REFLECTIONS ON GIITA

Printed with the kind Financial assistance of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams under the "Aid to Authors" Scheme

Dr. B. NARASIMHAM
REFLECTIONS ON GIITA
First Impression  1,000 Copies
June, 1996

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PRICE : Rs. 40

For Copies :

BRAHMANDAM NARASIMHAM
18-1-504/20
Bhavani Nagar
TIRUPATI - 517 501.

Printed at :
Omega Offset Printers,
61, Bazaar Street, TIRUPATI - 517 501
Ph : 23372
Acknowledgements

Some time ago, I submitted a copy of my book ‘Gita Darpanam’ (Telugu) to Sri Sri Sri Vijayendra Saraswati of Kanchi Kamakoti Pitham. His Holiness suggested to me that I should attempt to present the message of Gita in English in a manner that would appeal to the modern educated youth. That was the inspiration to write this book. I am in deep gratitude to His Holiness for the inspiration.

About the same time, my friends, the ASPEE brothers, Shri Sharad L Patel and Shri Kiran L Patel of the American Spring and Pressing Works, Bombay, have also suggested to me to write a simple exposition of the guidance available in Gita to the common man for a good living. I am deeply indebted to them for the impetus they gave to my long cherished desire to delve deep into some of the erudite commentaries on Gita as a student of science to verify the soundness of my own reflections on the concepts in the great book.

As the manuscript was getting ready, my esteemed friend, eminent scientist and thinker, Professor A C Pandya, formerly the Director of the Central Institute of Agricultural Engineering, had helped me by his comments, queries, clarifications sought and critical discussions that followed, of the propositions set out in my manuscript. I am thankful to him for the first reader responses he provided to me. Many more friends and scholars had gone through the manuscript.
members of the Balaji Satsang, Tirupati, to whom I delivered lectures based on this book, advised me to get it printed.

I sent a copy of the manuscript to Sri Swamy Aatmavid-ananda of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashram for opinion and a brief foreward. I am highly thankful to the Swamiji who, out of his love for me, took time off his busy work to go through the book and write the foreword.

I shall be grateful to readers who would care to write to me at least one comment, a doubt, a query, a clarification, a criticism or a suggestion for the improvement of the book so that, in course of time, it will embody the collective guidance of the present generation to the next generation in a language and terminology easily understood by them.

B. Narasimham
FOREWORD

The essence of all the scriptures of the world is for the manifestation of the potential divinity in man for achieving the ultimate happiness. Whatever may be our occupation or pursuit in life, this manifestation of divinity is to be attained in this very life. That is the goal supreme. Bhagavad Gita as a part and parcel of the great epic Mahabharata has brought out this aspect by delivering the message right in the midst of intense action, that is, a battlefield where troops are poised for action.

Bhagavad Gita conveys the essence of the Upanishadic teachings in a lucid manner through the dialogue between Sarathi Sri Krishna and the disciple Arjuna in a short span of about 700 slokas. Down the ages it has been treated and interpreted probably by the largest number of thinkers and commentators for any classical text, both ancient or modern. And each interpreter has found basis for his own understanding or philosophical interpretation in this great poem.

The present book 'Reflections on the Gita' by Dr.B. Narasimham is a sort of a guide for understanding of the great scripture for more practical utilisation of the teachings which is inherent in it. Thus it is not a commentary aiming to postulate a theory or in support of a philosophy. The present book has been divided broadly into three sections, first the basic concepts in the Gita, next the virtues enunciated and understanding of their necessity and lastly the paths that lead to the Supreme Being.
Dr. Narasimham being basically an Agricultural Scientist has exhibited that his brilliancy is not limited to that particular field of study only. His satirical writings give indication of his wit and wisdom in understanding of the Society and its ways. The 'reflections' bring out his deep philosophical insight. At the same time his scientific grounding has brought forth some interesting examples and interpretations from modern science. The detailed discussions on the Virtues listed in the 'Reflections' helps the reader to acquire an insight into the practical application of these virtues in his work-a-day life.

Thus 'Reflections on the Gita' is a valuable addition to the fund of literature on this important subject from a new angle.

Ranchi.
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AUTHOR'S NOTE

I have planned the book in three parts. The first part deals with the basic concepts on which the entire teaching is based. The second part deals with the virtues which have to be cultivated by any person aspiring for spiritual advancement. The third part deals with the main path laid down by Giita for attaining the spiritual goal.

In a book intended to serve as a supplement to Giita, use of some technical words in Samskrit is inevitable. Familiarity with the terms will be helpful when you wish to read the original itself to have your own understanding of the great book.

