the ineffable will to live, must similarly be put aside. For it can remain dormant. It is stated here that even that *sprha* must go.

149. By surrendering the desire to live do we mean that a person desire to die? No, the desire to die departs with the desire to live. "Does anyone ever desire to die?" is a question that may well be asked. The answer is that sometimes a

person does desire to die. We find that men commit suicide. A man of Wisdom, however, is never fed up or disgusted with his life. He drives the desire to die as far from his thoughts as he drives the desire to live. That does not mean that he becomes indifferent to life as a whole. Occasionally an old man is heard to say, "Not many days are left! Two-thirds of my life gone and only one-third remains!" All taste for life has dried up in such a person. He is indifferent. The attitude of a man of Wisdom is diametrically opposed to this. He has lost fear of death because he has conquered all attachment to life. Joyousness remains, the delight of the game. Life becomes for him a sport. Later, in the Tenth Chapter, the characteristics of a *Bhakta* are described thus: *tusyanti ca ramanti ca*. (The bhakta is happy and contented.) "Married to *mukti*, freedom, as to a bride, the bhakta leads a joyous existence," says Tukarama. Thus life is felicity.

The urge to live is the reverse of the fear of death. These are two aspects of the same thing. A soldier, when he goes to war, keeps himself amused with merry-making, laughter, joking, dancing. Pascal says that he behaves in this way because death is a constant presence to him. In order to forget it he creates a semblance of gaiety. The desire to live or, in other words, the fear of death, is a pricking thorn in his heart. To forget the pain he strives to work himself into a state of hectic exultation. This kind of pretended happiness is common enough. We see an apparently jolly person who is full of fun and laughter but, when we come to know him more closely, we find that he is sad at heart. He deliberately creates an atmosphere that helps him to forget his sorrow. The most painful of all the sorrows that afflict man is attachment to life. It causes pain up to the last, until death intervenes, and it pursues him even after death. To escape from this dismal prospect man devises various festivals and ceremonies as distractions. But the sorrow of a person who gives up all desire to live disappears of itself. Living then is no longer painful. All anxiety comes to an end. Life is pure delight.

151. This is the secret of children's happiness. They do not worry about life. Their unconcern arises from ignorance. It is true, nevertheless, that they do

not worry. A child is easily absorbed in its play, forgetting even hunger and thirst. His mother remembers for him. The child does not bother about it at all. This unconcern of the child is unconscious while the unconcern of the man of Wisdom is a consciously achieved condition. This is explained here. It is implied in the word, '*carati*', '*carati*' means to play and jump about. No trace of sorrow mars the life of one so engaged.

The subject of a discourse is reiterated at the end. In the phrase *Prajahati yada kaman* the subject is not merely restated. When a man of Steadfast Wisdom renounces all sensual craving it follows that he attains a state of contentment, identifying himself with the *ātman*. This is emphasized in this final summing up. When all craving is renounced one is merged in the source of ecstasy, which is the inner nature of the *ātman*. This is indicated here by the word '*carati*'. When outer impulses subside inner felicity remains.

(2)

152. The word '*carati*' is commonly understood in another sense. Tilak has explained this in his commentary on the Gita. The phrase '*visayan caran*' is used in one of the foregoing verses. Tilak suggests that the word '*carati*' should be interpreted here to mean that a man of Steadfast Wisdom moves among material objects with his senses duly restrained. This is not incorrect. The man of Wisdom does not renounce the use of his senses. He cannot refrain from seeing with his eyes or hearing with his ears. He does these things for the sake of rendering service. But this interpretation of '*carati*' is not indispensable. This verse sums up the meaning of the Steadfast Wisdom clearly and succinctly. The phrase, '*visayan car an*', adds nothing to it. '*Caran*' if transitive and '*carati*' intransitive. It is pointless to read meanings into a verse without sufficient reason.

153. According to the *smrtis* yet another meaning is implicit here. The *smrti* has ordained that a sannyasin must renounce all attachment and wander constantly from one place to another. The word, '*carati*', recalls this injunction. The Gita, however, makes no attempt to frame rules for the man who has attained Steadfast Wisdom. He has passed beyond the stage at which rules are

necessary. The rules given in the *smrtis* are for ashram discipline. They are framed according to the needs of the sadhaka. He is to move from place to place in order to keep himself free from entanglements. As he gains experience he will become more and more detached until at last he will be able to keep himself free no matter where he lives. Until then he must follow rules. Who can lay down rules for a man of wisdom? He has no need of rules at all. He makes his own. The Gita makes no attempt to define the character of a Wise man in a static manner. But if anyone wishes to see in the word '*carati*' a reference to the rules given in the *smrtis* for ashram sannyasins he may do so, treating it as a symbol. The word should not, however, be taken so literally in this place.

154. Here, as well as later in connection with the characteristics of a *Bhakta*, it is the characteristic, '*aniketah sthiramatih*', to which reference is made. Literally this means "one without a home". It may also imply a wanderer. But Jnanadeva extracts from this phrase another and more appropriate meaning. Like the wind which stops nowhere, the sadhaka builds no shelter for himself in any one place. One who is at home in the whole of creation cannot be homeless. He contains within Himself all that moves and all that does not move. Jnanadeva obtained this by the following logic. He construes the word, '*carati*', to mean one who, having himself become the universe, moves freely about in it. This interpretation is both easy to understand and in consonance with the literal meaning of the word. Jnanadeva has displayed great penetration. In Sanskrit the wanderings of a wise man are called his '*Vihara*'. East of Benares there is a province called Bihar. Rare indeed is it for a province to be named after the wanderings of a wise man. Our pious forefathers named Bihar in the memory of the Buddha. *Vihara* means moving about untrammelled, joyously, spontaneously. It is this meaning which is indicated here by '*carati*'. Life becomes a pleasant sport when all desires have come to an end, even the will to live itself.

155. The question will be asked: What can there be for one to do who has only the body left, who has lost even the will to live? This question is often raised in

theological discussions. The assumption is that nothing exists without a cause. Tukaram gives the answer: "*Tuka mhane atan, uraloh upakarapurata*". "The wise man," says Tukaram, "lives only to repay life's profound richness." The wise man is permeated with a feeling of atonement with the Universe. "I do not exist," he says. "Nor is anything mine. All that is belongs to you; it is yours. Look after it." This reading is borne out by the phrase which follows it: "*nirmamo nirahamkarah*." The wise man lives in order to benefit living creatures. He has no social ties whatsoever even though his body may be obliged to perform certain social duties. No one should, therefore, assume that, though he has foregone all other desires, he retains any social ambition. Social ambition is included in the 'all' when we say "all desires". He gave it up with the others. How then can he engage in social activity? His role as a sadhaka and the existence of social need combine to make him do it. The inspiration which made him become a sadhaka has become a part of his nature. It is part of his make-up. The stream of social need flows continually. These two oblige him to work. Again and again he is caught up in the stream. But what is here surprising in the fact that a man so constituted should find peace? He has a right to peace. All causes of unrest have been eliminated from his life. Egoism and conceit are gone, attachment is gone, desire for good and evil is gone, the will to live is gone. Where then can unrest find a foothold? Only peace remains.

