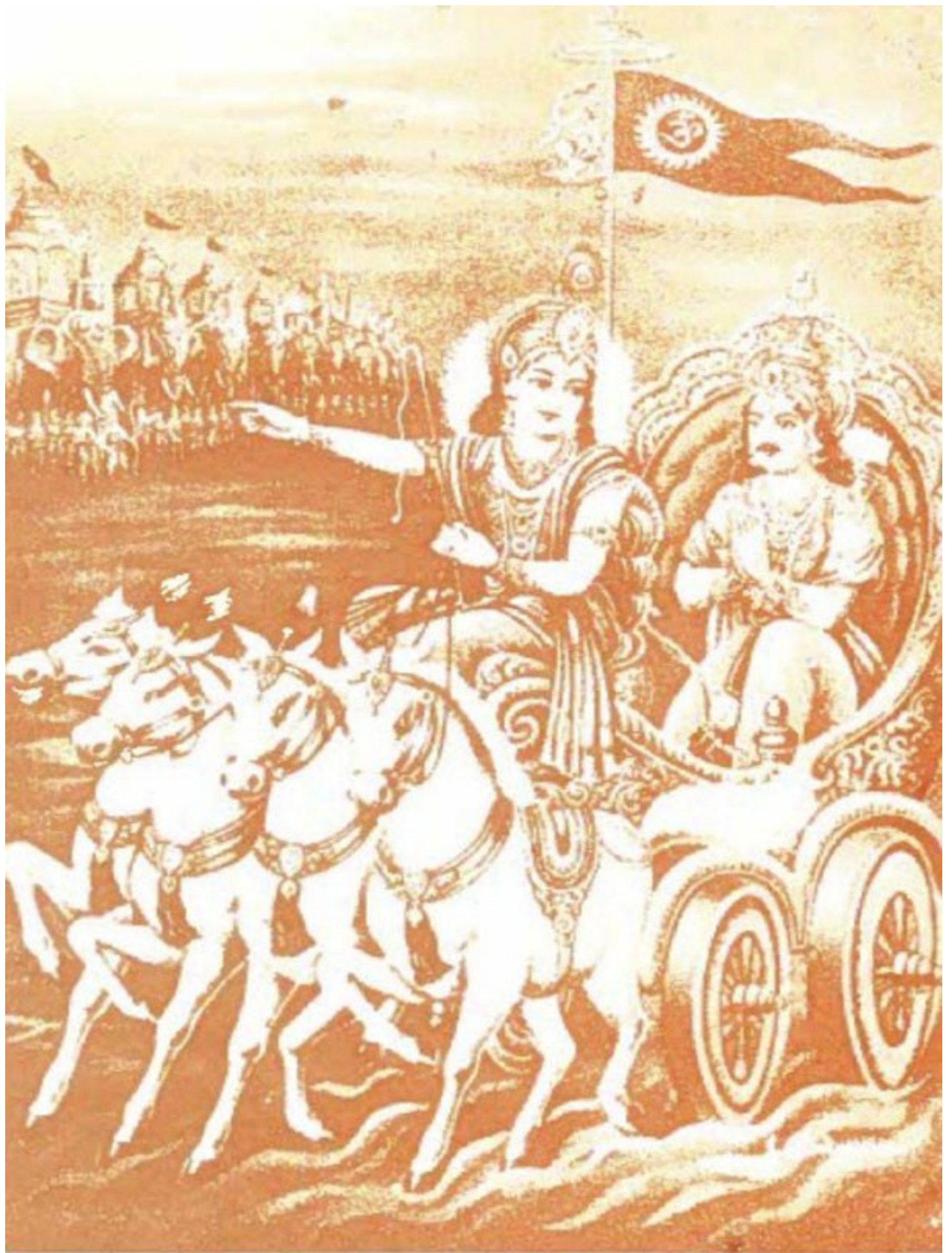
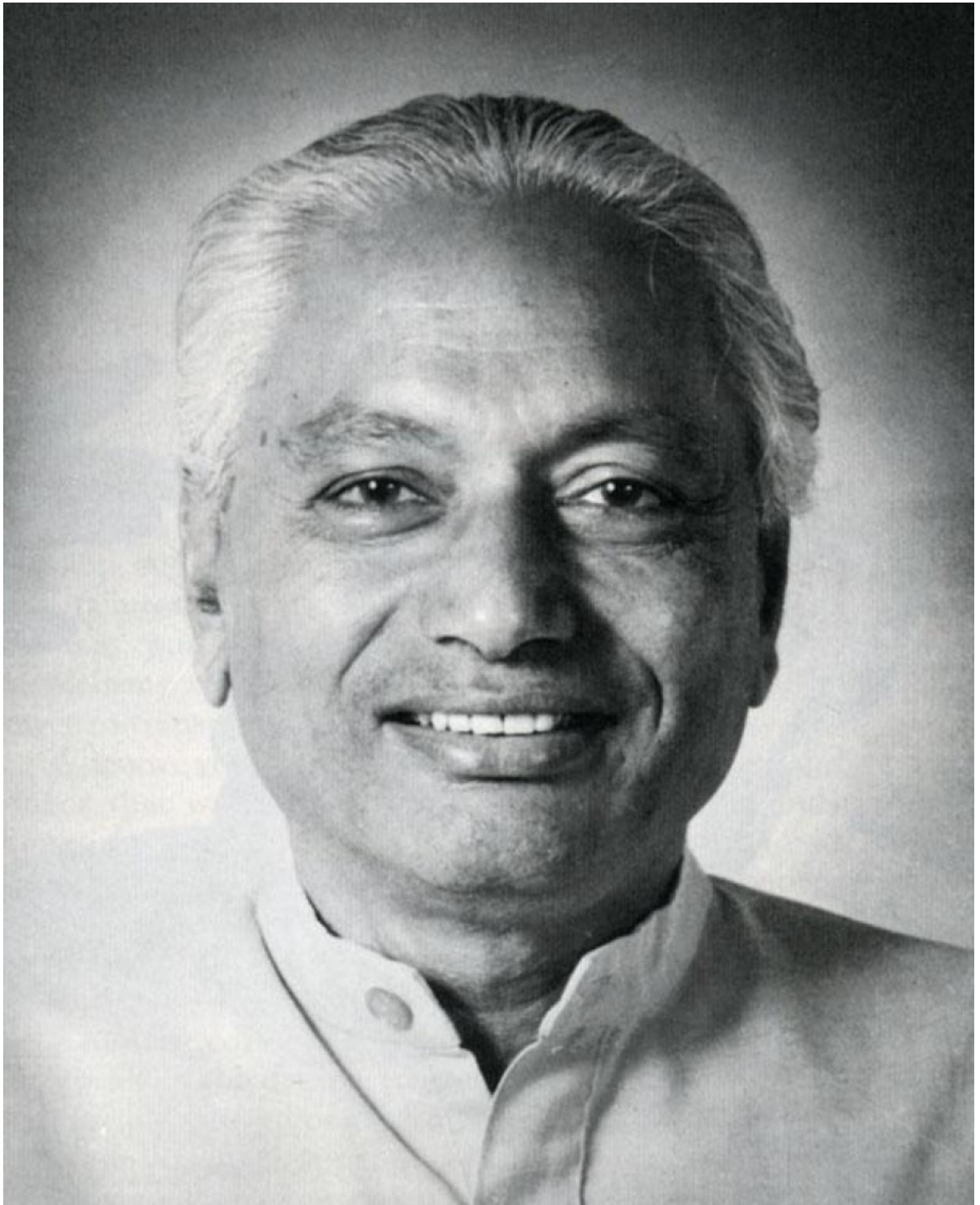