For the same purpose, some important verses are presented in relevant contexts. They are given in the Devanagari script. For the benefit of those who are not familiar with Devanagari, the verses are also transliterated in English script. While doing so, sandhi (joining of words) is broken so that each word can be recognised easily.

For each verse cited, the chapter numbers in Roman figures and verse numbers in Arabic numerals are given to facilitate easy reference with the original text. English translation of the verses is also given using, in general, the terms used by Radhakrishnan.

The English alphabet is inadequate to represent all the sounds of Samskrt. Earlier authors from MaxMuller to Radhakrishnan adopted superscripts and subscripts to indicate the pronunciation. Those signs cannot
be typed on ordinary type writers. Therefore, a simple stroke(‘) has been used in this book for the same purpose.

The scheme is as follows:

अ = a आ = aa ई = i ए = ii ठ = u
ऋ = uu ए = e ऐ = ai ओ = o अं = am
अः = ah ऋ = ri घ = c छ = ch ट = t
ठ = th’ ड = d’ ढ = dh’ ज = n’ त = tथ = th
द = d ध = dh फ = ph च = v ष = s’ छ =
sh झ = s ठ = ng थ = nj ज़ = jn

This is to guard against mispronunciation. The letters represent their respective sounds always and in all words.

The masculine pronoun of third person, 'he' has been used throughout. It should be taken to include 'she' also. The Supreme Being or even the jiiva has no sex. Sex is purely of the body. So the cumbersome method of writing 'he or she' 'his or her' 'him or her' 'he/she' etc have been avoided. They are unnecessary in a book that deals with the sexless aatma.

B. Narasimham
PREFACE

Bhagavad Gita is one of the most popular books of the world. Though the book was written some five thousand years ago, the message is relevant even today. The philosophical terms used in the text have been imbibed into all Indian Languages. Therefore, they sound familiar to us. Yet their meaning is not clear to many. The different schools of philosophy have placed their own interpretations on the text. Above them all, we have modern scientific community which is critical of some propositions set forth in the great book. This is partly due to the fact that the book is set in the back drop of the truths, beliefs and knowledge of those old bygone days. Some of the facts have scientific parallels but not yet verifiable by science. Science is still a developing knowledge. Men trained in science are hesitant to accept some concepts with the finality with which they are set forth in the ancient book.

Like science, spirituality is a product of the same human brain. Spiritual propositions also have changed from time to time. There are different schools of thought with widely different outlook. All of them are equally respected because the exponents of each of the schools were great learned men who were honest seekers of truth. Gita is inclined towards the Saankhya school which has the closest resemblance to modern scientific method in its approach. In fact, science can be considered an extension of the Saankhya method of search with reason and logic, devoid of mysticism or dictatorial doctrines.
Science, however, has so far confined its attention to physical phenomena of nature. It has only recently started paying attention to the mind. Emotions and feelings which constitute the major factors affecting peace and happiness of humanity are not yet the targets of science. As a result, today, there is an unbalanced development of the human mind; sharp intellect, but poor understanding of good and bad. No wonder, today, the world is a haven of crime and cruelty. In fact, by totally neglecting feelings, it would seem that science is promoting them.

Spiritual endeavour is primarily with the distant goal of emancipation of the soul. But it has nearer social benefits of great immediate value. Spiritual knowledge implants a self appointed judge in our very mind which always shows the right path. Following that path in our dealings with the people around us, we raise them to a higher level. Thereby, more harmony cements man and man. The spiritual man is not only happy with himself but also makes those who come in contact with him happy. Science gives us knowledge and physical comfort but not necessarily happiness. Spirituality, on the other hand, can give happiness even to the man in the hut. A happy mind is more valuable to man than a journey to the moon. Our ancestors, therefore, laid more emphasis on spirituality than on material science.

With the advancement of science, especially in the spheres of the microcosm and the macrocosm, many scientists are getting interested in Giita and the Upanishads. Despite the barriers of time and language, many eminent scientists have made references to the ideas in Giita and the Upanishads.

All the great thinkers focussed their attention largely on the eternal truth of this creation and its
relationship with the transcendent human mind. To the man of the every day world, who has little time or equipment to meditate on such deep matters, it seems to be of academic interest. He would like to have easy and ready made prescriptions to resolve the little dilemmas that precede his numerous decisions and actions. In other words, he wants a practical and pragmatic application of spiritual knowledge to guide him in his worldly actions. That will help him to carry on with confidence and faith in the rightness of his actions.