(3)

156. The foregoing has described the way a man of Wisdom feels. Now the nature of his Wisdom is described. It appears to be the complete opposite of what he feels. All desires good and bad, are permitted entrance into his feeling. Both good and bad are excluded from his wisdom. The knowledge of a man of Wisdom transcends both good and evil. Not the slightest trace of a conflict remains. There is neither vision nor creation. There is no designation, no form. No quality, no activity. No classification nor individuation. Nothing ordinary and nothing extraordinary. There is no perception, no emotion. No intellect, no ego. Then what is there? Nothing which can be described, for



there is nothing left to be said. Conditions are not the same where something remains to be said. It is mistaken to think that there is even a sense of self-existence. It can be called neither a void nor the absence of a void. It is a state of being. There is no movement in this state of being. This state defies description.

157. God becomes, for the man of Wisdom, the cosmos, replete and complete. A sense of wholeness enters into his feelings. There is no fragmentation. If a person breaks the nose off a beautiful statue and brings it to me with the question, "Is this nose beautiful?" I shall answer that the statue as a whole was beautiful when it was intact, its beauty lay in its wholeness. When broken into pieces, the pieces are not beautiful. The cosmos, as a whole, comprising both good and bad, is benignant. It is by such thoughts that one is prepared to lose oneself in this cosmos; this is the way it is worshipped and loved. Worship god and behold him!" His beauty will be revealed. "Sow the seed, and then go to the field!" For if you go to the field without sowing the seed you will find it full of tares and weeds. The purity of the world is revealed when it is approached with a sense of sanctity. A child shines in beauty when its mother clothes it with love. There is majesty and grandeur in the world when its immensity is perceived. There is also grace and beauty.

158. A state of activity wherein discrimination is the principle feature is described in the line '*yā nisā sarva bhutānām*'. Here good and evil are in conflict, longing is at loggerheads with disinterestedness, activity with passivity, indulgence with self-restraint, darkness with light, the real with the unreal.

159. Men of Wisdom find themselves in one or the other of these states because, and as long as, they are in the body. These states come and go, making their own way, without causing any disturbance to their inclinations. It is not really correct to speak of "inclination" for a man of Wisdom has none. The Great spirit, at whose instance the world revolves, knows what ought and what ought not to be done. The man of Wisdom is His instrument. The work which God wishes to accomplish through him will be accomplished in a manner

determined by social need. He does nothing of his own accord. Water goes where the gardener directs it. If it is diverted into a field of sugarcane the sweetness of the cane increases. If it is poured into a field of mustard the tang of the mustard is sharper. If it is turned into a field of onions their smell is stronger. Sugarcane, mustard and onions all grow in fields but they do not taste alike. Water goes where it is taken. A man of wisdom shows no preference for the performance of one act in contrast to another; he is not eager to do anything nor does he refuse to do anything. God does through him what is to be done. He has no likes and dislikes of his own. Therefore his Steadfastness is correctly described as dispassionate. But if we prefer to use the word propensity we must qualify it. It means passion in its totality, as a whole, not a bundle of desperate inclinations. Because he is incarnate in the body, a man of Wisdom experiences three states or conditions of being: the state of feeling, the state of knowledge and the state of activity. There is no conflict between these three states. Therefore there is no discord within him. He discriminates between good and bad in his activity. In his feeling he gathers all to his breast. In his knowledge he perceives that nothing is his own. Thus he plays three roles. I call them the trinity of the Steadfast Wisdom. The next chapter will deal with the greatness of the love out of which this trinity takes its rise.

## Chapter XVI

### IN A SPIRIT OF LOVE

#### (1)

160. The three aspects of the Steadfast Wisdom which we have studied are to be regarded as equivalent to the three aspects of God. The three states or conditions of being form a trinity because God, in his true nature, is a trinity. This is the central principle of our approach to the study of the Steadfast Wisdom. No one has ever seen God. One might just as well say no one has ever seen man. Man's outward aspect is visible and the outward aspect of God is also visible. The true nature of man is inner and, like the true nature of God, unmanifest. Man's outward aspect, being the smaller, seems understandable. God's outward aspect is the whole of visible creation. It is, therefore, beyond the grasp of the mind. The actual extent to which both God and Man are manifest and unmanifest is the same. Just as there is a way through which we can come to know man, there is also a way through which we can come to know God. That way is the way of Steadfast Wisdom. As long as men who have attained this wisdom appear among us, we shall have a means of coming to know the true nature of God. In every place and at all times a man of Wisdom will be in our midst. Therefore such a person may be looked upon as God incarnate in the microcosm. The three states of this wisdom reflect the three aspects of God. Together they reflect His wholeness. All that can be conceived and all that cannot be conceived are contained within it.

161. The first aspect of divinity is its goodness. It is reflected in the aspirations of man. Man aspires to the good. Even one who does evil aspires to do good. A list does not wish to be himself deceived. A violent man does not wish to be subjected to violence himself. Out of this human aspiration for the good, ethics are born. It may be difficult to ascertain exactly what constitutes the good in certain situations, but something called the good undoubtedly exists. And it is dear to the heart of man. The Lord gives hope not only to Arjuna but to the whole of mankind when, after describing the virtues of the divine heritage. He

assures Arjuna that it is his by right of birth. It is true that faults are to be found in man. But these belong to the beast in man, not the human in him. Humanity is good, aspires to good, and makes its way forward progressively towards the good. The heart of humanity is constituted of goodness. We are told: *hrddese arjuna tisthati*.

