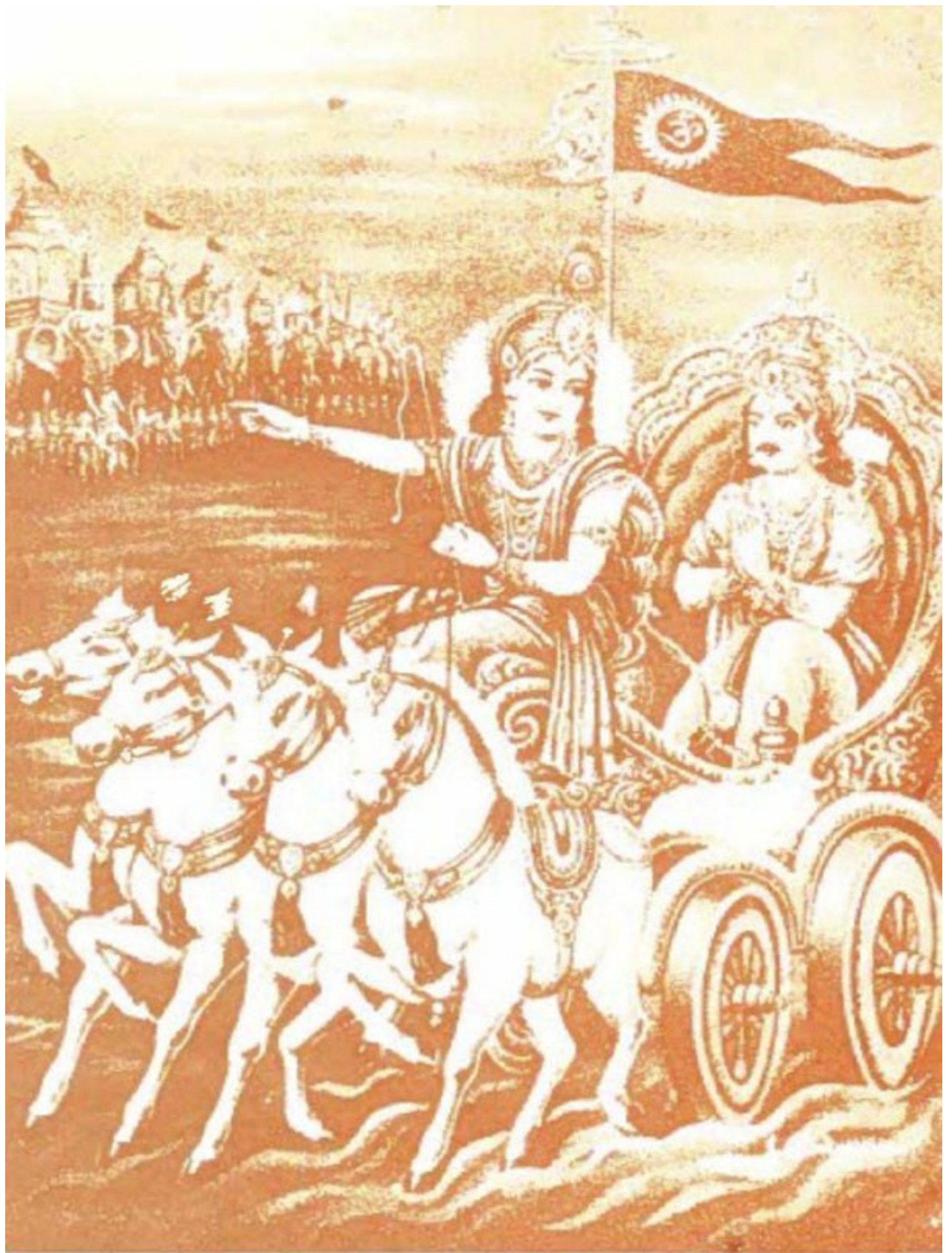
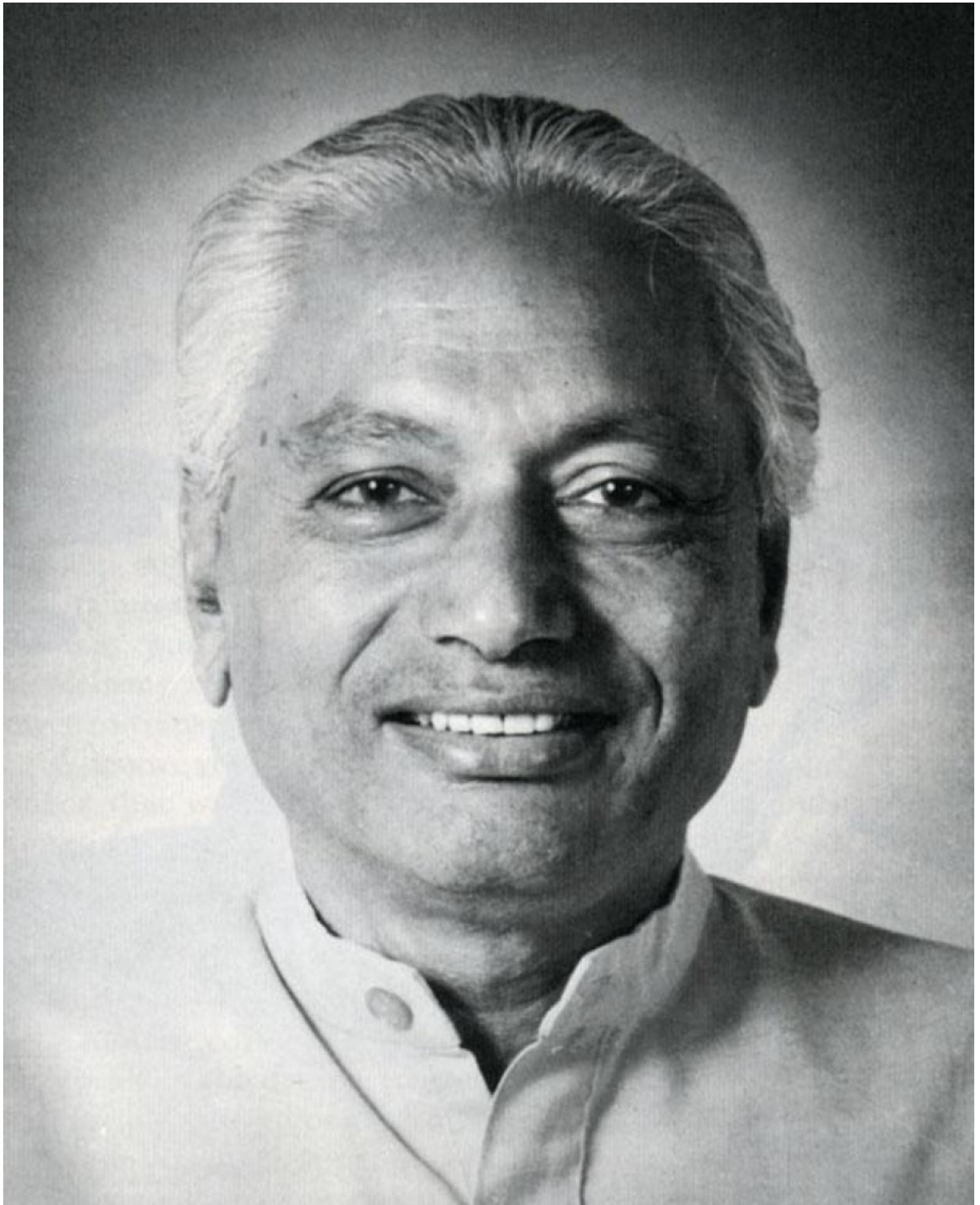