We have plenty of such moral guides in our literature. The verses of Bhartrihari, the abhangs of Tukaram, the songs of Kabir and a host of books in regional languages by great men have all attempted such simple thumb rules of behaviour.

Unfortunately, we cannot determine in absolute terms, what is right and what is not. It depends on the general social acceptance of the time. Naturally, scholars of our time would like to find sanctions in the scriptures for our changed values. This results in new interpretations. More than a millenium ago, S'ankaraacaarya, the celebrated genius, gave a brilliant commentary on Giita against the background of the vast spiritual literature available in his time. Raamaanuja, an equally brilliant sage of the 11th century gave his own commentary based on his slightly different concept of man and God. This was followed by many more commentators in our time like Aurobindo, Tilak, Vinoba, Gandhi and Radhakrishnan, to name only a few. Each commentary has its own colour, flavour and purpose.

Science and social change have made it imperative to view the age old teachings in a new light. And Giita is not a dictatorial book. It does not encourage blind obedience to rules. It helps us to reason out for ourselves.
and take our own decisions.

This little book attempts to present the teachings of Giita in a manner that can be appreciated by the people of the present society - the scientists, businessmen, artisans, in fact, men and women of all walks of life. It helps them lead a life of satisfaction that what they do is in consonance with the great teachings of the past. That would give them a peaceful, purposeful and harmonious life free of tension.

B.N.
BASIC CONCEPTS

The first men in the world were like children. Everything happening around them was a mystery for them. They did not know why some things happened. So they considered every phenomenon as the work of a form of God. They had a god for the sun; a god for the rain; a god for the fire and so on. If there was no rain, they thought that the rain god was angry. If there was a fire, the fire god was angry. If there was a storm, the wind god was angry. They thought that they would be safe if they could please the gods by praising them or making offerings to them. All such accumulated practices passed down from generation to generation. Whether such knowledge is true or born out of ignorance is a matter of dispute between those who believe in them and those who do not. Being a matter of faith, the dispute may never be settled. Meanwhile, the believers got on well with their faith. It satisfied their innermost urges and feelings. It gave them right conduct, a happy social life, peace and happiness. On the other hand, the non-believers reaped no particular benefits by their lack of faith.

However, in course of time, many great thinkers were born. They tried to get at the 'truth' of this universe. They contemplated on what is man, what is life and what is the goal of man. They also delved deep into human nature and human mind. Why are there so many kinds of persons? - some kind, some cruel; some tolerant and some violent; some happy to give and some greedy to grab; and so on? They saw misery around them. They tried to know why misery strikes man and how he can be free from it. In short, they were in quest of happiness for all mankind.
They attempted to get at the truth by the method of reason and debate, which is similar to that adopted by modern scientists. This philosophical knowledge was called *vedaanta* as distinct from the earlier *vedik* knowledge. This knowledge led to the postulation of the all pervading Supreme Being. The rationale behind this postulation is enshrined in the *Upnishads* and *Dars'anahs*. The *Upnishads* are mostly in the form of question-answer sessions between the disciple and the teacher. This knowledge combines not only the highest knowledge possible to get by man's reasoning ability but also what can only be attained by communion with the consciousness deep within us by rigorous training of the mind. The great sages devoted their whole lives to pursue this knowledge — not for any selfish objective nor to misguide future generations, but for its own sake and for the sake of truth. Therefore, it is accepted with faith and reverence.

A summary of this knowledge was given by Bhagavaan S'rii Krishn'a to all mankind in the form of Bhagavad Giita. Arjuna was just an apparent kindler. There is a famous verse with a grand metaphor:

सवेदिनिषदो गावो दोक्ष्ता गोपालनदनः
पार्थों वत्स स्नाधी भोक्ता दुरगं योतामृतं महात्

*arva upanishadah gaavah; dogdhaa
gopalanandananah; paarthah vatsah sudhiih
bhokta; dugdham giitamritam mohat.*

"All Upanishads are cows. S'rii Krishn'a is the *milk* man. Arjuna is the calf. The wiseman is the *consumer*. The nectar of Giita is the milk."

S'rii Krishn'a was no dictating prophet. After explaining the upanishadic knowledge to Arjuna, he finally says,
"Reflect on this fully and then do as you choose."

It is thus clear that the precepts in the Gītā are the essence of the teachings of the Upanishads propounded by various sages. We are advised to reflect on them carefully and take our own decisions.

The spiritual concepts of the Upanishads form the basis for the rules of conduct recommended for the common people. Secular and religious codes were intimately woven together into a culture.