THE SONG OF GOD

(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 bharaata 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 bharaata 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 muktah 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 sikhram 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 ardhamatra (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 vasesc
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 avapnotii 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

4 - Karma Jnana Sanyasa Yoga The Yoga of Wisdom

The Same Old Truth

IV:1 - The Blessed Lord said: I taught this imperishable Yoga to Vivasvan; he told it to Manu; Manu proclaimed it to Ikshvaku.

IV:2 - This, handed down thus in regular succession, the royal sages knew. But in course of time the succession was broken, and therefore the science appears to be lost.

IV:3 - That same ancient Yoga has been today taught to you by Me, for you are my devotee and friend; it is the supreme mystery.

'There is nothing new under the sun'! The same old truth is re-stated over and over. The presentation is different - adapted to suit different peoples, generations and conditions prevalent.

The Mahabharata has eighteen chapters or 'books'. The Gita has eighteen chapters. One plus eight is nine, the final number. It is a symbol of finality - the last word. There are some who are sure that the Gita contains the 'last word'. Others claim the title for the Holy Bible or the Holy Quran. One who realises that all these three spring from the same source sees no confusion here. The Indian wisely adds, however, that this 'last word' can be re-stated time and time again, with a slight difference in the modulation and accent. This is the secret of his tolerance, understanding and all-inclusiveness.

Truth gets perverted and lost on account of disuse and misuse. The intellect is incapable of comprehending the spiritual truth which spiritual experience alone can approach. When the latter is absent, the intellect feels compelled to spin a web of myth and superstition (known as philosophy) around the truth which is totally covered up in this cobweb in course of time.

The Lord revives true knowledge once more.

Avatara

IV:4 - Arjuna said: Later on was your birth, and prior to it was the birth of the Sun; how am I to understand that you didst teach this Yoga in the beginning?

IV:5 - The Blessed Lord said: Many births of Mine have passed, as well as of yours, O Arjuna! I know them all, but you knowest not.

IV:6 - Although I am unborn and my supernatural body never deteriorates, and although I am the Lord of all sentient beings, I still appear in every millennium in My original supernatural form.

God is omnipresent and omnipotent. He is like the umpire in a football match: he lets the two teams (the divine and the undivine) play on; he himself remains unnoticed till the need arises and then he suddenly reveals his presence. The word 'avatara' or 'descent' is only symbolic. God, who is omnipresent, bursts into manifestation, even as electricity, which is subtle and 'does not seem to exist at all' , reveals itself through a light-bulb or where there is a short-circuit.

You and I have had countless births. God has also manifested himself countless times. You and I are also manifestations or incarnations of the omnipresent God! So were Rama, Krsna, Buddha, Zarathustra, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, etc. There is this little (?!) difference: two people go into the sea; the fool is drowning and the lifesaver jumps in to save him. We are drowning in ignorance and evil. God (as the saviours and prophets) comes to save us. We are bound by ignorance and maya. He play-acts as if bound, in order to liberate us.

It is blasphemy to say that this cannot happen. It is a rash denial of the omnipotence of God. True, the special manifestation does not cancel his omnipresence. When there is a great white cloud above us it does not mean there is no water-vapour anywhere else. God is ever omnipresent, even while he is with us as an avatara.

God's Play

IV:7 - Whenever there is a decline of dharma, O Arjuna, and rise of unrighteousness, then I manifest myself.

When does God thus manifest himself? Whenever the forces divine, 'the children of light', are overwhelmed by the undivine forces or the offspring of darkness, there is a divine manifestation to restore the balance.

This, however, seems to run counter to the scriptural declaration 'satyameva jayate' (truth alone triumphs). Is it possible for unrighteousness to overwhelm righteousness, even temporarily? No. Even that seeming triumph of unrighteousness is but a victory to righteousness.