# THE SONG OF GOD

(Bhagavad Gita)







# **The Song of God**

**Swami Venkatesananda**

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## **Worshipful offering at the Feet of Gurudev Swami Sivananda**

It has always bordered to the miraculous. Gurudev blessed Me and sent Me overseas in 1961, and I have been asked to speak, speak, and speak to all sorts of audiences in several countries. Before I stand up on the platform, and after I get down from it, I have always been sceptical of My worthiness to be there. But I have always experienced an inner transformation the moment I offer the prayer to the Guru - Gurudev took over. It was He who spoke, and I have always been the first listener.

I am nothing. It is Gurudev who has carried on His own mission - that it has been through this particular instrument is a blessing upon it. In the proces, the instrument itself has been chastened, purified, and in spite of its unworthiness, glorified. But, no one should ever forget that all glory, all praise, should be offered to Gurudev.

May this light shine forever in our hearts.

Swami Venkatesananda

## Preface

The Bhagavad Gita - Song of God - has captured the imagination of thinking men and women all over the world. It has been translated into many languages and has among its devotees people belonging to many religions and nationalities.

The uniqueness of the gospel of the Bhagavad Gita lies in the fact that its follower need not belong to a particular formal religion or sect. "Each man devoted to his own duty attains perfection", declared the Prophet of Cosmic Vision, Sri Krishna, who continues to explain succinctly how this perfection is attained. "He from whom all beings have evolved and by whom all this is pervaded - worshipping Him with due performance of his own duty, man attains perfection."

Here, then, is an unique gospel which does not tamper with your station in life, distract you from your duties, disturb your faith, nor lure you away from the path you have chosen, but illumines your path and strengthens your faith. Its proclaimed object is to free you from worry and anxiety, to protect you from yourself - your own lower self, full of unruly desires and unjustified prejudices, deluded by ageless ignorance and therefore haunted by meaningless fears of imaginary calamities.

Is it possible in the modern world to live a life of peace and joy, free from tension and anxiety, fear and frustration? Yes! The Bhagavad Gita illumines that possibility.

Here is the story of the Mahabharata in brief. Two brothers, Dhritarashtra who was born blind, and Pandu who was born anemic, had a hundred wicked sons and five pious respectively. The wicked sons of the former were keen to 'take over' their cousins' share of the kingdom, and tried by all means, fair and foul, to achieve their ambition. God's Grace, however, rescued the sons of Pandu from peril to peril. The wicked hundred contrived to banish the pious five from the kingdom for a period of thirteen years, and when they returned after successfully completing the period of exile, the wicked ones flatly refused to give them their rightful share of the kingdom.

Sri Krishna, who was a friend of the pious five, made a last minute attempts to avert the armed conflict, which however became inevitable. The impartial Lord Krishna offered to help both the parties; they could choose between Himself and His vast army. The wicked hundred chose the army, and the pious five were happy that they could have Him on their side. Sri Krishna served as the charioteer of one of the pious five, Arjuna.

Dhritarashtra, the blind King, was complacent that his sons' superior might, the numerical superiority of their army, and the presence on their side of Bhishma of unparalleled valour - who could not be slain against his own will - would ensure their victory. However, on the tenth day of the battle, Bhishma fell. The blind King's faith was shaken, and he called upon his intuitive-sighted Minister, Sanjaya, to narrate the events of the war to him.