162. The second aspect of God is the cosmic one. It is an integrated whole. Good and evil both have a place in it. In an orange we find seeds, juice, the membranes which divide the flesh of the fruit into sections and the peel. An orange can be sour, bitter or sweet. All these together make an orange. If I am asked what an orange is like, I shall take all of them into consideration before I answer, "Good, sweet, juicy." To one who eats an orange its seeds and its peel are of no importance. These are accessories, secondary. The orange does not lose or gain in quality because of them. This, of course, is looking at the orange from the human standpoint. For the fruit itself the seed is the most important part. An illustration is always to be understood in a general way. As a whole the world is good. Evil is accessory to it, a shadow which brings out and emphasises the good. The universe, in its entirety, is refulgent with both good and evil. It inspires both fear and love. In the Eleventh Chapter of the Gita we are told that Arjuna was overawed. In the Bhagavata we are told Prahlada was inspired with love. The universe is both magnificent and terrible, like the Himalayas, like the ocean. It draws you to itself and also terrifies you. Therefore Siva is described as of dual aspect, beneficent and terrible, tranquil and furious. Together these constitute the manifestation of Siva.

163. The third aspect of God is beyond good and evil, beyond creation, beyond mind, beyond aspiration. But, though beyond all things, it is at one and the same time, the foundation of all things, the support, the base. It cannot be described. It is neither good nor evil. Only negative terms can be used in reference to it. The only affirmative statement possible is that it is. All else is '*neti, neti*'. (Not this, Not that). In Vedanta it is called Brahma.

164. The Gita describes the triune aspect of God in various places. The first aspect is present as human aspiration. It is unqualified good. The *Bhaktas* think

of their deity as equipped with four arms, four-square. Because it is equated with human aspiration it constitutes the true aspect of man. Two arms have been added to indicate what is not fully manifested in man's outward life. To worship God in this fourfold version is to experience in your heart His purity, His goodness, His righteousness, His benignity. These are, together, called 'sat' by the Gita. This is the 'sat' of the mantra, 'oum-tat-sat'. Four-armed in form, its nature is good and it is the real. The second or cosmic aspect we find in the Eleventh Chapter of the Gita. It includes both good and evil. It stands for totality and wholeness. The Gita describes it scientifically as composed of being and non-being (*sadasat caham arjuna*). The third aspect is beyond all attributes. There is no form, no quality, no category. But it is the matrix of all things. The Gita designates it as '*na sat tan nasad*.' The Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Chapters are devoted to its elaboration.

165. The three states or conditions of being which comprise the Steadfast Wisdom correspond to the three aspects of God. '*Sadasat*' can, logically, be divided into four forms: (1) Unmitigated good, (2) Unmitigated evil, (3) *Sadasat*, good and evil and (4) *na sat, nasat*, neither good nor evil. But only three of these four categories are applicable to God. The fourth, unmitigated evil, cannot be ascribed to Him. It belongs to Satan alone. God has no fourth aspect. Therefore, the Steadfast Wisdom also has no fourth aspect.

(2)

166. There is a verse to this effect in the Ninth Chapter. That verse is rather obscure. It is one of the very special verses Vyasa has put in the Mahabharata. Commentators interpret it each in his own way. To me it appears that it deals with the subject we are studying.

**Others again sacrifice with the sacrifice of wisdom and worship Me as the one, as the distinct and as the manifold) facing in all directions.**

*jnanayajnena ca 'py anye  
yajanto mam upasate,  
ekatvena prthaktvena  
bahudha vis'vatomukham. (Gita IX: 15)*

This verse means that one who worships God by wisdom, worships Him as the Single, the Diverse and the Manifold, each a facet of his vast true nature.

All three of these realisations come to one and the same person. And God Himself is also One when He is worshipped as *na sat tan nāsad ucyate*, that which is said to be neither existent or non-existent. The worshipper and the worshipped are thus one. Thus the knowledge of the attributeless Brahman is revealed. To worship Him from the standpoint of being which excludes non-being automatically leads to a dualism in which God and the devotee are distinct. To worship Him as the ceaseless play of being and non-being is to worship Him as the Manifold.

167. All the three aspects are facets of the wise man's knowledge. He beholds God as unmitigated good while in the field of action. His role is to discriminate. There are some who interpret the worship of God as distinct to mean that the worshipper is distinct and separate from God. This is not correct for ordinary Bhakti is not described here. What is described is worship through knowledge. Bhakti has been described in the verse beginning: *satatam kirtayanto mām*. It gives as much opportunity as you like for dualism. There is no need to introduce it at this point. For we are discussing the Yoga of Knowledge. It is correct here to state that the worship of God in diversity is to worship Him by discrimination between good and evil, through judgement. He is worshipped as attired in the celestial vestments of both good and evil when He is worshipped in the infinite diversity of his manifestations. This is the state of emotional realisation behind the worship of a man of Steadfast Wisdom. Out of it springs an attitude of amity, of friendliness, towards all created things. This verse, understood in this way, is found to be in harmony with the triune aspect of God as given in the Gita.

167. All these three aspects are reflected in the life of the man of Steadfast Wisdom. For one, however, activity may be chief, for another emotional realisation and for yet another perceptive knowledge. Corresponding difference appear in externals. These do not indicate that a man has experienced only one of these states of being however. He experiences all three. And the experience

is identical. Differences are attributable to the predominance of one aspect. This gives rise to confusion and people make the mistake of drawing comparisons between one wise man and another. They refer to one as greater than the other according to their own preferences. It is an illusion to think so. No external difference is of any importance as long as inner qualities are the same, Five rupees is five rupees whether it is in coins or in a note. The difference is only a matter of form. The man of Steadfast Wisdom draws followers and guides people to the right path no matter which of the three aspects is uppermost in his expression at any one time. Self-knowledge does not vary in the degree of its illumination.

(3)

169. Another question arises here. Are these three states of being which constitute the Steadfast Wisdom related to each other? Are they as distinct and separate from each other as the states of waking, of dreaming, and of deep sleep? A man is not wakeful when he sleeps. He does not sleep when he is awake and when he dreams he is neither awake nor asleep. Are the three states, of knowledge, of activity, of emotional realisation, connected with each other or are they as distinct as sleeping, waking, dreaming? The comparison is not valid. A man of wisdom also sleeps, wakes and dreams, just as other people. The conditions we are discussing belong to the waking state. And waking, sleeping and dreaming will be found, on close study, not to be wholly unrelated. Our sleep is very much influenced by our waking and our waking by our sleep. After a good sleep one is well awake, alert. If one works hard while awake, he sleeps soundly. Dreams likewise cannot but influence our waking and what happens while we are awake influences our dreams. A wise man experiences these three states of being while he is awake. One state is certain to influence the other. It is not possible that any one of the three should not be affected by the other two.