Legend and history bear witness to this process. First there is oppression of the good by the evil. The wicked have no need to reflect, no qualms of conscience. The good are circumspect. The former take undue advantage. ("You need not turn the other cheek - I know where it is", says the wicked man who persists in his oppression of the good.) When this oppression reaches the limit, there is compression which disturbs the very core of the 'good' being oppressed. At this core, there is God. When evil reaches this core, there is explosion; his power manifests itself in its own glory. This is the historical process: oppression, compression, explosion. The first two are necessary conditions for the third and hence it is possible to see in the seeming triumph of unrighteousness a true victory for righteousness. Extreme unrighteousness does a signal service of bringing God and divine power into manifestation.

If all this is puzzling, the Bhagavatam fans it further. It is not as though the children of light are God's and the wicked ones are the creatures of some other creator. They are all God's children. There are periods in the cyclic world-process when one or the other of these creatures holds sway. That, too, is God's play.

Avatara

IV:8 - For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked, and for the establishment of righteousness, I advent myself in every age.

What does God do when he manifests himself? He protects the good, destroys the evil and establishes righteousness. Please note that 'the good' need not be confined to 'good people'. 'Protection of the good and destruction of the evil ...' (Fill up the blanks, as you like!) Even good and evil tendencies may be brought within the meaning of this verse. Only the good are protected: not a privileged community. Hence, 'be good; do good' if you want God's protection!

There is no real destruction even of wicked people they have to be purified and redeemed. Only the evil nature or tendencies have to be destroyed. Hence even the good people whom Rama and Krsna protected, died, and the wicked ones whom they killed went to heaven (because their evil nature had been removed).

This is the only definition of the purpose of avatara. The criterion that determines who is an avatara is not supernatural birth or deeds, not supernatural appearance or disappearance, but the power to establish righteousness. Hence we regard the human Rama as an avatara and not the powerful and 'superhuman' Ravana. In this light, Rama, Krsna, Buddha, Zarathustra, Mosis, Jesus, Mohammed and Mahavira, are all avatar of God.

We admit that the son of God is even as God; the son of a lion is lion. We admit that the Prophet of Islam, too, is an avatara; the messenger sent by light is light only. When a candle gives birth to another, it is also a candle - not son of the candle or the messenger of the candle.

Since this avatara effectively veils himself with his own maya, he may behave as God or man, he may proclaim his divinity or hide it - if he upholds righteousness, he is God.

The Divine Nature Of Oneself

IV:9 - He who thus knows in true light my divine birth and action, after having abandoned the body is not born again; he comes to me, Arjuna.

At this stage it is necessary to remind ourselves that the first person singular used in this scripture does not refer to the personality 'Krsna' , but to the godhead revealing itself through him. The speaker could well have been Krsna, Christ, Buddha or Allah. The meaning and the significance will not suffer in the least.

It is in this light that we should take the declaration of lord Jesus that he is 'the light, the truth and the way and that no-one goes to the Father but through "me".' We can realise the unmanifest godhead only through the manifest divinity.

There is, however, no harm in the followers of Krsna regarding him as their only way, and the followers of Christ adhering to his feet with equal zeal. What is harmful, however, is running others down, which is a waste of time anyway. It is absurd, too, to say: "Only my mother is a woman capable of giving birth to human children, yours cannot be." We all have only one mother, but motherhood is not restricted to that woman - it is common to all women.

The manifest divinity is more easily accessible to the embodied being than the unmanifest transcendental being. In fact, that is the very purpose of manifestation or avatara: God symbolically descending to our level in order to accept, redeem and uplift us. When we learn not to cavil at these avatara, but to accept, adore and worship them, knowing their true divine nature, we shall have attained enlightenment and liberation.

It is equally important to remember that 'knowing their true nature' implies recognition of the essential divine nature of oneself and the urgent need to shake off the dust that covers it. Such recognition is an avatara, too!

The Fire Of Knowledge

IV:10 - Freed from attachment, fear and anger, absorbed in me, taking refuge in me, purified by the fire of knowledge, many have attained to my Being.

When we are thus convinced of the divine purpose behind this creation, viz., the establishment of righteousness and the destruction of evil, we give up vainly craving for the objects of the world and getting attached to them.

Desire and anger cease in us. When we assure ourselves of God's protection if we are good, then fear ceases. The good can never be harmed by anyone; and here, legends and history assure us that the truly good man blesses his oppressors for they compel him to seek refuge at the feet of God. Western psychology tells us that 'likes, dislikes and fear' are present even in a new-born baby. But these are absent in the yogi! There is a radical transmutation.

All this is possible only if we kindle the fire of knowledge within us and keep it forever alive. This fire dispels the darkness of ignorance and gives us the comfort of the warmth of divine assurance. It saves us from the pit of temptations, from the evil within ourselves, and promotes goodness in us; for we begin to realise that goodness is closer to God. This knowledge confers upon us the greatest boon of forbearance and fortitude to endure the fleabites of evil forces in the certain conviction that they cannot harm us, but on the contrary, they do keep us awake in God.

This knowledge thus liberates us from our own evil tendencies and reveals to us that even the good ones are but the proteges of God. True goodness and righteousness belong to him. We are immediately filled with wonderment and gratitude in which we let our little ego be absorbed in him. We attain to God's being. We return to the centre, source and goal of our being, the ground of our existence.

The knower of God becomes God; says the Upanishad: charcoal offered into fire becomes fire. This man-of-god is man only to our human vision - in truth he is one with God.