Now read on ...

## Prayer at Begin - GITA DHYANAM

Om parthaya pratibodhitam bhagavata narayanena svayam vyasena grathitam purana munina madhye mahabharatam advaita 'mrta varsinim bhagavatim astadasa 'dhyayinim amba tvam anusamdadhmi bhagavad gite bhava dvesinim

1. Om. O Bhagavad Gita, with which Partha (Arjuna) was illumined by lord Narayana himself and which was composed within the Mahabharata by the ancient sage Vyasa, O divine mother, the destroyer of rebirth, the showerer of the nectar of advaita (oneness) and consisting of eighteen chapters - upon thee, O Bhagavad Gita, O affectionate mother, I meditate.

namo 'stu to vyasa visala buddhe phulla 'ravinda 'yata patra netra yena tvaya bhārata taila purnah prajvalito jnanamayah pradipah

2. Salutations unto thee, O Vyasa of broad intellect, and with eyes like the petals of full-blown lotuses, by whom the lamp of knowledge, filled with the oil of the Mahabharata has been lighted.

prapanna parijataya totravetra 'ka panaye jnana mudraya krsnaya gita 'mrta duhe namah

3. Salutations to Krsna, the parijata or the bestower of all desires for those who take refuge in him, the holder of the whip in one hand, the holder of the symbol of knowledge and the milker of the nectar of the Bhagavad Gita.

sarvo 'panisado gavo dogdha gopala nandanah partho vatsah sudhir bhokta dugdham gita 'mrtam mahat

4. All the upanisad are the cows, the milker is Krsna the cowherd boy, Arjuna is the calf, men of purified intellect are the drinkers, the milk is the great nectar of the Gita.

vasudeva sutam devam kamsa canura mardanam devaki parama 'nandam krsnam vande jagad gurum

5. I salute lord Krsna, the world teacher, the son of Vasudeva, the destroyer of Kamsa and Canura, the supreme bliss of Devaki.

bhisma drona tata jayadratha jala gandhara nilotpala salya grahavati krpena vahani karnena velakula asvatthama vikarna ghora makara duryodhana 'vartini so 'ttirna khalu pandavai rana nadi kaivartakah kesavah

6. With Krsna as the helmsman, verily, was crossed by the Pandava the battle-river whose banks were Bhisma and Drona, whose water was Jayadratha, whose blue lotus was the king of Gandhara, whose crocodile was Salya, whose current was Krpa, whose billow was Karna, whose terrible alligators were Asvatthama and Vikarna, whose whirlpool was Duryodhana.

parasarya vacah sarojam amalam gitartha gandhotkatam nanakhya 'nakakesaram hari katha sambodhana 'bodhitam loke sajjana satpadair ahah ahah pepiyamanam muda bhuyad bhārata pankajam kali mala pradhvamsi nah sreyase

7. May this lotus of the Mahabharata, born in the lake of the words of Vyasa, sweet with the fragrance of the meaning of the Gita, with many stories as its stamens, fully opened by the discourses on Hari, the destroyer of the sins of Kali, and drunk joyously by the bees of good men in the world, day by day, become the bestower of good on us.



mukam karoti vacalam pangum langhayate girim yat krpa tam aham vande parama 'nanda madhavam

8. I salute that Krsna, the source of supreme bliss, whose grace makes the dumb eloquent and the cripple cross mountains.

yam brahma varune 'ndra rudra marutah stuvanti divyaih stavair vedaih sanga pada kramo 'panisadair gayanti yam samagah dhyana 'vasthita tad gatena manasa pasyanti yam yogino yasya 'ntam na viduh sura 'sura gana devaya tasmai namah

9. Salutations to that God whom Brahma, Varuna, Indra, Rudra and the Marut praise with divine hymns, of whom the Sama-chanters sing by the veda and their anga, in the pada and krama methods, and by the upanisad, whom the yogi see with their minds absorbed in him through meditation, and whose end the hosts of the deva and asura know not.

Om Namah Bhagavate Vasudevaya

Om Namah Sivanandaya

Om Namah Venkatesaya

Om Namah Shivaya

Om Tat Sat

## Prayer at End - GITA MAHATMYA

gri ganesaya namah! sri gopala krsnaya namah! dhara 'vaca bhagavan paramesana bhaktir  
avyabharini prarabdham bhujyamanasya katham bhavati he prabho

1. The Earth said: O Lord! The supreme one! How can unflinching devotion arise in him who is immersed in his worldly life, O Lord?

sri visnur uvaca prarabdham bhujyamano hi gita 'bhyasa ratah sada sa mukta sa sukhi loke  
karmana no 'palipyate

2. Lord Visnu said: Though engaged in the performance of worldly duties, one who is regular in the study of the Gita, becomes free. He is the happy man in this world. He is not bound by karma.

maha papadi papani gita dhyanam karoti cet kvacit sparsam na kurvanti nalini dalam ambuvat

3. Just as the water stains not the lotus leaf, even so, sins do not taint him who is regular in the recitation of the Gita.

gitayah pustakam yatra yatra pathah pravartate tatra sarvani tirthani prayaga 'dini tatra vai

4. All the sacred places of pilgrimage like Prayaga, etc., dwell in that place where the book, the Gita, is kept and where the Gita is read.

sarve devas ca rsayo yoginah pannagas ca ye gopala gopika va 'pi narado 'ddhava parsadaih