170. Relevant to this connection is a statement of the Gita to the effect that the wise man regards pandits, brahmins, cows, elephants, dogs and chandals as equals. Some Vedantists argue that this is true of the state of feeling and does

not apply to the state of activity. We may feel towards all these in exactly the same way but when it comes to actual practice distinctions must be made. Men must be dealt with as men and cattle as cattle. States of feeling based on a realisation of identity, cannot wipe out difference on the plane of action. A man of wisdom is not unaware of this. The orthodox pandits argue that they do not really make any distinction between brahmins and untouchables. "Nevertheless", they say, "discrimination is inevitable on the basis of function." Let us look more closely at their argument. It is reasonable to say that the state of one's being should logically harmonize with what one does. To assume that the various states are unrelated to each other, is wrong. Feelings influence action, actions influence feeling, knowledge most certainly influences both. Knowledge and feeling are not ineffective. They are not like a box of matches that one can keep in one's pocket and take out to light as one chooses. They are inextricably bound up with life.

171. Let us, to begin with, compare the state of feeling or emotional realisation with the state of activity. On reflection it will be clear that emotional attitudes must produce appropriate responses in action, within the limits of compulsion. I wish to wear gold on my finger. Gold in any shape will not fit it. The gold must be made into a ring of the right size. It is of no use to me until it has been made into a ring. I shall not accept it. Neither will I throw it away only because it is not a suitable shape. I know the value of gold. My feelings tell me that all which exists, both good and bad, is a manifestation of Brahman, unalloyed gold. Take a meeting of good people by way of example. A chairman is required. A man of wisdom will nominate a suitable person to be the Chairman of the meeting. He will not suggest a bad man. But, even though a bad man is excluded, he will not be excluded out of spite, Divinity resides no less in a bad man than in a good man. For a gathering of good men the appropriate Chairman is a good man. A Wise man, in what he does, makes no distinctions. He acts in full awareness of the ultimate unity within, while he uses discrimination in his external behaviour. And he takes care to see that this consciousness is unimpaired although his actions may take different forms. He looks upon all with an equal eye. He does not, therefore, give the same



medicine to a person suffering from plague and a person suffering from tuberculosis. He fits action to circumstance. But he knows inwardly that, although his action in one set of circumstances may differ from his action in another set of circumstances, all circumstances are manifestations of Brahma. He will not despise anything nor slight anyone, cultivating an equal regard for all.

172. Perceptions or realisations which come to a person in one state of being cannot be forgotten in other states. They influence our conduct noticeably. A man cannot but have more than one role. A humorous friend told us the following story. A certain teacher of mathematics went for an outing. "Where is the Station?" a passerby accosted him. The teacher answered, "Geography is not my subject." This teacher evidently thought that a teacher of Mathematics had no need whatsoever to know any geography. It is true that all the things we perceive emotionally cannot be applied in practice. But it is not possible to ignore these perceptions entirely in our activity. A man in whom emotion dominates will not neglect the discrimination which is essential to right action. He, of course, knows salt from sugar, which colour is red and which is not, which object is round and which square. If it is necessary for reasons of personal and social hygiene not to touch a person, say a leper, he will observe the rule and refrain from doing so. He will take upon himself the care of the afflicted person and incur risks but he will take precautions against contracting the disease. He does this because his purpose is to cure the leper, not to become like him. He may expose himself to risk deliberately but, in order to protect others, he will remove the leper to a safe distance from the town or village and if necessary, he himself remain sufficiently aloof. A rule is here framed and obeyed in a spirit of love, out of intelligent and merciful consideration. He does not forget that the leper is one aspect of God. But in taking precautions he shows his judgement. If he keeps the afflicted person at a distance, regarding him as impure, and refuses to care for him, if he looks upon him with revulsion and honor, his vision of God as immanent in all things is destroyed at the source. Where then is his wisdom? To experience the oneness of all life is an emotional realisation and belongs, as the orthodox

pandits say, not to the state of activity but to the state of feeling. But they are entirely wrong in assuming that these two states are distinct and separate. They are different facets of one and the same experience. Both the false and the true elements in the arguments used by the orthodox pandits are thus exposed.

## Chapter XVII

### THE ANSWER

(1)

173. The three states or conditions of the man of Steadfast Wisdom which we have described are: (1) knowledge, *jhana*, (2) Feeling, *bhava*, (3) activity' *kriya*. These are complementary to each other and not antagonistic That is to say, though they do not thrust themselves upon one another they exercise an influence which is mutual. The different colours of the rainbow blend in an intermingled radiation though they appear to be separate and distinct. This radiation forms a single entity which is known as a rainbow. The life of a man of Wisdom is composed similarly of these three states or conditions of being. We have seen what happens when a conflict arises between feeling and activity. Conscience turns into invidious discrimination when feeling fails to influence action. This is illustrated by the arguments advanced by the orthodox pandits in favour of untouchability. What they say is meaningless for what they call conscience is, in their case, gross discrimination. A child is branded as untouchable from birth because of his parentage. What does this indicate? It shows how bondage to tradition makes learned men pompously foolish. Discrimination does not imply a superiority complex. What to eat and what not to eat is a matter of judgement. We have already illustrated what we mean by judgement in the case of the leper. The leper must be isolated but at the same time given care, sympathy, love. If love is the cause of his segregation it is an act of conscience. And if love is not the cause, it is an act of invidious discrimination. A second illustration is the case of a judge. A judge has to take into consideration questions of right and wrong before giving his verdict if he does not, his verdict has no value. But the seal of the all-pervading Spirit must be set up his work. Stated in plain words, this means that his justice must be tempered with mercy, only then will the judgement be just. Judgement not illumined by spiritual insight degenerates into a form of vengeance.

174. Activity must be directed by feeling and it must also be regulated by knowledge. To one who has the true knowledge both evil and good appear undesirable; he considers himself beyond both. In activity a constant and intelligent distinction must be made between them. These two states, therefore, appear to be contradictory. But they are in fact complementary for, although the state of knowledge is apparently so different from the state of activity, the acts of a man of Wisdom are influenced by his knowledge. His knowledge flashes out through them. They are coloured by it. All his activity is irradiated and glorified by his knowledge. He is aware that both good and evil are false even while, in making judgements, he separates the one from the other. Consequently he remains unattached and humble in all he does. It is only in a state or condition of knowledge that a person can remain unaffected and uninvolved with the work he does. Because a man of Wisdom is enlightened he is not moved by pride when he distinguishes between good and evil in his acts. He is neither an egoist nor is he attached. His is the Yoga of motiveless action.