Before we proceed to study the message of Gītā, we should first understand the basic concepts on which it is based.

**NATURE (PRAKRITI)**

Let us start with understanding our body and mind which are the instruments for our dealings with the world. Our body consists of various organs. The organs are made up of tissues like the bones, muscles, nerves etc. Every tissue is made up of cells. Every cell has a nucleus containing two sets of chromosomes, 23 pairs in all. The chromosomes carry the DNA spirals of genes. The genes control the chemical reactions in the cell. The cell contains a large variety of substances. The substances are made of molecules and molecules are made up of atoms of various elements.

The body is thus made up of different combinations of atoms of a few elements. How do these elements get into the body? They get in as constituents of the food, water and air which we take in. The substances which we take in are broken up into simpler molecules or atoms,
recombined into substances that the body needs. The superfluous ones are again sent out into the world. These atoms getting in and out of the body are the same as those existing in everything else in the universe. The atoms of the world enter, circulate in the body and get back into the wide world. It is these atoms of passage that give form to the body.

A very nice model is given to understand clearly that we are just part of nature and no more. If we observe a rapidly flowing rivulet, we find a number of whirl pools or eddies. Water continuously enters the eddy, takes a turn or two and gets out into the general flow. There is nothing specifically making up the body of the eddy except the passing water. Eddy is only a particular phase of the water around. The form stays for a while and disappears in the water. Our body is like that eddy. It is a phase of nature with a temporary existence during which nature flows in and out of the body continuously for some time. Then the body disappears to become indistinguishable from nature again. Swaami Vivekaananda put it more poetically when he said, "Science has proved to me that physical individuality is a delusion. My body is really one little changing body in an unbroken ocean of matter."

Sage Kan'aada was probably the earliest to recognise that matter is made up of atoms which combine in pairs, threes or more numbers to produce molecules of different things with different properties. Modern science confirms this. However, today scientists are identifying subatomic particles which they think are the building blocks of nature.

For some time, matter and energy were supposed to be separate entities. But now they are perceived as two phases of existence of the same thing. All activity in nature is the result of interaction of matter and energy.

Space (aakaas') gives form to things. Therefore it
was considered as an ingredient of nature. Space not occupied by visible matter was supposed to be a vast emptiness or vacuum. But it is pervaded by 'fields' of forces. Energy from stars flows through space unnoticed until it strikes against matter. Some postulate that it is filled with antimatter. Space is now known to have a profound role in the processes of nature.

Kan'aada suggested that time (kaala) also was a constituent of nature. But its significance was not recognised by the sages of his time or by modern scientists. But when we consider the radio-active elements, we see that Kan'aada has a point there. They give out radiations at regular intervals as a result of which their atoms change into those of another element 'in course of time'. Einstein proposed that time is the fourth dimension of space. (space has the other three dimensions, viz., length, breadth and height). Time and space are now considered as one entity, the space-time continuum. 

Matter -energy and space-time seem to constitute nature. In ancient times, both in the east and the west, five elements were considered the basic constituents of nature, namely, earth, water, air, energy and space. Indeed in a gross sense, they are. Some texts have gone to the extent of working out the proportions in which they are compounded to form various objects. It is futile to expect word to word correspondence between ancient and modern concepts. But both are agreed on one thing, that all perceivable objects in the universe are made up of the same elements of nature.

Bhagavad Gita adds three more to these five elements as constituents of nature. They are, manas (mind), buddhi (discrimination or discretion) and ahamkaara (self sense, self identity or ego).

भूमिरणोज्जनालो वायुः खं मनो बुधिदेव च
अहंकार इतियं मे भिन्न प्रकृतिरस्त्रा
bhumiḥ, aapāḥ, anālaḥ, vaayuḥ, kham, manah, buddhiḥ eva ca
ahamkaaraḥ iti iyaṃ me bhinnāḥ prakṛitiḥ
ashtathaa.

"Earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, discretion and
self sense; this is the eight fold division of my nature"

The ability to sense, interpret and react to
environment is what may be called the mind (manas).
Buddhi or discretion determines the response to stimulii.
The proclivity of the organism to perceive itself as an
individual, distinct from the rest of the universe is what
may called self sense or ego. Ego (latin) and aham(sanskrit)
both mean 'I'. These three are components of the faculty
of the brain which may be collectively called the mental
complex (antahkaran'a). In a broad sense, these faculties
appear to be present in all living things. The three of
them seem to act as a cabinet.