5. All the gods, sages, yogi, divine serpents, gopala, gopika (friends and devotees of lord Krsna), Narada, Uddhava and others (dwell there).

sahayo jayate sishram yatra gita pravartate yatra gita vicaras ca pathanam pathanat srutam  
tatra 'ham niscitam prthvi nivasami sadai 'va hi

6. Help comes quickly where the Gita is recited and, O Earth, I dwell at all times where the Gita is read, heard, taught and contemplated upon.

gita 'sraye 'ham tisthami gita me co 'ttamam grham gita jnanam upasritya trimllokan palayamy  
aham

7. I take refuge in the Gita and the Gita is my best abode. I protect the three worlds with the knowledge of the Gita.

gita me parama vidya brahma rupa na samsayah ardha matra 'ksara nitya sva 'nirvacya  
padatmika

8. The Gita is my highest science, which is doubtless of the form of Brahman, the eternal, the ardhmatra (of the sacred monosyllable om), the ineffable splendour of the self.

cidanandena krsnena prokta sva mukhato 'rjunam veda tray! parananda tattva 'rtha jnana  
samyuta

9. It was spoken by the blessed Krsna, the all-knowing, through his own mouth to Arjuna. It contains the essence of the three veda, knowledge of the reality. It is full of supreme bliss.

yo 'stadasa japen nityam nara niscala manasah jnana siddhim sa labhate tato yati param padam

10. He who recites the eighteen chapters of the Gita daily, with a pure, unshaken mind, attains perfection in knowledge, and reaches the highest state or supreme goal.

pathe 'samarthah sampurne tato 'rdham patham acaret tada go danajam punyam labhate na 'tra samsayah

11. If a complete reading is not possible, even if only half of it is read, he attains the benefit of giving a cow as a gift. There is no doubt about this.

tribhagam pathamanas to ganga snana phalam labhet sadamsam japamanas to soma yaga phalam labhet

12. He who recites one-third part of it achieves the merit of a bath in the sacred Ganga, and he who recites one-sixth of it attains the merit of performing a soma ritual.

eka 'dhyayam to yo nityam pathate bhakti samyutah rudra lokam avapnoti gano bhutva vasesh ciram

13. That person who reads one chapter with great devotion attains to the world of Rudra and, having become an attendant of lord Siva, lives there for many years.

adhyayam sloka padam va nityam yah pathate narah sa yati naratam yavan manvantaram vasundhare

14. If one reads a quarter of a chapter or even part of a verse daily, he, O Earth, retains a human body till the end of a world-cycle.

gitayah sloka dasakam sapta panca catustayam dvau trin ekaih tad ardhm va slokanam yah pathen narah candra lokam avapnoti varsanam ayutam dhruvam gita patha samayukto mrtomanusatam vrajet

15,16. He who repeats ten, seven, five, four, three, two verses or even one or half a verse, attains the region of the moon and lives there for ten thousand years. Accustomed to the daily study of the Gita, the dying man comes back to life again as a human being.

gita 'bhyasam punah krtva labhate muktim uttamam gite 'ty uccara samyukto mriyamano gatim labhet

17. By repeated study of the Gita he attains liberation. Uttering 'Gita' at the time of death, one attains liberation.

gita 'rtha sravana 'sakto maha papa yuto 'pi va vaikuntham samavapnoti visnuna saha modate

18. Though full of sins, one who is ever intent on hearing the meaning of the Gita, goes to the kingdom of God and rejoices with lord Visnu.

gita 'rtham dhyayate nityam krtva karmani bhurisah jivanmuktah sa vijneyo deha 'nte paramam padam

19. He who meditates on the meaning of the Gita, having performed a lot of good actions, attains the supreme goal after death. Such a man should be known as a jivanmukta (sage liberated while living).

gitam asritya bahavo bhubhujo janaka 'dayah nirdhuta kalmasa loke gita yatah paratn padam

20. In this world, taking refuge in the Gita, many kings like Janaka and others have reached the highest state or goal, purified of all sins.

gitayah pathanam krtva mahatmyam naiva yah pathet vrtha patho bhavet tasya srama eva by udahrtah

21. He who fails to read this Glory of the Gita after having read the Gita, loses the benefit thereby, and the effort alone remains.

etan mahatmya sahyuktam gita 'bhyasam karoti yah sa tat phalam avapnoti durlabharn gatim apnuyat

22. One who studies the Gita, together with this Glory of the Gita, attains the fruits mentioned above and reaches the state which is otherwise very difficult to attain.

suta uvaca mahatmyam etad gitaya maya proktam sanatanaatn gitante ca pathed yas to yad uktam tat phalarnlabhet

23. Suta said: This greatness or Glory of the Gita which is eternal, as narrated by me, should be read at the end of the study of the Gita and the fruits mentioned therein will be obtained.

iti sri varaha purane gri gita mahatmyam sampurnam

Thus ends the Glory of the Gita contained in the Varaha purana.

Om Namah Bhagavate Vasudevaya

Om Namah Sivanandaya

Om Namah Venkatesaya

Om Namah Shivaya

Om Tat Sat

## Conclusion

This is a glimpse of the gospel of Lord Krishna - simple, direct, yet profound. It is not one of pessimism or escapism, but is full of robust common sense. And if it sometimes seems to be puzzling, it is because common sense is so uncommon in the complex world of today.

You may be quite certain that one direction is east and the opposite direction west. But, if you move a little, you suddenly discover that east and west meet you! You are the divider, and from another point of view, you are the meeting point. In fact, it is the mind that creates all this duality which multiplies into endless diversity, creating conflicts and confusion all the way through.