Lord Krsna's searchlight illuminates the inside of man! Religion gets a revolutionary meaning. Life glows with a divine purpose. Man's puny individuality receives a fatal blow, only to be resurrected in and as God. Step by step we are led into the heart of the reality where nothing but God exists and where even the visible universe is but the body of God.

The little ego asserts itself. It has its own petty desires and cravings, attachments and aversions, dogmas and doctrines. Krsna warns us: "These must go". That is the meaning of 'samnyasa' (renunciation).

We should practise true samnyasa without advertising it. It is not for others, but for our own sake. Advertisement might provoke some to antagonism and prompt others to hero-worship, thus the purpose will be defeated. Incidentally, the following is a wise rule if you value your peace of mind: never let anyone know the innermost secrets of your life, what you value most and wish to achieve. Or else you will be exposing your vulnerable points.

Krsna advocates gradual growth or evolution, not overnight transformation or revolution. You might be tempted to swear: "I will be totally selfless from this moment". Avoid that temptation.

Prayerfully hold the ideal in front of the mind's eye every day. If you take a vow you will only be provoking all the latent inner enemies (and external forces) which will compel you to break the vow the very next day. Have you not noticed that on the day you resolve to fast, you feel hungry earlier than usual? When the vow is broken you will waste further time and energy in useless remorse.

By God's Grace, we shall come out victorious, in due time!

Tolerance

IV:11 - In whatever way men approach me, even so do I reward them; my path do men tread in all ways, O Arjuna.

IV:12 - Those who long for success in action in this world sacrifice to the devata; success is quickly attained through action.

This could well have been the basis of the numerous 'spiritual healing' techniques evolved specially by the westerners. If one realises that God is good, perfect, full of light, life and love, then he experiences these qualities in him and around him; God himself comes to him as such. One who has no faith in an abiding truth or reality surrounds himself with darkness. He who regards God as a tyrant is terrified.

God has bestowed upon man intelligence which is but a spark of God's consciousness, and free-will which is particularisation of God's omnipotence; man can use them for his own uplift or downfall. He is free within wide boundaries.

Even in the 'religious' approach, the Hindu firmly believes that the countless viewpoints of God (which are the different religions) are all valid and will lead us to the same God. The ultimate experience, viz., God realising himself, is beyond the pale of the ego; but the highest spiritual experiences, too, may differ from man to man, as is revealed in the 'different' religions. This conviction fills us with tolerance and understanding, without loss of individuality.

Even they who seek material gains (or even spiritual perfection) resort only to God through the various divinities (powers of God's nature); and God responds to them via the same channel, as the fruits of those actions (success or failure, pain and pleasure and so on). We adore God alone in various ways. This knowledge frees us from fear, attachment, anger, intolerance and proselytism.

Caste

IV:13 - The fourfold caste has been created by me according to the differentiation of Guna and Karma; though I am the author thereof, know me as the non-doer and immutable.

IV:14 - Actions do not taint Me, nor have I a desire for the fruits of actions. He who knows me thus is not bound by actions.

Men, desiring worldly rewards, work in different fields. Their inherent and predominant quality or nature (guna) leads them along these paths of activity (karma). God as we noticed in the last two verses, 'goes' to them along those very paths. He provides them with the congenial atmosphere in which they can evolve with the help of their own guna and their own karma; the yoga of the Gita does not demand transplantation, but only transmutation. This congenial atmosphere is the caste system in its pure and uncorrupted form.

God, being the centre of all, is equidistant from all, whatever their caste and whatever be their duty or activity. God-oriented performance of one's own duty is the direct road to perfection. This path (the caste system) originates in his nature, but it should not be attributed to him (that is, it should not be regarded as the absolute!), because it is the individual's nature that determines or paves it, and as this nature undergoes transmutation, the path might vanish in the destination!

God is not bound by anything in this universe. God is not even bound by this notion of 'unboundability'; so he may incarnate himself and appear to be bound! He is beyond all concepts.

The second verse can also be used as a formula to meditate upon, in order to disentangle the soul from the mesh of our body and mind. The 'me', then, would refer to the soul, the witness consciousness, the true self which is not tainted by any action of the body and mind. This meditation will liberate us from bondage to karma.

Appropriate Action

IV:15 - Having known this, the ancient seekers after freedom also performed actions; therefore perform actions as did the ancients.

This is the doctrine of total freedom of the Bhagavad Gita. In the light of this doctrine, even 'bounden duty' is sublimated into joyous abandonment which is but a synonym of a free participation in the divine will. We seek not only freedom from external authority (and the consequent mental conditioning) but freedom from inner reaction to authority (which is an expression of vanity).

Glimpses of this freedom are seen in ourselves, during sleep and during deep meditation. The inner intelligence which had, during its unawakened states known as waking and dream, foolishly bound itself to the body and the mind, which are nothing more than the bricks and mortar of residence, realises upon awakening that pain and pleasure and so on, which it had to endure during those two states were the necessary sequel of its wrong identification of itself with its residence.

As in the human body, so also in the body of God called the universe. We are tiny cells in that body of God. His life pulsates in us as our immortal being. His power flows through us as will. His consciousness shines in us as intelligence. None of these is 'ours'. Yet, if we but joyously offer our little self to the care of the great body, then even as a tiny copper wire becomes charged with formidable electric current on account of its passive contact, we too, shall share his life, power and consciousness.

Not bound to anything in this world we shall still take part in all its activity as a witness, in choiceless awareness. Realising that both egoistical action and egoistical withdrawal are forms of the false identification of the soul of our soul with the body and mind, we shall surrender ourselves to God's will and live in this house of God, unaffected by its construction, alteration and demolition, freely moving in it and using it in accordance with the divine will, which is natural and appropriate action.