Suppose that there is an apple in front of you. The
eyes convey the information to the mind. The mind
recognises it as an apple. The self sense decides that eating
it gives you pleasure. Discretion will then consider the
ethics, health and other pertinent aspects and approves
the eating. The mind then sends out relevant instructions
to the hands, the mouth and teeth.

It is well known that molecules have properties
different from those of the atoms which are compounded
in them. For example, hydrogen has certain properties.
Oxygen has certain other properties. But when they combine,
they form water which has entirely different properties.
The same hydrogen and oxygen in the same proportion
combine with carbon also at the same time, to become
sugar with still different properties. Similarly, large
molecules formed out of hundreds of atoms acquire new
properties like colloidal properties, ability to carry positive
and negative charges at different sites, and ability to catalyse other chemical reactions. More complex molecules acquire properties of organised chemical reaction including self duplication. This we call life. In the same manner, the cells of the brain (which is also made up of molecules) has acquired properties of receiving, and interpreting external signals, analysing them and reacting to them in the light of the good or bad they may cause to the individual.

What gives substances their 'properties'? In many cases, scientists have found some principles or lines along which properties are acquired by molecules. Some are still elusive. For the present scientists just accept them as nature. This is not very different from saying that they are ordained by God.

Let us consider water which is the most abundant substance on earth. Life was made possible because of water. Life is sustained because of water. Look at its properties. Almost all of them are exceptional. Its high specific heat, high latent heat of vapourisation, its expansion when cooled below 4º C, ionisation of salts dissolved in it and other astounding peculiarities of its behaviour are so intimately connected with life that it is impossible to refute that it was endowed with these properties by some supreme being to serve a purpose.

Giita says that the supreme being which gave rise to nature, is the cause of the specific properties of substances. In a series of verses in Chapter VII and X, it has given with examples that He is (the cause of) the characteristic nature of things.

Since interpretation of stimuli, their evaluation and response to them are all the functions of the same brain, scientists may not consider it necessary to accept them as basic ingredients of nature on par with matter, energy, space and time. Further these are apparently absent
in inanimate things and not easily recognisable in lower beings. Scientists are still immersed in the mechanics of nature. They have not yet turned their attention to its purpose. Purpose, however, appears to be a factor in determining the direction of activities in nature. Philosophers consider that where there is order and purpose, there the mind is present whether there is brain or not.

THE HUMAN BODY

The human body (kshetra, deha or s'ariira) along with its idiosyncrasies is defined in verses 6 and 7 of Chapter XIII thus:

महाभुतान्यहंकारो बुध्दिर्व्यक्तमेव च
इन्द्रियाणि दस्ति-कं च पंच चेतनिक गोचराः
इछा द्वेषस्वसंह दुःख संघात अवेतनाधृतिः
प्रसन्न स्वभाव विश्वविद्युत्तम

mahaabhuutaani ahamkaarah buddhih avyaktam eva ca
indriyaani das'ti-ekam ca panca ca indriya gocaraah
icchaa dveshah sukham duhkham sanghaatah
cetanaa dhrithih

etat kshetram samaasena savikaaram udaahrittam.

"the great elements, self-sense, discretion, the unmanifest, the eleven indriyaas, liking and dislike, pleasure and sorrow, the aggregate (organism) awareness and steadfastness; this in brief is the field (body) and its ideosyncrasies"

Other than the eight constituents of nature discussed above, the following are included here as the features of the body.
The ten organs of the body (indriyas)

Traditionally, five organs of sense and five organs of action are recognised. These are under the control of the mind. But quite a number of internal organs of great importance like the heart, liver, kidney etc. are controlled by the involuntary nervous system. This system also has its headquarters in the brain. There, no doubt, are some mutual influences of the voluntary and involuntary systems on one another. But, by and large, the internal organs are fairly independent of the mind. This is a merciful dispensation that keeps the vital organs free from the fickleness of the mind. Our constitution makers may well ponder over this nature's (god's?) way and grant autonomy to vital services like the judiciary, police and administration to keep them free from interference. Philosophers also should think deeply why these organs were accorded such autonomy.

It is also noteworthy that in this verse, the mind also is clubbed with organs by calling the group as the eleven indriyaas, i.e., just one of the eleven instruments!

Several books and articles have appeared comparing the thinking abilities of the mind with that of computers. Like a microprocessor, the mind is supposed to be capable of writing information into a physical location, called memory. Scientists working on artificial intelligence consider intelligence synonymous with memory. According to them, the humans are much more intelligent than animals because their memory mechanisms are much more sophisticated than those of the animals. Abilities like formulating languages, laws and creative art which animals do not possess are simply due to the better memory of men.