There is only oneness and cosmic unity. There just cannot be two infinities or two omnipresences. The origin of the perception of diversity is enshrouded in mystery - maya. But Krishna boldly assumes responsibility for even that! "I am seated in the hearts of all; from me are memory, knowledge, as well as their absence," says He.

The manifest universe is the body of God, and the supreme spirit is the indweller. Even this distinction was made to suit human analogy and to satisfy the duality-ridden intellect. We make an arbitrary distinction between our body and our spirit which seems to be justified because at one stage - death - the spirit leaves the body. This, obviously, does not apply to the Lord and His Body, for He is eternal and infinite, and does not leave His Body.

What a sublime vision! What a world-uniting doctrine! What a fountain of love! What a soft blow to shatter all distinctions and differences! What a divine cord of love to unite all mankind in oneness - divinity!

Swami Venkatesananda

Om Tat Sat

*Krishna's gospel will not suffer in the least if the first chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is ignored. But, the blind man will continue to be blind and unseeing, the hero will continue to fool himself, and refuse to look at his 'friends' and his 'enemies' in the correct perspective.*

*The following is not intended to suggest that the Bhagavad Gita or the Mahabharata itself is an allegory. Yet one cannot but be struck by the lesson it provides. The scripture opens with the blind king's question expressing his concern and his eagerness to 'know'. The spiritually blind man, secure in his false sense of material security, must awaken, must begin to question, must want to know. When he does, Sanjaya enters the picture. Sanjaya is self-conquest, discipline (which is disciple misspelt). Without discipline, if one goes to the guru, one would be treated as a guest! And one would derive no greater benefit.*

*Even after one awakes and becomes a discip(e)l(ine), one needs a guru. Or else one may make a mistake and consider that error to be the truth, clinging to it and mistaking that for faith, love, devotion, etc. It is when the disciple surrenders himself to the guru and serves him, that his heart is purified and becomes transparent, so that the guru's light shines through him without any effort on the part of either.*

*Similarly we learn vital lessons from Arjuna's conduct. He asks Krishna to place the chariot between the two armies, so that he can take a good look at his enemies. We enter life determined to fight our enemies. (Krishna himself says that these enemies are within!) We blow the conch, beat our drums, and jump into the battle. Proudly we ask or pray to God to lead us, to guide us (to where we can see the enemies). Often he places the chariot of our life right in front of the most delicate relationships - Bhishma, the grandfather and Drona, the teacher. Mysteriously, he reveals to us that we are bound by our self-esteem, by our blind attachment to our family traditions, our culture and our ancestry (symbolised by Bhishma the grandfather) and our philosophy, doctrine, dogma, our cult and religious tradition (represented by Drona the teacher). We begin to reclassify these - the inner enemies - into kith and kin! We are ready and eager to renounce some relations (often unimportant trifles), but we cling to the dreadful chains that bind us. We give up father, mother, property, home and wealth, but we cling to a caste, a cult, a religious tradition, a spiritual leader, etc. The latter do not seem to be 'enemies'. Without realising that all 'my' is eneMY, we endeavour to find scriptural sanction for these new attachments, and impotently refuse to fight the battle of our spiritual life.*

*The spiritual hero ought to see the inner enemies for himself. It will not do to take them for granted on the testimony of others. This does not mean that one should subject oneself to temptations or walk into the snare of sensuality.*

*But one must see evil as evil for oneself, and not just believe it is evil because somebody else said so!*

## **1 - Visada Yoga**

### **The Yoga of the Distress of Arjuna**

#### **The Preceptor's Grace And Blessing**

I:1 - Dhrtarastra asked: Tell me, what did the sons of Pandu and my sons do when they had assembled on the field of righteousness, eager to fight, O Sanjaya?

I:2 - Sanjaya replied: After looking over the army gathered by the sons of Pandu, King Duryodhana went to his teacher Drona and said:

Dhrtarastra was the blind father of Duryodhana and his brothers. He was blind in his affection for his sons, blind to dharma (righteousness or duty), and had a blind faith that physical might would triumph. Bhishma's fall on the tenth day of the battle reminded him of the unalterable law - dharma or truth alone triumphs.

Sanjaya discreetly refers to Duryodhana as the king. It is the mark of a wise man that he does not wound anyone's feelings and sentiments under any circumstance. He does not take undue advantage of even an opponents faults. He is full of sympathy even for the wicked in their physical and mental sufferings.

The Mahabharata paints Duryodhana as the villain. There was no great sin which he had not committed. He had no respect for the elders. He had great faith in the strength of the mighty and little in the goodness of the holy. Yet, at this eventful juncture, when he is embarking on a war that could well mean life or death for him, the first person he thinks of is not his evil advisers nor even the great generalissimo, but his preceptor, Drona. Without the preceptor's grace and blessing no worldly undertaking or spiritual practice can ever bear fruit. This conviction was so deeply ingrained in the ancient Indian that even the wicked Duryodhana was full of it.



## No Man Is Perfect

I:3 - O teacher, behold this mighty army of the Pandavas, arrayed by the son of Drupada, your wise disciple.

I:4 - In that army there are heroes, mighty bowmen, equal in fighting to Bhima and Arjuna; there are also great fighters like Yuyudhana, Virata and Drupada of the great car.

I:5 - Dhristaketu, Chekitana and the valiant king of Kashi, Purujit, Kuntibhoja and Shaibya, the best warriors.