Righteous Action

IV:16 - What is action? What is inaction? As to this even the wise are confused. Therefore, I shall teach you about action. Knowing which you shall be liberated from Samsara.

IV:17 - The true nature of action should be known, also of unlawful action, and of inaction; hard to understand is the path of action.

People have asked themselves: "What should I do?" The self-arrogating ego has led them along the by-lanes of varied activities, often described as duties and scripturally ordained injunctions, and sometimes restrained them to a state of inaction on the assumption that all action is tainted with evil. Are actions good or evil in themselves, or are they to be judged by their results? If the latter, how is it possible for us to foresee the result? If the former, who is the judge to tell us which action is good and which evil and what are the criteria? These problems have worried even the great ones.

As a renowned saint of India declared: "The scriptures differ among themselves and even the sages differ among themselves. Truly, the secret of righteousness is hidden from mortal gaze. That path which the holy ones have trodden should be followed." The Mahabharata illustrates this riddle. The righteous Yudhisthira is often faced with this fundamental problem: "What is right action?" On top of all this, lord Krsna himself suggests what appears, on the surface, to be decidedly unrighteous!

Yet, an action may be unrighteous from the standpoint of human law and righteous according to the divine law. The world has only too often witnessed diabolical rulers impose their will on their subjects with the sanctity and 'cover' of the divine law! Modern political and religious institutions have taught us that even man's conscience can be so coloured as to regard man-made law with greater veneration than divine law which is deliberately obscured from his vision. What is right?

Atonement

IV:18 - He who seeth inaction in action and action in inaction, he is wise among men; he is intelligent, although engaged in all sorts of activities.

The puzzle can be solved only by 'seeing' the whole universe as the one body of God. Indwelling this universe is the cosmic consciousness which is the eternal witness since it is uninvolved (like space) in whatever takes place in it. In God's body the countless cells vibrate constantly; these cells are the different worlds (and the beings in them). When they vibrate in accordance with the divine law which is the operative part of God's divine nature, they are said to be good and to do good, and to engage themselves in right action. This atonement, however, is spontaneous and not rationalised or willed.

When the cells, on account of the inherent free-will, fall out of alignment with the divine will, the latter, in order to protect the total organism from injury, allows the rebellious cell to disintegrate by its own power - even as a palm tree defying a storm is felled, whereas a blade of grass which bows to the storm is saved; and, even as a healthy cell in our body is protected and a cell which will not co-operate with the life-force is eliminated. Vicious actions disrupt the social structure, which is the body of God. When such disruption has already taken place, the divine will employs other cells to restore harmony by quelling the rebellion - resulting in activity which partakes of the nature of the rebellious cells themselves. This explains lord Krsna's mysterious ways.

On such occasion, if our atonement to the divine will is blind and impulsive, we might at times find ourselves on the horns of a dilemma. But if our atonement is based on the right understanding that we who seem to be ever active do nothing and that it is the intangible divine will which is ever active, then we realise the unity of our own little intelligence with his, our finite will with his infinite will and our whole being with his. The 'I' dissolves in the all, the doer of all actions.

The impulsive man's instinctual action and the rationalist's selfish, clever and calculated action are in truth inaction: both of them are reactions, the former to external stimuli and the latter to circumstances. A wise man observes himself and the world around him, and this self-awareness acts spontaneously and non-volitionally. Hence true action is 'inaction'. Self-awareness is total action.

Fragmentation And Holiness

IV:19 - He whose undertakings are all devoid of desires, and whose actions have been burnt by the fire of knowledge, the wise call him a sage.

IV:20 - Abandoning all attachment to the results of his activities, ever satisfied and independent, he performs no fruitive action, although engaged in all kinds of undertakings.

The ever-vibrant universe is rooted in the supremely quiescent Brahman (absolute reality) who is supreme peace itself. The ever active body is indwelt by the self which is the peace that passeth understanding. Beneath the turbulent surface, the ocean itself is calm. Fragmentation is conflict, wholeness (holiness) is peace.

Activity is the nature of form, quiescence is the nature of the spirit. Ignorant superimposition of the characteristics of the form on the spirit is the root-cause of endless suffering. He who regards the quiescent spirit as the doer of actions paradoxically endeavours to restrain the form (body and mind) from their natural activity! Such a man is full of tensions. He thinks he knows what to do and what not to do; he is full of desires and schemes. Desires and schemes are the generators of tension. He does not know what he is. Only self-knowledge removes selfishness. Hence Gurudev Sivananda emphasised: "Be good, do good", in that order.

The cell that is ignorant of the body entertains selfish desires and has its own private schemes. When the fire of the knowledge that we are all cells in the body of God burns this ignorance, then contentment born of total self-surrender to the will of God arises. Selfishness, egoism and their retinue of evil disappear, even as the ghosts of the dreamer's dream vanish on his waking.

A man who is awake in this knowledge is not idle, he is a true channel for the flow of God's will. The actions of such a man are movements in cosmic consciousness, without cause, without goal, without dependency, and without the idea 'I do this'.

Perfect Thinking

IV:21 - Without hope and with the mind and the self controlled, having abandoned all greed, doing mere bodily action, he incurs no sin.

IV:22 - Content with what comes to him without effort, free from the pairs of opposites, free from envy, even-minded in success and failure, though acting, he is not bound.

Desire and its consequent 'planned activity', are the generators of evil; when they happen to be in accordance with divine will they confirm the ego in its self-arrogating doership of actions; when they are not and so there is failure, they cause tension which intensifies the soul's ignorance.