A computer can exhibit intelligent behaviour only if the instructions are fed to it earlier. And that intelligence is limited to programmes of that subject only and not extended to other areas. It is the same with the mind
also which acquires its programmes at the very time of fertilisation of the ovum as we shall see a little later. No wonder, mind has been considered by Giita as an instrument.

The five perceptions:

The five perceptions are, form(seen by the eye), sound (heard by the ear), taste (felt by the tongue), smell (felt by the nose), and touch (felt by the skin). These really are the functions of the five sense organs and the mind. Why then are they separately mentioned?

Let us look at the solid wall before us. The rays of light reflected from it fall on our retina after passing through the lens. The stimulus is conveyed to the brain by transformation into electrical and chemical impulses. The brain(mind) puts them together, decodes the impulses and conjures up an image which we understand as the wall. Our understanding of an object is the property of the individual mind and senses. Another individual may not see the same image. What we 'see' depends on the wavelengths of light absorbed and reflected by the object. It also depends on the resolution capacity of the eye or the microscope used. It also depends on the efficiency of the retina and relevant nerve cells. A colour blind person cannot see the colours we can see. What we see also depends on the brain centres associated with the function. Finally it depends on the nature of activity taking place in the brain at the moment. We are also familiar with what are called optical illusions.

And what is the reality of the object? It has a molecular structure, the atoms, the protons, nutrons, electrons with their dual states of existance as particles and waves, their gyrations, the enormous space between them and the numerous subatomic particles. This 'reality' (as science knows to day) is never seen by us at all.
Same is the case with our other perceptions also. Like the proverbial blind men attempting to 'see' an elephant, each sense organ perceives only a particular property of the object. For a blind man, colours do not exist; for a deaf man melody does not exist. May be, the object has other properties, to perceive which we have no apparatus. For example, dogs can hear and smell things which we cannot. Our mind gets only an idea of the object, not its reality. Our perception is indirect through transformed signals. That is what our ancients meant when they said that the world is a delusion. It does not mean that the world does not exist. It only means that it is not what we perceive.

Our reactions to the objects are also highly individualistic (subjective). What is beautiful to one is not so to another. We react to signals and not to reality. An event on the patently unreal movie screen elicits the same reaction as the real one. Our impressions are mechanical, dependent on the body machine. It is, therefore, very thoughtful of the ancient sages to have included perceptions in the make up of the body.

Pleasure and sorrow, love and hatred:

Among the many studies launched recently on the functioning of the brain, the "split brain research" is interesting. The brain has two large lobes, the right and the left. There seems to be a division of functions between them. While the left lobe is said to be more objective, deductive, realistic, logical and scientific, the right half is said to be predominately subjective, inductive, imaginative, intuitive, and artistic. It is as if there are two distinct personalities in us, each in the charge of one lobe of the cerebrum. For our purpose, we need not go further into the researches on the functional distribution in the brain. Suffice it to say that there is a part of the brain which appears to be responsible for looking at things beyond
their physical parameters. Enjoyment of pleasure and suffering of misery are the result of clothing the skeleton of a physical event with a subjective imagination. If a person dies, his dependents may feel sad but his heirs may feel happy. Many of our sentiments are learnt responses.

It is the pleasure and pain which affect our emotions deeply. And it is the emotions which influence our behaviour. In the ultimate analysis, it is the emotions that determine the harmony in society. Therefore, the sages and philosophers laid a greater emphasis on the emotional aspects than the cold, logical, material sciences. Pleasure and pain are not experienced when the mind is put to sleep by hypnosis or anaesthesia because mind is the instrument which perceives them.

**The activator (cetanāa)**

The word cetana has been generally translated as consciousness or awareness. Mind (manas), like a computer, does not 'understand' or know what it is doing. Actually, the mind machine does not have any 'information'. Like the bytes of a computer, it has only a sort of material representation of the information. When a sentence is written, the letters and words themselves do not know what they are conveying. Similarly the mind does not 'really know'. It appears that no programming is possible to make a computer 'know'. It has no self awareness or consciousness. Cetana is that awareness which the mind (manas) lacks. It is supposed to be functioning when the mind is not. It is proposed to be the link between the mind and the soul about which we shall discuss a little later.

**Steadfastness (dhriti)**

This may be understood as 'will'. It is the ability to stand against the fickleness of the mind and its inclinations. Viewed differently, it can be understood as
the ability to over-rule the software of the mind. This does not seem to strictly belong to body and mind, but included here for technical reasons.