175. Thus these states intermingle. Together they form the irradiated and perfect life of a man of wisdom. But what does it profit us to know the characteristics of the life of a man of Wisdom? This question may well be asked. This question is aptly answered in the words of Jnanadeva. The contemplation of the life of a liberated man gives us a glimpse of *mukti*, liberation, and its quality. *Mukti* is not the monopoly of the man of Wisdom. *Mukti* belongs equally to all. In contemplating the lives of those who have won *mukti* people discover a way to find their own. It is, therefore, useful that the individual seeker as well society should come into contact with men of wisdom and learn something about their way of life. Steadfastness is the natural and normal state of a man of Wisdom but for others it is only attained through effort. The wise man sets an example for us to follow. He points to the way we must go. Life must be oriented in that direction. The lives of the wise are models which we must copy in our daily behaviour. The life of a community becomes profoundly rewarding when it is oriented towards liberation. The example of the man of Steadfast Wisdom convinces us that it is possible. Such a

man is for us a blameless and perfect ideal. There are faults and imperfections in the fumbling efforts of ordinary people but the *ātman* is everywhere the same. Knowledge of the three states or conditions of a man of Steadfast Wisdom is, therefore, of value both to individual seekers and to society as a whole.

(2)

176. At the close, of the Seventeenth Chapter of the Gita the subject of our discourse is summed up in the three word *mantra*, "*aum tat sat*". A *mantra* has an extraordinary potency, a potency out of proportion to its verbal content. It is not devoid of reality. A *mantra* is more effective than a cannon ball. It changes the direction of life of a man inspired by a *mantra*, alters, gradually coming to partake of the nature of the *mantra*. This *mantra* has been given to us by the Gita in order that the qualities which distinguish the man of Wisdom may appear in the lives of all. It is the jewel of contemplation of the Gita. It is rightly regarded as the core of the Upanishadic teaching.

177. The first word is '*aum*'. '*aum*' is the divine principle signifying immensity, comprehensiveness, vastness. It is the all-pervading, manifest, expression of the Brahman, '*aum*' is at one and the same time a letter and a word. As a word it means 'Yes'. '*aum*' is the affirmative aspect of the divine.

Tukarama describes the affirmative aspect of Divinity, saying, "All that is said in praise of Him is true." Does He have form? Yes. Is He formless? Yes. Is he good? Yes. Is he not so good? Yes. Does He have attributes? Yes. Is He without attributes? Yes. Is He small? Yes. Is He large? Yes. To all these questions the answer is an affirmative. "I am this and I am also that." '*aum*' signifies the immensity, the stupendousness, the cosmic character of the form within which is comprised all that can be imagined and all that is beyond imagination. Therefore this word of power is as 'suitable as a chant for the emotional realisation of Divinity through *Jap a*'.

178. As a letter '*aum*' is representative of all written characters. It begins with the sound 'a' and ends with the sound 'm'. Between these two sounds comes 'u' which penetrates into both. In Sanskrit the alphabet starts with 'a' and ends

with 'm'. The first letter is pronounced from the throat and the last with the lips. To pronounce 'm' we press our lips together and add a slight nasal intonation. 'u' is regarded as representative of letters 'y', 'r', 'l', 'v'. All literature, good and bad, all learning and all the arts are brought together in the word 'aum'. This interpretation is admittedly hypothetical. Even so it is through the creation of a symbol for all expression that the immensity, the greatness, the comprehensiveness, of the cosmic aspect of Divinity can be indicated.

179. According to comparative philology 'aum' appears to be a verb root. As a verb root it means 'to pervade all things, to immanate.' That which is immanent in all living things in their natural condition is 'aum'. The Marathi verb root, 'Onv', (to thread), is derived from the pre-Vedic root 'aum'. Our philologists think that the origin of Marathi word goes back to the pre-Vedic period. The relationship between the word 'Ohv' and the Sanskrit 've' (to weave) is taken to be established but the nasal pronunciation is not thus accounted for. The Gayatri is a Vedic metre of verse. Most of the words can be easily linked together in this metre. The Marathi metre, *Onvi*, resembles this. The *Onvi*, of Jnanadeva consists of three and a half lines just as it has been imagined that *aum* has three and half syllables. The word 'Uma' contains this root and therefore means the Goddess who is immanent in all things. By adding the prefix 'vi'to it the word 'vyoman' stands for the supreme, all-pervasive heavens, the sky. The Latin word 'omnis' which means all, is a variant of 'om'. *aum* is also spelt 'om'. It is found in English words like 'omnipresent'. When the word is studied in this manner we find that the *mantra* 'aum' is most appropriately used to indicate the emotional comprehension of the cosmos by a man of Steadfast Wisdom.

180. The second word, 'tat' means "that". 'That' is what is neither being nor non-being. 'That' means what is not this, 'this' being everything we have, thus suggesting something totally beyond conception. A sage attains a state of knowledge by meditating upon 'tat', 'Thou art that". You yourself do not belong to the manifested world, which is conditioned by the three qualities Of

*Sattva, Rajas* and *Tamas*. You are beyond that. This great truth is taught by this axiom, "Thou art that"

181. The third word is '*sat*'. It is clear. He is '*Sat*' who embraces good and foregoes evil. '*Sat*' indicates adherence to the good and the renunciation of the bad. '*Sat*' means pure Brahman.

182. Taken together '*aum*' indicates the comprehensive, all-pervasive Brahma, '*tat*' indicates the attributeless Brahma and '*sat*' indicates Brahma as unmitigated good. Here, in these three words, we have the three states or conditions of the Wise man. They are not entirely separate. We have already seen that the three together compose a single life, the life of a man of Wisdom. '*Sat*' predominates in the state of activity. Activity constitutes the obvious aspect of outward life. When biographies of great men are written, their activities are described. A man's works are the visible, tangible part of his life. Accordingly '*sat*' becomes the noun and '*aum*' and '*tat*' become its adjectives. They are added to '*sat*' in order to enhance its meaning. '*Sat*' with its two qualifying adjectives, '*aum*' and '*tat*' therefore indicates activity that is good, irradiated with the all-pervading, uninvolved spirit. Comprehensive, beyond all involvement, and pure, is a life that is a full and true life. Fullness in any context is to be judged in the sense.

183. As an illustration let us examine the true character of *satyagraha*. The word plainly indicates aversion to what is bad or untrue and attraction to what is good. But in the effort to reject the bad and retain the good we should not forget to contemplate the cosmic aspect of God. You must not forget for an instant that the person who stands in front of you is an aspect of you yourself. You must set about correcting others as gently, with as much sympathy, as you pluck a thorn out of your own hand. You must remember that it is you yourself who is being corrected though the act may be an outward one for somebody else. You must not be angry or impatient. You must understand that there is good where you see bad. If you can enter into the heart of the person with whom you are dealing through the door of this goodness you will be able really to help correct the bad. This is what '*aum*' suggests, '*aum*' tells you to set upon

your resistance the seal of the spiritual realisation that the one whom you consider evil, that fault which you wish to correct, is nonetheless an aspect of Divinity. This is the foundation of *satyagraha*. Do not think of yourself as the winner of a battle where, after much effort, your purpose has been accomplished. Do not take pride in what has been done. Is it more than a mirage? Remember that it is all only a game. You in your own nature and the person with whom you are dealing in his own nature, are both beyond all this. Do not become involved in the game. It must not be forgotten that we are not entangled in it. In the word '*tat*' we are reminded of the need to retain our detachment.