The wise man's mind, too, may entertain hope. If he is a perfected yogi, it will invariably be the reflection of the divine will. If he is an earnest seeker, he will hope for success, but be prepared for the opposite! Thus he goes beyond both. This is not merely 'positive thinking', but 'perfect thinking'. We strive, for that is our birthright and the expression of divine nature in us, too. This effort may even be backed by 'positive thinking' and wishing for the best. But it is free from egoistic projection of self-will, for we are prepared for what at the moment appears to be the worst (in the knowledge that God's will is ever the best). This fusion of positive and negative is perfect thinking which transcends both.

Pain and pleasure, success and failure, are the egoistic interpretation of the divine will when the egoistic interpretation of the divine will when the selfish man breaks life into fragments or foolishly imagines that the coin of life has only one - the pleasant, successful side! Corners and patches of a painting appear ugly or beautiful, dark or bright; but when the whole painting is seen, they coalesce into a masterpiece of portraiture.

The yogi is not a gloomy pessimist. He hopes for the best, but accepts whatever happens as the best. In him the sins of ignorance, desire and private hope, are absent.

God's Dream

IV:23 - To one who is devoid of attachment, who is liberated, whose mind is established in knowledge, who works for the sake of sacrifice, the whole action is dissolved.

IV:24 - Brahman is the oblation; Brahman is the melted butter; by Brahman is the oblation poured into the fire of Brahman; Brahman verily shall be reached by him who always sees Brahman in action.

The sage who is established in wisdom regards his whole life itself as a sacrifice. Yajna (sacrifice) is Visnu (God) - God sacrificed his unity, as it were, in the fire of diversity, creating infinite beings and imposing on himself the duty of preserving and redeeming them.

Nothing can be 'outside' the infinite God. Nothing can be apart from his being. This creation, too, is within him. All the activity that is experienced takes place within him. The only suitable analogy is the dream in which the dreamer creates space, time and material diversity within himself and views the phenomenon as if he were apart from the other dream-objects, which derive their power, intelligence and individuality from the dreamer himself. Hence, the world is often spoken of as God's dream.

This knowledge should be sustained even in our waking state of consciousness. God is in all. God is the all. God is the all-in-all. The symbol of the Indian ritual of yajna or havan can be extended to include all actions. The performer of the action, the instruments used, the act itself and the one to whom it is directed - all are God only.

God or the reality is not a static existence but a process, beginningless and endless. Thus, there is nothing unsacred in the universe. To live in this spirit is brahma-karma-samadhi or the egoless participation in the will of God, described in verse twenty-one as 'doing mere bodily action' without the least isolation from the totality. The wise man sees that the bodily functions are already and always will be independent of the ego!

Gradual Evolution And Sublimation

IV:25 - Some yogis perform sacrifice to the gods, while others offer the Self as sacrifice in the fire of Brahman alone.

The highest wisdom is not attained overnight. Man's consciousness is shadowed by ignorance and superstition, pride and prejudice, false notions and ideologies. It is not given to all to uproot this mighty tree of ignorance with a single axe-stroke of supreme wisdom. The path of the majority lies through the gradual evolution and sublimation. This sounds easy; it is not. One has to be eternally vigilant if one is not to slide back or to run round in circles. Eternal vigilance is not different from instant enlightenment!

There are some yogi who 'sacrifice' to the gods. They engage themselves in ritualistic worship. When the ritual is performed with right understanding (that the whole universe is God's self-sacrifice), it transforms one's whole life into divine life. The yogi's vision expands to include in his concept of God, his parents, teachers and guests. The ritual widens into charity. The heart is gradually purified, eventually to let the light of God shine unobstructed by the distortion of the ego.

There are others who do not worship the gods, but perform religious rites, for their own sake. Though these rites promise heaven to the performer, he is encouraged to cut out this desire, in order that his action may lead him to the supreme. Hence even the oblations are followed by the formula 'na mama' - 'not mine' or 'not for me'. When these sacrifices purify one's heart the light of God reveals itself.

Eventually, this yogi offers sacrifice itself as an oblation into the fire of Brahman, the absolute. All activities which were superimposed on Brahman, in ignorance, are offered in the knowledge of the transcendental reality which is the eternal witness of the dynamism of its nature.

Rituals For Meditation

IV:26 - Some again offer hearing and other senses as sacrifice in the fire of restraint; others offer sound and various objects of the senses as sacrifice in the fire of the senses.

IV:27 - Others sacrifice all the functions of the senses, and those of the vital energy or Prana, in the fire of the Yoga of self-restraint, kindled by knowledge.

These are not external but internal 'rituals'. External rituals are props for an internal process of meditation. To the vast majority of people they are necessary. There are a few spiritual heroes, however, who can dispense with them and enter the inner realm.

1. First kindle the fire of self-restraint within. Into that burning desire for achieving perfect restraint, offer the cravings and longings of the senses as and when they arise. The symbolism of the fire-worship will greatly help.
2. In the case of such activity and even such righteous enjoyments as are inevitable to the living of life, visualise the senses themselves as the sacrificial fire. Offer the objects of enjoyment into this fire; this is a very effective way of getting rid of 'likes and dislikes' which are the result of over-rating the objects of the world. The objects are like inert firewood, fuel for the senses which are the fire to be sustained so long as it is necessary for the enlightenment of the soul.
3. In a higher kind of meditation, the fire is samnyasa (combined practice of concentration, meditation and samadhi) and the oblation is the action (present and past) of all the senses and even the vital force.

Once the oblation is offered into the fire it becomes one with the fire which alone shines. Thus, when the senses and the vital force are offered into the fire of atma-samnyasa, the self alone shines, after absorbing the oblations (senses and vital force) into itself.

Spirit Of Sacrifice

IV:28 - Some offer wealth, austerity, Yoga as sacrifice; while the ascetics of self-restraint and rigid vows offer study of scriptures and knowledge as sacrifice.