I:6 - The strong Yudhamanyu and the brave Uttamauja, the sons of Subhadra and of Draupadi, who are all great heroes.

No man is perfect. The good man has his faults. The evil one has to his credit sublime thoughts and chivalrous actions, however rare they may be. Both of them are subject to temptations. But the good man shakes off evil after a brief encounter. The wicked man similarly shies away from goodness just as fast!

Having approached the teacher, Duryodhana does not fall at the Guru's Feet and ask for blessings. Nor does he wait upon Him for guidance or direction.

His aggressive and arrogant nature immediately overpowers even Guru-

bhakti (devotion to the preceptor). The result? Taunting words and

commands! "Look at this powerful army of our enemy: it is arrayed by one whom you taught!"

The wicked man's heart trembles in fear and the Pandava army (though numerically weaker) appears to be a 'mighty army'. The will quakes before a sense of guilt and the vision is blurred.

## Impudence

I:7 - Know also, O best among brahmana, the names of our most distinguished leaders. I recount them for you.

I:8 - Thyself, and Bhishma, Karna, Kripa, Asvatthama, Vakarna and also Jayadratha, the son of Somadatta, who ever win in war.

I:9 - And also many other heroes, who have given up their lives for my sake, armed with various weapons, all well skilled in battle.

I:10 - This army of ours, marshalled by Bhishma, is insufficient, whereas that army of theirs, marshalled by Bhima, is sufficient.

What impudence! Does the teacher need to be told all this? Also, Duryodhana fears that 'my army is insufficient'.

The singular and unmistakable characteristic of the wicked man is vanity and belligerence, which seeks more and more destructive power.

Yet the ominous truth escapes his lips. These great warriors 'have given up their lives for my sake'! Anxiety fills the evil heart. He sees the enemy army in the true light. It is both formidable and sufficient, whereas his own army is insufficient. The two vital factors that ensure victory are on the Pandava side. They are, in the words of the Holy Bible, God and His Righteousness. Minus these, might and numbers are mere liabilities.

Perhaps in a flash of momentary intuition, Duryodhana realised the unrighteousness of his cause. Such moments are granted even to evil-doers. The courageous one shakes the evil off, without a false sense of dignity or vain desire overcoming him. We need err only once if we have a little wisdom left in us.

## Cultivation Of Good Habits

I:11 - Therefore, do ye all, stationed in your respective positions, protect Bhisma.

I:12 - Bhisma, the oldest of the Kaurava, in order to cheer Duryodhana, now roared like a lion, and blew his conch.

I:13 - Then, conches and kettledrums, tabors, drums and cow-horns blared forth quite suddenly and the sound was tremendous.

Forgetting to whom he is talking, Duryodhana instructs the venerable teacher: "Protect the commander-in-chief". The righteous impulse of turning to the teacher at the crucial hour is smothered by accumulated evil tendencies strengthened by frequent repetitions and reinforced by insatiable lust for power. Even in the hour of danger the wicked man's haughty head refuses to bow, and his heart refuses to pray. Adversity often turns a man away from the evil path, but that is true only of one who is on the borderline between good and evil. We have seen that the same calamity which compels one to abandon the evil path and to strive to become a saint, goads another into the darker mazes of vice. Only deliberate cultivation of good habits and tendencies can effect a healthy conditioning of our heart which, even if it is not naturally bent God-ward, will turn to him the moment it is given shock.

Duryodhana speaks to Drona. The latter does not reply! The insulting and impudent behaviour of the wicked deserves only one treatment - indifference. The commander-in-chief, however, steps in, and, without a word, signals the commencement of the battle.

## The Lord Als Charioteer

I:14 - Krishna and Arjuna, seated in their magnificent chariot, yoked with white horses, also blew their divine conches.

I:15 - Krishna blew the Pancajanya, Arjuna blew the Pevadatta and Bhima blew the conch Paundra.

I:16 - Yudhishthira blew the Anantavijaya, Nakula and Sahadeva blew the Sughosa and Manipuspaka.

I:17 - The King of Kasi, Sikhandin, Dhrstadyuma, Virata and Satyaki also.

I:18 - Drupada and the sons of Draupadi, they all blew their respective conches.

I:19 - The sounding through sky and earth caused an uproar that tore the hearts of the sons of Dhritarastra.

The Lord's conch is called pancajanya, the matrix of the five elements or tanmatra. The sound that issues from his conch is the supreme Om-kara, the vibration which is the origin of all creation.

Arjuna's chariot has the Lord himself as the charioteer. The Kathopanishad likens the senses to horses and the intelligence to the charioteer. When the Lord himself is the charioteer, it is no wonder that the steeds are white, a colour symbolising purity. If we hand the reins of our mind over to the Lord, then it is certain that our senses will be purified and all their functions will be pure and sinless.

The end of the night and the dawn of the day are unwelcome events to thieves and prostitutes. Even the auspicious sound of the conches of the Lord and his devotees pierce the hearts of the wicked. Fear is not outside but within them.

## The Lord Is Ever Ready

I:20 - Then, seeing all the people of Dhritarashtra's party standing arrayed and the discharge of weapons about to begin, Arjuna, the son of Pandu, took up his bow.

I:21 - Arjuna said: Krishna, place my chariot in the middle of the two armies,

I:22 - So that I may behold those who stand here desirous to fight, and know with whom I must fight.

I:23 - For I desire to observe those who are assembled here to fight, wishing to please the evil-minded Duryodhana.