184. I have spoken of *satyagraha* by way of illustration. It is the *sutra* of all human relationships. It tells us how a son conducts himself in relation to his father, a father in relation to his son, a guru in relation to his disciple, a disciple in relation to his guru and so forth. The feeling aroused by these three words taken together influences each of them separately also. If only the part relating to emotional realisation which accepts good and evil alike is retained and the rest cast aside, the judgement which directs our activity, which guides our conduct, is also cast aside. All activity will cease if the transcendent aspect alone is taken. If action is unduly preoccupied with discrimination between good and evil innumerable unjust barriers will be set up in its name. Life will be fragmented, and full of conflict. Activity will be free and perfect only if the three aspects are taken together and the three states of being combined in one state. The Steadfast Wisdom has been described keeping this in mind.

(3)

185. Let us take a final look at Arjuna's first question. We shall then be able to identify the characteristics of Wisdom. Arjuna's first question is, "What are the attributes of Steadfast Wisdom?" Both the positive and negative aspects have been considered in outlining the answer. Arjuna further asks how a man of Steadfast Wisdom conducts himself, in thought, word and deed. Is his speech sweet or harsh, does he live like a poor man or a man of moderate means, are his movements hurried or slow? The Lord does not answer in these terms.



Placing life as a whole before us He gives us the answers to all three questions. The life of man as a whole is comprised in the way he lives, the manner in which he speaks and his movements. But the answers are, in a literal sense, obscure. Three verses have been given to the explanation of how a man of Steadfast Wisdom speaks. Critical commentators have concluded that such a man is neither elated by pleasure nor dejected by unpleasant experiences, *Nabhinandati na dvesti*. In answering Arjuna's question as to how a man of Wisdom lives the assumption is made that Arjuna wishes to know how he came to his present condition. The methods followed and sadhanas practised are described in ten verses. He is then told, the man of Steadfast Wisdom lives as '*asit matparah* i. e., in, and by losing himself in the Brahman. How such a man moves is described at the end by the words, "he moves uninvolved by desire," *Pumams carati nihsprhah*. Taking all these into consideration Arjuna's question become (1) What is the full explanation of the negative and affirmative aspects of the Steadfast Wisdom of one who has come to rest in samadhi ? (2) What are the obvious, tangible and most concrete characteristics of Steadfast Wisdom, signs which are easily identifiable by all? (3) What is the path and what is the process which leads to the attainment of Wisdom? (4) What is the part played by a man of Steadfast Wisdom in the life of the World? If Arjuna's questions are given a meaning as extensive as this, a meaning correspondingly significant and deep will be found in the answers.

## Chapter XVIII

### ATTAINMENT

(I)

186. The description of the characteristics of the Steadfast Wisdom is here brought to a conclusion. Its effects are given in the last verse. These effects are not like the effects of many liturgical tomes, hollow and barren. In the Gita effects which are logical, precise and masterfully conceived, are described. This is the Gita's way. The effects enumerated here are of this kind:

**This is the divine state, O Partha, having attained thereto, one is (not again) bewildered; fixed in that state at the end (at the hour of death) one can attain to the bliss of God.**

*esā brāhmi sthitih pārtha nai nām prāpya vimuhyati  
sthitva' syām antakāle'pi brahmanirvānam rcchati.*

(Gita II: 72)

187. The word '*sthitih*', stability, is here contrasted with '*vr̥ttih*', propensity or inclination, '*sthitih*' is part of the compound word, '*sthitaprajna*.' The differences between the two words will become clearer if we study them in their verbal forms. The verb root in '*sthitih*' is '*stha*'. '*stha*' means to build, erect, set in a vertical, upright position. It conveys a sense of permanence, of constancy, of immutability. The verb root of '*vr̥ttih*' is '*vrt*', '*vrt*' means to revolve, to turn in circles. The word '*vartul*' (circle) is derived from the same root. In '*vr̥ttih*' there is a sense of restless changeability, instability, movement, unreliability, impermanence. A man's inclinations, his propensities, are not lasting. They change. A period of wakefulness is followed by slumber and slumber by dreams. In a waking state there is an interplay of many different propensities, anger, fascination, despair, elation. The yogic sastra classifies propensities into five categories. The act disassociating oneself from these five is called *yoga*. Eight steps or stages are given. The last is *samddhi*, *dhyana samadhi*- But *dhyana samadhi* is not *yoga*. It itself is a propensity. It may be the

last, the ultimate propensity, but it is not in itself *yoga*. *Yoga* means the absence of all propensities, or to be more exact, freedom from the influence of any propensity. *Samadhi* means the climax of the propensity of meditation. Man's inclinations are sporadic and changing, in flux or absent. In *samadhi* they are brought to rest and quietened. Quietness implies stability. This stability is, however, only temporary.

188. The chief advantage of *samadhi* is that only one propensity, the propensity to meditate upon God, is retained and all others are dispensed with. Meditation is beneficial because reflection on God who is considered the source and support of all good things, is conducive to the cleansing of the heart. But *dhyana samadhi* is not a permanent state. It breaks up after a time. Permanence is reached by going beyond it, beyond even the propensity to meditation upon God. This state of cognition, untrammelled by the play of propensities, is called Wisdom, *prajna*, in the science of *Yoga*. The consciousness, '*citta*', is pure, effulgent, and securely at rest in the *ātman*, when *prajna*, wisdom, is attained. This condition is known as *brahmisthitih*, repose in Brahman or Life Eternal. It is the natural state of a man of Wisdom, a constant and imperturbable state. Meditation on the other hand is only a passing condition, which is retained purposefully and it disappears because the mind is in movement. This is the difference between the *Brahmi sthitih*, the state of Steadfast Wisdom and *dhyana samadhi*, the *yoga* of meditation. We have taken due note of it before. The Steadfast Wisdom, *brahmi, sthitih*, is a state of wakeful cognition. There is no confusion *nainam prapya vimuhyati*. Delusion does not have any hold on us. Unlike other kinds of knowledge, self-knowledge, knowledge of the *ātman*, does not have to be acquired over and over again.