IV:29 - Others offer as sacrifice the outgoing breath in the incoming, and the incoming in the outgoing, restraining the courses of the outgoing and the incoming breaths, absorbed in the restraint of the breath.

Gradually, the spirit of yajna or sacrifice should widen to include all of one's activities, sacred and secular.

In all these the symbolism of 'sacred oblation', should be well understood and rightly applied.

1. In charity, the receiver is the fire and the gift is the oblation.

The wise man expects not even a word of thanks; the act is complete in itself.

2. In austerity, the fire is renunciation and self-denial, arid desires and cravings are the oblation.

The fire blazes more brightly with each oblation.

3. In yoga, the inner self is the fire and the mental modifications are the oblations.

The fire purifies the latter, transforms them into pure thoughts (sat samkalpa).

4. Svadhyaya or self-study of scriptures: desire for self-knowledge is the fire which is augmented with successive oblations of study of scriptures.

5. Jnana-yajna or the wisdom-sacrifice: seekers after truth are the fire and knowledge itself is the oblation.

The former are enlightened.

6. In pranayama, the solar (positive, prana) force is offered in (united with) the lunar (negative, apana) force; and the negative is poured into the positive at the solar plexus.

The fire thus generated, rouses the latent Kundalini Shakti, whose union with Siva at the crown of the head is enlightenment.

Spirit Of Sacrifice

IV:30 - Others who regulate their diet offer life-breaths in life-breaths. All these are knowers of sacrifice, whose sins are destroyed by sacrifice.

IV:31 - Those who 'eat' the remnants of the sacrifice, which are like nectar, go to the eternal Brahman. This world is not for the man who does not perform sacrifice; how then can he have the other, O Arjuna?

Lastly, there are those who are abstemious in their diet. They eat merely to keep body and soul together. When the life-force in them clamours for more, they turn it upon itself (offering, as it were, the life-force itself as the oblation into it).

The spirit of sacrifice destroys sin. All these practices are neither good nor bad in themselves. For example, austerity (tapas or fire) can either lead to the destruction of the sinful nature or increase one's vanity - depending on the inner spirit. The spirit of yajna 'detaches' the self from the activity itself, thus allowing the latter to wipe the mirror clean so that in it the ever-pure self is instantly reflected in all its glory. Failure to understand and adopt this symbolism will often result in our wiping the mirror with the face, thus transferring the evil tendency from the mirror (the body and mind) to the skin of the face (the ego). The spirit of sacrifice also warns us not to expect anything in return; only the ashes of purity or sattva will remain after the sacrifice. The sacred ashes are so dear to lord Siva (the divine auspiciousness itself) who naturally bestows upon us all that is good.

This residue of the sacrifice is nectar which confers immortality on us. We must let it nourish our life in every way. (It also refers to the remnants of charity, specially of food, which become holy and soul-purifying.)

He who is devoid of the spirit of sacrifice - the selfish man given wholly to sense-indulgence - is a burden on earth.

The Flavor Of Life

IV:32 - Thus, manifold sacrifices are spread out before Brahman. Know then all as born of action and thus knowing, thou shalt be liberated.

IV:33 - Superior is wisdom-sacrifice to the sacrifice with objects. All actions in their entirety, O Arjuna, culminate in knowledge.

The sacrifices given here in the Gita are only examples. They indicate the essence of the art of life, the spirit of sacrifice or unselfishness. It is not an ideal known as unselfishness, but the direct realisation that there is no self independent of the totality. With this shall men flavour all the actions of this life. The Creator intended that this spirit should govern all activities of all beings here. Whereas the so-called 'lower' orders of creation (the plants, and the animals to a great extent) instinctively live in this spirit, man, instead of consciously participating in God's will which this spirit inculcates, dares to flout it and arrogate the action to himself. He who knows that all sacrifices involve action and all actions should be performed as sacrifice, is liberated - from ignorance and egoism, sin and suffering.

Of the sacrifices described in this chapter and of the many more alluded to, the wisdom-sacrifice is the best. All other gifts and all other activities are transitory in their effect. Life itself is short, and even the most spectacular action is reduced to a few lines in a book of history and one more tendency in the soul - if it is not accompanied by right knowledge. Knowledge, on the other hand, liberates the soul from bondage to samsara or the ever-revolving wheel of birth and death. Do not forget that the giver of knowledge is a devotee who considers the recipient as his lord!

Whereas actions are inevitable, knowledge is the goal. The inevitable actions should be performed in the spirit of sacrifice; but knowledge should be acquired and imparted at every turn. For self-knowledge is the goal of actions themselves.

Prapatti

IV:34 - Know that knowledge by prostration, by question and by service; the wise who have realised the truth will instruct thee in it.

IV:35 - Knowing that, thou shalt not again get deluded like this, O Arjuna; and by that thou shalt see all beings in thy self and also in me.

This knowledge which is the goal as well as the basis of all actions, the knowledge of the spirit of sacrifice, has to be acquired from the 'knowers of truth', but they wait till the seeker approaches them in the attitude of discipleship.

Prostration is only a symbol of surrender - prapatti. This Sanskrit word has a wonderful import. The student realises in his heart that he is sunk in grief for lack of knowledge, that he cannot obtain it on his own (from books etc.), and that the guru alone can guide him to it. Before this three-fold fact is immediately and directly 'seen', and one's own vain 'knowledge' firmly rejected all of which enables true humility to arise in one's heart - no knowledge is of any practical use. Even if some knowledge is acquired, it only acts as an intellectual burden, sinking man a little lower into the mire of vanity. But once the right attitude is acquired, there is deep and genuine yearning at heart and we can learn from anything and anybody. Dattatreya had twenty four guru.