Arjuna is the son of Pandu, the 'white' king. White is symbolic of purity. The offsprings of purity are virtuous qualities. In the Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna is the disciple, the seeker. He represents the good man who, as yet, is not steady in his wisdom - alluded to by the restless monkey ensign!

Only by the Grace of God is it possible to curb this restless tendency of the mind. Otherwise, like Arjuna, who at this juncture is enthusiastic about the righteous war, but later changes his mind, we, too, will swing constantly between zeal and despair in our spiritual life.

The Lord is ever ready to save His devotee. In fact, He rejoices to be the devotee's servant! The Lord of the universe condescends to become Arjuna's charioteer. What Humility! What Love! God's Love of the devotee is immeasurably greater than even the greatest devotee's love of God. Countless stories are current in India to show that the Lord is ever ready to serve the devotee in every way.

## The Most Suitable Climate For Teaching

I:24 - Sanjaya said: Thus addressed by Arjuna, Krishna, stationed the best of chariots in the middle of the two armies.

I:25 - In front of Bhishma, Drona and all the rulers of the earth, Krishna said: "Arjuna, behold now all these Kurus gathered together!"

I:26 - Then Arjuna saw his fathers and grandfathers, teachers, maternal uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons and companions,

I:27 - and friends also in both armies. When the son of Kunti, seeing all these kinsmen standing arrayed, spoke thus sorrowfully.

The greatest of all moments in the history of the world, the moment when the yoga of the Bhagavad Gita was revealed, arrived.

Arjuna was the chosen channel. The Lord was manoeuvring Arjuna into the position in which the ideal stage would be set up. Hence, He places the chariot right in front of the two people for whom Arjuna had the greatest respect and love - Bhishma and Drona. Not only that, the Lord miraculously brings about a change in Arjuna's vision.

Arjuna, who but a moment before was thinking of the Kaurava army as the 'enemy', 'evil-minded', etc., suddenly beholds all the warriors in a different light - as kinsmen and friends. Enthusiasm for war yields place to sorrow and confusion.

The external situations or circumstances have but a neutral intrinsic value; it is one's own mind that attributes pleasure and pain, good and evil to them. As we shall see, this is the very core of the yoga of the Bhagavad Gita; and, lord Krishna creates the most suitable climate for His teaching by bringing out the contrast in the two attitudes of Arjuna.

## A Correct Attitude

I:28 - Arjuna spoke : Seeing these, my kinsmen, O Krisna, arrayed and eager to fight,

I:29 - My limbs fail and my mouth is parched up, my body trembles. The bow slips from my hand. My skin burns.

I:30 - I am unable even to stand. My mind is reeling, I cannot hold myself steady.

I:31 - I do not see any good in killing my kinsmen in this battle.

The seed of all our miseries is beautifully exposed to our view. 'Suffering' does not move us to pity. We are not at all 'grieved' over death.

We do not shed tears when we read of earthquakes and air-crashes. Only identification of our own self with the persons involved gives rise to grief. 'A boy drowned in the sea' is news; 'My son was drowned' is a heart-breaking tragedy! Both boys were living beings, born of parents, but the latter was 'my son', and that makes all the difference.

Delusion is a mental state, but it has a devastating effect on even our physical being. Psychosomatic medicine is discovering the truth that our health depends not so much on health foods and tonics, on strong muscles and sturdy limbs, but on the state of our mind which is ultimately dependent on a correct attitude to life. The Bhagavad Gita gives us this correct attitude.

The 'adverse omens' - did Arjuna actually see any? We should not forget the Pandava were victorious. The omens could have portended the destruction of their own children. Or perhaps the fear and the confusion which overwhelmed Arjuna made him 'see things'.

## Unwinking Vigilance

I:32 - For I desire not victory, nor kingdom, nor pleasures; of what avail is dominion to us, or pleasures or even life?

I:33 - Those for whose sake we desire kingdom, enjoyments and pleasures, stand in front of us in battle, having renounced life and wealth.

Vasistha, Krsna and Buddha have all acclaimed with one voice that desire alone is the root-cause of all miseries and of transmigration. Here we have Arjuna voicing the same thoughts and the same wisdom, yet he was wrong! To all outward appearances the sage might behave like a madman, but a madman is not a sage! Between escapism and renunciation there is this vital difference - the inner attitude. Krsna does not advocate escapism. He revives in us the true spirit of renunciation.

"I do not want victory or pleasure, so I will not fight," says Arjuna.

"You should not run after victory or pleasure, not even the pleasure of abstaining from the battle; therefore you should fight," says Krsna.

The argument is the same, but the conclusions are different because the inner approach is different. Hence, we should not blindly trust our intellect, but should seek wise counsel in order that the inner intelligence may be awakened.

Again, "It is for our relatives' sake that we seek kingdom, etc., and I won't fight since they may be killed in war", says Arjuna. "No, not for their sake, but for God's sake, for the sake of your duty or God's Will, you shall fight", replies the Lord.

The path of duty is often unpleasant to the pleasure-seeking mind or ego-centred personality. It demands unwinking vigilance to prevent insincerity and unwisdom from veiling true insight.



## Relationship Is The Source Of Grief

I:34 - Teachers, fathers, sons and also grandfathers, maternal uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law and other relatives.

I:35 - These I do not wish to kill, though they kill me, even for the sake of dominion over the three worlds, leave alone killing them for the sake of the earth.

I:36 - Only sin will accrue by killing these felons. What joy can we get by killing our relatives?