189. Between meditation and knowledge there is, of course, a difference and spiritual knowledge also differs from other kinds of knowledge. Meditation is artificial. It is the painstaking cultivation of an inclination. Knowledge is not artificial in this sense. It is not obtainable by cultivation. This is the difference between *jnana* and *dhyana*. The difference between *atma jnana*, spiritual

knowledge, and all other kinds of knowledge is much greater. I studied geography. But not having any further need for the knowledge after my examinations I forgot it. When I lived at Benaras I used to read the Railway Time Table of Uttar Pradesh. Now I no longer need the information. I have forgotten it Knowledge of this kind is knowledge of externals acquired by accumulation. Such a dead weight of information is a burden on the memory and, therefore, as soon as the information becomes superfluous, the mind tends to drop it. However, the acquisition of such information is considered to be a token of erudition. This process robs the mind of its resilience and makes it dull. May God shield us from such learning. This is not the case with self-knowledge, *atmajnana*. Self-knowledge is not an accumulative process.

190. Meditation, *dhyana*, is of an entirely different nature. Figures of speech, verbal pictures, comparisons and examples are given in order to clarify the subject under consideration. All are form of concentration. To attribute one thing to another is contemplation. Its method is to select something representative and turn it into a symbol. In other words, meditation is fabricated. As I write the letters forming the word, almirah, on a piece of paper I transfer to them the nature of the wooden almirah. This is *dhyana*. It does not add to knowledge. It has no appropriate application outside literature. A bottle of ghee cannot be kept in this word-almirah. It is nothing more than the image of a thing, a symbol. An article has different symbols and different images in different languages. To confer a representative character on a symbol is a kind of artificiality. Even though, the knowledge of externals is not, like *dhyana*, artificial, it imposes a burden upon the mind because it is extraneous to the *ātman*. This is such-and-such a tree. It is of such-and-such a quality and such-and-such a nature. It is true that this nature and this quality are not imposed upon the tree by me. This is, in short, material knowledge of facts, but external nonetheless. This must not be forgotten, *Atmajnana*, knowledge of the spirit, is not like this. It is neither artificial nor external. Therefore once it is won, it is won forever. There is no possibility of its ever becoming spoiled or faded, for it is of the spirit and not of the intellect. It is

fused with the *ātman*, merged with it. It cannot be lost and it cannot be discarded. This is what is called '*nainam prapya vimuhyati*'.

191. What do these words signify: '*sthitva syam antakale*' *pi*? Some people think it means that, even at the time of passing, i.e. the moment of death, *brahmisthitih* must be retained. It is generally acknowledged that man's end is hard. It is not an easy matter to retain one's composure at that time. If the repose one has won with so much effort fails at the end, all is lost. If a train goes off the rails, it goes into a ditch even though its journey may be near its end. This phrase is understood to mean that particular care must be taken to see that this '*sthitih*', composure, is maintained through the end. However this is not the correct meaning. The time of passing, death, is of course a most important moment. Vigilance to the very end is obviously essential for the seeker. This is why the Gita, in the Eighth Chapter, discusses at length the sadhana of our last hours. And it tells us that in order to make this sadhana possible a lifelong effort is required. All this is valid for a sadhaka, in the stage or condition of an aspirant, not for one who has attained repose in the self, *brahmisthitih*. *Brahmisthitih* is not something that is experienced momentarily and later lost. A constant effort is not required to maintain and retain it. *Brahmisthitih* is not an inclination or propensity at all. It is a permanent and continuous and stable state of being. It lasts. People look upon the moment of death as something dreadful. *Brahmisthitih* is not interrupted even at that hour. This is the meaning of *antakale'pi*'. The meaning of the word '*sthitih*' was discussed in considering the phrase: '*nainam prapya vimuhyati*'. And the line '*sthitvasyam antakale*' *pi*', clarifies the meaning further.

192. *Brāhmisthitih* is present always even at the time of death and at all other times. Unlike other kinds of knowledge spiritual cognition is not lost by inattention. A certain person was ill. He had passed several examinations in English. But, as a result of his illness, he forgot all the English he had ever learnt. This happened because that knowledge had been thrust into his mind from outside. His mind, debilitated by illness, relieved itself by throwing off the burden. It was natural. Self-knowledge is acquired by a totally different

*method. One may not win it in a hundred thousand life-times but, once attained, it knows no eclipse. No question of 'if' or 'then' arises in connection with it. It cannot be said that 'if' one's spiritual knowledge is retained at the time of passing 'brahmisthitih' will be won. 'If' and 'then' have no place in this context. The purpose of this verse is to make this plain.*

193. Samkaracharya understood this very well. In order to avoid the trouble caused by 'if' and 'then' he used a different kind of phraseology altogether. He interpreted the passage given above as meaning that, if a man attains to *brahmisthitih* at the last moment, even at the time of his death, he will achieve *nirvana*. What Samkaracharya says is true but there does not seem to be any need for this interpretation here. The beauty of the Words, '*sithiva syam antakale'pi*' is lost. These words imply that *brahmisthitih* is a condition that is beautiful, so immutable and so strong, that even circumstances as dreadful as those associated with a man's death cannot defeat it, nor is it disturbed by them. The meaning given to the verse by Samkaracharya is not erroneous but it is a little beside the point and the interpretation which sees in it the admonition to take care to retain *brahmisthitih* is erroneous.

(2)

194. The teaching is summed up at the end in the phrase '*brahma nirvanamrcchati*'. Like the phrase, '*sithitaprajna*', Steadfast Wisdom, the phrase, '*brahmanirvam*' is an expression peculiar to the Gita. A merging with Brahman, at-one-ment is implied. The Brahman is not a point in space, a place to which one must go. The barrier set between Brahman and myself is the illusory obsession that I am the body. The shattering of this illusion is the removal of the final evil. The Brahman alone is absolute reality. The expression, *brahmanirvana*, implies that human life finds its filial fulfilment in merging with the Brahman. The illusion that I am the body is thus destroyed. All our undertakings, personal lives, our social service; our acquisition of knowledge, meditation and so forth have this supreme purpose in view. By a single word the Gita conveys to us this profound meaning.