Behaviour types (gun'as)

A notable omission from the above list seems to be that of attitudes or behaviour types (called gun'as) Traditionally three types are recognised. They are, the righteous (sattva), the conceited (rajas) and the stupid(tamas). The three English words chosen to designate the three types approximately describe in one word, the type of behaviour of each class of people. But in Indian philosophy gun'as are used to classify all activity in the universe. The gun'as are said to be born of nature (prakriti) (Chapter XIV-5). It is also said that they are born of the body (XIV - 20). Usually a person possesses all the three gun'as. But one of them dominates the other two. The dominant one determines the person's views, actions and reaction to events. In fact, the personality of the person is shaped by the gun'as he possesses. This idea has been elaborated in the Giita. It says that a person's manner of involvement in an action (s'radhaa) is determined by the dominant Gun'a. The word s'raddhaa is translated as faith or belief. But it includes also the commitment or attention with which one involves himself in action as a result of the faith. This s'raddhaa can be righteous or noble; conceited or desire oriented; or stupid and misconceived. It is the s'raddhaa which typifies a person.

Mr.X is born with a raajasic temperament (the conceited type). He is dynamic, fond of praise and recognition, showy, loves his friends passionately and hates his enemies bitterly and is revengeful. These traits will influence whatever he does. Let us say, he wishes to distribute food to the poor on an occasion. He would invite a VIP to inaugurate the function. He would have posters
pasted on walls of the town indicating the inauguration by the VIP, the large number of poor that are going to be fed and his deep concern for the poor. He will probably hold a press conference. He will arrange for photographs to be taken, if not a video recording of the function. Meanwhile it comes to his notice that one of the poor fellows unwisely remarked about his vanity. He at once tells his men to see that the fellow is excluded from those to be fed.

He is committed, efficient and dynamic. Indeed he is doing a noble act of feeding the hungry. But his raajasik stamp is seen on everything he does. This is what the Giita verse means when it says "man is what his s'raddhaa is". To bring home this point, a number of verses set out in detail how a person of each of the three types involves himself in various activities. We shall deal with them elsewhere in this book.

S'raddha is the motive force behind all actions of man. And this depends on the dominant gun'a he is born with. Without getting lost in the technical jargon and conflicting interpretations of the great commentators, we may accept that the gun'as also form the natural outfit of our body which we possess for our life time.

Briefly stated, our body is made up of ingredients of nature. Our likes and dislikes, motives and abilities are conditioned by the matter we are made up of. To that extent, our behaviour is dependent largely on our nature and, therefore, more instinctive than willed.

Let us see this verse (III-33)

सदृशं चेष्टाते स्वस्त्यः प्रकृतेःञ्जानवानपि
प्रकृति यात्ति भूतानि निग्रहः किं करिष्यति
sadris'am cesht'ate svasyaah prakiteh
jnaanavaoan api
prakritim yaanti bhutaani nigrahah kim karishyati

"Even the Jnaani does in accordance with his nature. All things follow nature. What can restraint do?"

Let us also read these two verses (XVIII - 59,60)

वद्धकारभाषित्रियं योत्स्य इति मन्यसे मिथ्येष व्यवसायस्ते प्रकृतिस्त्रवं नियोक्ष्यति

स्वभावजेन कौन्ते निबद्ध स्वेदन कर्मणा कतृ नेच्छसि यन्योहात् करिष्यात्स्वतेऽपि तत्

yadi ahomkaaram aast'itya na yotsye iti manyase mithyah esah vyavasaayyah te; prakritih tvaam niyokshyati

svabhaavajena, kaunteya, nibaddhah svena karman'aa

kartum na icchasi yat mohaat, karisyasi avas'ah api tat.

"If, indulging in self conceit, you think 'I shall not fight' your endeavour is futile. Nature will compel you"

"What you do not want to do, out of faulty perception, you will do even against will, bound by the acts born out of your nature"

In all the three verses cited above, it has ben explained that every individual has his own inherent nature (svabhaava). It prompts him to do things that conform to his nature. One may wish to do otherwise, but seldom succeeds in resisting his nature. Allergies, responses to drugs and biological efficiencies are well known to differ from person to person. So do artistic imagination, athletic skills, intellect, rationalism, and manner or bearing etc. differ from person to person. We are able to describe
the personality of a person only because of the constancy of his nature. It, often, renders it possible to predict his behaviour.

Sage Vis'vaamitra was a prince of the warrior caste with a dominant raajasik nature. He wanted to become a Brahmarchi who should have a saattvik (docile) nature. He performed penance for many years to achieve this. But even then, his quick temper and obduracy showed up at critical moments as the many stories about him in puraan'aas reveal.