I:37 - Therefore, we should not kill the sons of Dhritarashtra, our relatives.

Verse 35 is reminiscent of the words of the great spiritual hero of the Kathopanishad, viz., Naciketas. There, the Guru (Yama) is pleased.

But, here, the Guru (Krsna) does not applaud Arjuna's dispassionate words. Mere aversion to worldly pleasures is valueless without devotion to God. It can only lead us to self-imposed misery and poverty-stricken life. As Gurudev used to say, we should 'detach the mind from the objects and attach it to the Lord'.

The Lord, as the indweller, knew that Arjuna's heart was enshrouded by spiritual ignorance. In order to remove it, he gave it an opportunity to manifest itself, by placing the chariot in front of Bhishma and Drona. Arjuna's cleverness weaves a web of logic to hide his ignorance and faint-heartedness. He forgets that it is the duty of rulers to punish felons, and suggests that even that is fraught with sin! Why? 'Because they are our relations'. All animate and inanimate creatures in the world are God's creations; but relationship is our creation and the source of grief.

## Destroy The Real Enemy

I:38 - Though they, with intelligence overpowered by greed, see no evil in the destruction of families, and no sin in hostility to friends.

I:39 - Why should not we, who clearly see evil in the destruction of a family, learn to turn away from this sin?

It is easier to perceive fault in others than within oneself. The Kaurava were greedy. They would do anything to retain sovereignty of the usurped kingdom. 'So they do not see the sin in killing kinsmen; we are wiser and so should desist from it' - is Arjuna's argument. One man's vanity shields another's transgression with a seemingly lofty rationalisation.

No wise man will ever justify war. But wise men have from time immemorial indulged in what they regarded as righteous war. War itself is evil, but when it is the only remedy for a greater evil - to dethrone evil which has usurped the place of dharma - war is a necessity. Then, and only then, to fight is dharma (righteousness or duty). To run away from it is adharma! Just as an unruffled mind and a loving heart guide the surgeon's skilled hand to remove a malignant growth, the wise and chivalrous ruler must be guided by a clear vision of dharma and by a deep love for all his people in order to deal firmly with wickedness.

Arjuna was wrong in saying that as they were his kinsmen, he should not kill them, nor is it right to say that since they were his enemies, Krsna asked him to kill them. It was only because they were the perpetrators of adharma that it was Arjuna's duty (as a prince) to exterminate them. If dharma was on the Kaurava side, even if they were his enemies, Krsna would have asked Arjuna to look within himself and destroy his real enemy - adharma. (unrighteousness).

## To Know What Is One's Duty

I:40 - In the destruction of a family, the immemorial rites of that family perish - the destruction of spirituality.

I:41 - When unrighteousness dominates the family, the women of the family become corrupt, and when the women become corrupt, unwanted progeny comes.

I:42 - Confusion of castes leads to hell the slayers of the family, for their forefathers fall down to hell, deprived of the offerings of rice-ball and water.

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

When knowledgeable persons in a society are either killed in war or lured away to other countries or avocations, the 'spirit' of the customs, traditions and rites is lost, leaving the dead carcass of a ritual to which she masses cling. When the spirit is lost, piety or righteousness is lost.

The custodians of piety (our womenfolk) become corrupt and there is confusion of castes. No one has a clear idea of his duty, and consequently there is chaos.

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

## Continuous Anxiety And Tension

I:43 - By these evil deeds of the destroyers of the family, which cause confusion of castes, the eternal religious rites of the caste and the family are destroyed.

I:44 - We have heard that inevitable is the dwelling for an unknown period in hell for those men in whose families the religious practices have been destroyed.

The hell referred to need not be elsewhere, but here itself! Every war leaves a long, tragic and horrendous trail of widows, orphans, 'illegitimate' children, social misfits and outcasts. All this happens even without war, in a rootless or uprooted community. When the motive is physical attraction or material consideration, marriage between people of different cultural backgrounds, intellectual equipment and spiritual values or even tastes and temperaments, sooner or later leads to unhappiness. If some of these families appear to be 'happy', it is only because they have no idea at all of real domestic harmony. Of course, this does not apply where the parties to the marriage belong to different cultural groups, but their intellectual and spiritual equipment is similar or complementary, and they are therefore prepared to and capable of making the necessary adjustments.

With regard to the social structure, Aldous Huxley says in his 'Perennial Philosophy':

'Contemporary history is the hideous record of what happens when political bosses, businessmen or class-conscious proletarians assume the Brahman's function of formulating a philosophy of life; when usurers dictate policy and debate the issues of war and peace; and when the warrior's caste duty is imposed on all and sundry, regardless of psycho-physical make-up and vocation.'

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

## The Greatest Sin

I:45 - Alas, we are resolved to commit very sinful acts, ready to slay our kinsmen to satisfy our greed for the pleasure of a kingdom.

I:46 - If the sons of Dhrtarastra with weapons in hand should slay me in battle, unresisting and unarmed, that would be better for me.

I:47 - Sanjaya said: Having thus spoken in the midst of the battlefield, Arjuna, casting away his bow and arrow, sat down on the seat of the chariot, his mind overwhelmed with sorrow.

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

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

Thus are we led to the threshold of this yoga.

Om Tat Sat

Thus in the Upanishad of the Bhagavad Gita, the Science of the Eternal, the Scripture of Yoga, the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, ends the first chapter entitled: Visada Yoga - The Yoga of the Distress of Arjuna.