195. Brahman is immensity, it is the all-comprehensive. Our purpose is to transcend the narrow confines of the body and to merge in the infinite (Brahman). One form of life is larger than another. A third is larger still. There is diversity among the manifested forms of life. But creatures, by comparison with Brahman, are most insignificant. They are finite, confined within limits. The subject of man's speculation, the object of all his reflection, is to discover means of transcending his limitations, to set himself free to be merged in infinity. This is *brahmanirvana*. In such a condition the walls of flesh drop away. The body is thus seen to be the instrument of relation. It is useful and even essential up to a point. Later, as man's perception widens, the body becomes less and less significant. The body belongs to the primary stage in the practice of this all-pervasiveness. In later stages the body is a hindrance. Knowledge, *jhana*, contemplation, *dhyana*, *upasana* and work or karma yoga, are all begun in the body and find it useful at the start. But later, as these disciplines bring insight, the infinite is envisioned more and more clearly and all things are seen to be contained and permeated by the *ātman*. The body thus serves its purpose.

196. A person in this condition or state of being becomes also a great force for the guidance of the Community and people feel his presence to be a great thing. To the seer himself it is a small matter. When such a man dies it seems to us a great and irreparable loss; for we are deprived of a great uniting force. The day of his death is regarded as a holy day. It is on the day of his death that a wise man truly unites us and shines like a beacon light, illumining the path of righteousness. His physical presence no more draws attention: His spiritual light alone guides. Thus in death his mission is sanctified and therefore such a day is called a Saint's day. However, common people see the loss of his physical presence and not the light of the spirit that shines all the brighter. Death is the beginning of his ministry. Before it takes place the body limits his field of effectiveness. How far can a lone voice reach? How many people can he guide personally? Those who behold the body remain spell-bound by it because the illusion persists that the body is the man. Thus the body comes to be venerated instead of the spirit. The body is the final impediment in the service of man.

197. As long as we are exclusively identified with our bodies we are shut off from the fullest communion with all creation. The body is the barrier. The body prevents us from entering into the hearts of all, the universal heart. The body is useful to us as long as an instrument in our effort to understand the hearts of others. Through my own hunger and thirst, my joy and sorrow, I come to understand the hunger and thirst of others. Individual existence gives me the opportunity of understanding the sorrows and pleasures of others through my own experience. If the heart is capable of empathy and feels the sorrow of another as though it is its own, the body is an asset to understanding but when one has glimpsed the essence of the heart of all beings, when one has experienced communion with the totality of manifested life, an exclusive identification with one body, and the restricted field of its senses, mind and judgement, become a hindrance to understanding. To transcend these limits, to scale these barriers to right perception, is the final object of the heart. To seek communion with and assimilation into all manifested life, to merge into the infinite, to lose one's identity in the Brahman that is *brahmanirvana*.

(3)

198. The Buddhists have adopted the word *nirvana* only, omitting the word *brahma*. *Nirvana* describes the negative way to knowledge. It indicates the renunciation of egoism, the breaking of the earthen vessel of the 'I' and the 'mine'. When a person dies an earthen pot is broken in his name according to a custom sanctioned by the Hindu sastras. The feeling out of which the custom has arisen is the feeling that since, from now on this person must be spoken of as dead, let him really and truly die. Let the earthen vessel of his hopes and desires be broken. Let his individual entity, his 'I' ness, come to an end. This is also the reason his body is cremated. When his father dies a person buries him and plants a mango tree over the grave. When the tree bears fruit he thinks of it as having grown out of the grave. A man buries his mother in a field and plants a lemon tree. The lemons are nourished by his mother's bones. Cremation does away with the possibility of this kind of continuity of association. Why should we want one who has died to cling to us in one form or



another? Am I a touchstone that his or her life will turn to gold if he or she clings to me?

The practice of burial, or building altars to the dead or setting up memorial tablets or of planting trees and bushes on graves is a way of perpetuating memories and clinging to them. Cremation is, therefore, preferable. Nonetheless memorials to the dead keep on rising. Let the lifeless body be consigned to the fire! The focal centre which held together the five elements is totally negated. Thus the Buddhists prefer the language of negation. Let man's illusions, all his attachments, perish with the body. Let him become nothing, *sunya*. Therefore the Buddhists retained only the word, *Nirvana*.

199. The adherents of the Vedas have preferred the positive phrase, *brahmanirvana*. They have chosen the language of affirmation. It is interesting to note these variations of preference for they will help to bring out the specific importance and limitations of each point of view. Language cannot be flawless. The nature of language is so peculiar that while it reveals the inner content of a subject or quality, it also confuses. Words affirm some qualities and negate others. The affirmative as well as the negative context of terms has to be taken into account before they are accepted. The followers of the Vedas like to regard the liberation of the spirit, *mukti*, not as a void (*abhava*) but as a positive state of consciousness. The Vaidikas prefer to say we become the infinite rather than to say egotism has ebbed away. The Buddhists for their part do not hesitate to state that every characteristic and attribute of 'I' ness recognised as such, must be absolutely wiped out of consciousness. This dying to the known is for them an adventure of great courage and sustained perseverance. They feel that the final temptation of man is the illusion that existence is worthwhile. To identify oneself and to assert that I am all, is, they say, needlessly to prolong the illusion of 'I' ness, non-being. The Vaidikas deny that fear is implied and reject ideas not in consonance with experience. Up to the present the seeker has by the practice of various disciplines let go of one thing after another. He has established himself firmly in the *ātman*. He has attained to his own true nature, leaving both death and birth behind. With

Dharma he has slain what is not Dharma. He has transcended Dharma itself by renouncing the fruits of his labour. By surrendering his will to God he frees himself from the effects of action and inaction. Finally he merges his consciousness with the Divine in a state of communion. How can he accept the destruction of the 'I' which has accomplished so much? The 'I' that remains after all gross matter has been removed, has become vast and pervasive, irradiated with Brahman. That is true.

200. Followers of the Vedas speak of *mukti*, liberation, as a positive state or condition but they do not look upon it as an addition to what exists. Buddhists, when they reject the word I and all terminology derived from it, do not support the theory of annihilation. To regard them as annihilationists is a mistake very commonly made, an unfortunate confusion. I do not find much difference in meaning between the two approaches. The difference appears to be one of preference. Buddhists dislike intensely the use of the word T. That is good. T is a much soiled word. Has it any place in the concept of *brahmanirvana*? If we examine the word *brahmanirvana* more closely we find that in affirming what is, it denies what is not, by implication. This two-fold import is fully substantiated by the manner of its usage in the Gita. By the term, *brahmanirvana*, the 'I' is negated. Brahman alone remains. There is nothing alarming in this. Where words fail is there any point in quibbling over terminology? Let me conclude by paraphrasing the verse of the Gita (5.5), as: *ekam brahmam ca sunyam ca, yah pasyati sa pasyati.*" He who sees Brahman and Sunya as one and the same sees truly. All dispute concerning the word, *brahmanirvana*, is thus amicably settled.