The jnani or the guru is like a bridge. The bridge is the 'other shore's' helping hand reaching out to this. The guru is God's helping hand reaching out to the seeker. The seeker must surrender his vanity to the guru and prove his devotion by whole-souled service. The guru will then impart the highest knowledge to the disciple, understanding, grasping and assimilating which, the latter will experience cosmic consciousness. Incorrect understanding of any of the factors involved will lead to a dreadful caricature of the beautiful guru-disciple relationship.

Intuitional Knowledge

IV:36 - Even if thou art the most sinful of all sinners, yet thou shalt verily cross all sins by the raft of knowledge.

IV:37 - As the blazing fire reduces fuel to ashes, O Arjuna, so does the fire of knowledge reduce all actions to ashes.

This jnana or intuitional knowledge or wisdom is fire. It burns. It purifies. It illumines. It burns all the impurities within the human heart. It purifies all that it touches. It illumines the truth. The self, hidden in the heart of man by the veil of ignorance with its heavy encrustation of sinful deeds birth after birth, is the truth. It is the veil that is affected by sin. The self - like space - is unaffected by whatever happens; it is unlimited and ever pure.

When the fire of knowledge is kindled in the human heart by the sage-guru, this fire reduces the evil - (which is veil misspelt) - to ashes. The heavy encrustation of sin only makes the fire grow more fierce! The thickness of this encrustation is immaterial; fire is unaltered by what it burns, and fire burns all! Quantity is not the criterion here; a spark can reduce a whole forest to ashes.

Unlike most forest fires, but like the fire that catches a veil, this fire of knowledge destroys the very roots, the entire veil of sinfulness. With ignorance is burnt desire along with its ramifications as sinful tendencies. The fruits of past actions (sancita karma) are burnt too, for they were themselves part of the dream from which the wise man has been awakened. The future actions (agami karma) are egoless and desireless and so bear no fruit. But 'sarva karmini' is plural, not dual. Even prarabdha karma (the effect of past actions which have begun to fructify) which governs this incarnation, is 'cheated' by the wise man who does not identify the self with the body and the mind. (Parabdha karma can afflict only the body and the mind.) Thus freed from karma and ignorance, even the most sinful man shines as a sage in the light of knowledge of the self. Neither the veil of ignorance, nor the evil action, nor to live in sin and suffering (note the three words in bold type have the same letters) is based on truth. They are born of non-understanding and die on understanding.

The Purpose Of Creation

IV:38 - Verily, there is no purifier in this world like knowledge. He who is perfected in yoga finds it in the self in time.

IV:39 - The man who is full of faith, who is devoted to it, and who has subdued the senses obtains knowledge. And, having obtained the knowledge, he goes at once to the supreme peace.

No-one is barred from knowledge of God or self-realisation. No-one is eternally damned here. All beings will gradually evolve into perfection. In due time, every living being (even a worm which you may tread on!) will attain perfection in yoga and find knowledge in the self. That is the purpose of creation; the world exists to provide schooling for the individual so that it may attain perfection. Perfection is the direct experience that imperfection (self-limitation, sin and sorrow) is but a dream. Self-realisation is the truth; self is ever real!

There are some who say: "We shall get it in due time - why bother?" They fail to see that only when the time has come does one bother. The pregnant woman bides her time. It is only when the time arrives that she bothers! Not that she bothers because she wants to. The seeker cannot help it; his time has come. For the others, too, the time will come, for all are evolving towards perfection.

How can we recognise whose time has arrived? By faith. The seeker who is at the threshold of knowledge is full of faith. This faith is totally different from the faith (blind, biased belief) that breeds conflict. This faith is born of a veiled vision of truth. In the ignorant the truth is veiled; in the faithful truth shines through the veil. This faith compels him to be devoted to that, the self or God, with his body, mind, heart and whole being. This whole-souled devotion is accompanied by its natural corollary - he is self-controlled and his mind and senses do not run riot. All this burns the veil and reveals knowledge.

This knowledge quickly leads the seeker to the supreme peace or Brahman.

Doubt Is A Great Destroyer

IV:40 - The ignorant, the faithless, the doubting self goes to destruction; there is neither this world nor the other, nor happiness for the doubting.

IV:41 - He who has renounced actions by yoga, whose doubts are rent asunder by knowledge and who is self-possessed - actions do not bind him, O Arjuna.

IV:42 - Therefore, with the sword of the knowledge cut asunder the doubt of the self born of ignorance residing in thy heart and take refuge in yoga. Arise, O Arjuna.

He whose time has not yet come is known by his faithlessness. He goes to 'destruction', not total annihilation, but destruction of this precious opportunity granted by the Lord. This human birth is the door to liberation. He who utilises it for this great purpose is saved; he who does not, slams the door in his own face. He destroys, as it were, the raft that could have taken him across the ocean of samsara.

Doubt is a great destroyer. We are commanded by the Lord to question our preceptors. Towards the conclusion of the Gita, Krsna further commands Arjuna to reflect over what he had told him. We should question the guru and then reflect over what he tells us; but with faith, not with a doubting intellect! Questioning and doubting are two very different mental actions. Questioning is a necessary step to the acquisition of knowledge; doubting is refusal to listen, refusal to think, refusal to look within, refusal to understand. Under cover of doubt, the ego thrives - the ego manages not to doubt itself. The man whose heart is full of doubts has no peace, no happiness even in this world; he does nothing good which could earn him a better world hereafter. What a loss!

Doubt must be slain by knowledge. The seeker must quickly begin the practice of 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 fourth chapter entitled: Karma Jnana Sanyasa Yoga - The Yoga of Wisdom.