We may compare this with what we know of genetics to day. Most physical and mental characters have been shown to be determined by the genes inherited by the individual. This means that the individual has to behave, to a large extent, as directed by the genes. His choice in the matter is limited. Even in respect of some traits which can be imparted by training, the extent of success depends on the genes. It has also been established that individuals differ from each other inherently due to inheritance.

In the early days of the development of the science of genetics, the Russian scientists worked hard to establish the role of environment in the modification of the expression of genetic characters, in order to fit science into the political philosophy of the land at that time. Due to the unfortunate racial holocaust in Hitler's Germany and the racist arrogance in South Africa and other parts of the world, the genetic determination of characters in human beings is played down on a low key, while utilising it in animals and plants for improving them. Science, however, supports the concept of Giita that the behaviour of a person is largely dependent on his nature.

Does it, then, follow that we are helpless slaves of our inherent attitudes? How far can 'will' (dhriti) exert itself to subdue or alter natural urges? Radha Krishnan,
the renowned philosopher and former President of India, gave this analogy. Life is like a game of bridge. We did not invent the game or design the cards. We did not frame the rules and cannot control the dealing. The cards are dealt out to us. We get good or bad cards by chance. To that extent nothing is in our hands. But we can play the game skillfully or foolishly. A skillful player may have received bad cards; but may win the game. A bad player may have received good cards and yet may lose the game. Our life is a mixture of chance and choice. By proper exercise of our choice we can steadily control all the elements and totally eliminate the determinism of nature. The purpose of spiritual exercise is to strengthen this will. Who is it that can exercise this will?

THE SOUL (SELF, AATMA)

At the time of death, organs which were functioning in co-ordination till then, stop functioning from the next moment. It is tempting to think that some manager who supervised the functions has just left the body. At the very beginning of the instructive part of Giita in Chapter-II, he is called 'dehi' i.e., one who owns or dwells in the body. Computer scientists working on artificial intelligence are of the opinion that a computer or computer-like object made up of nature's elements cannot be expected to be 'aware' of itself, 'know' what it is doing or take original decisions not already programmed in it. Since we possess these abilities, they postulate that some form of energy which is probably faster than light must be present. Some have even given this energy the name 'tachyon'. Such an energy, they say, is theoretically not repugnant to the theory of relativity. Though tachyon has not yet been detected, they are working on the idea for the last decade or more. We have yet no grounds to rush to the conclusion that tachyon is probably the soul substance. However,
when we note that in chapter XIII, the dweller in the body is called 'kshetrajna' i.e. he who 'knows' the field (body), it is apparent that the ancients understood that awareness is not a property of the physical body.

There are four propositional regarding the soul or self.
1. That he is eternal. He cannot be killed.
2. That he leaves the body at the time of its death and enters another body at the time of its birth. In a very famous verse it has been said, "just as a person discards a torn dress and takes on a new one, the soul leaves a worn out body and enters a new one".
3. That the same soul dwells in all bodies. This will be examined a little closely later.
4. That the soul is God himself.

क्षेत्रज्ञां चापि मां विष्णुद्वर्षां श्रेष्ठेऽपि भारत

kṣetrajnam ca api maṁ vaddhi sarva kṣetreshu

"know me as the kṣetrajna (soul or self) in all kṣetras (bodies)"

'Me' is here God because God, in the form of Krishn'a, is revealing the knowledge. Here it is also repeated that the same soul dwells in all bodies. It is a strange statement difficult to accept at first sight. But let us recall to our mind what we found about the body. Our body, though appearing as a distinct entity, is part of the continuous unbroken nature, like the eddies in water. Similarly, the soul or self in our body is apparently distinct but it forms part of continuous unbroken universal self.

अविभक्तं च भूतेऽपि विभक्तं तव ज्ञितम्

avibhaktam ca bhuuteshu vibhaktam tvā ca sthitam

"he is undivided and yet seems to be divided among beings"
The concept that God is present in all of us (and all things as well) is almost universal. Yet it is, for the present, a matter of faith. His presence can be inferred but he cannot be perceived, shown or proved objectively by known physical methods available to us. That is why persons initiated to scientific reasoning find it difficult to accept the proposition. Like Kapila and Kan'ada, scientists do not invoke God to explain the behaviour of nature. It is their professional norm. If they attribute to God everything they do not understand at the moment, their search would lose its keenness and curtail their adventure. "When every-thing seems to be explicable (or possible to explain in future), in terms of the laws of nature," they question, "why is it necessary to postulate a God, whose existance cannot be proved?" When some of the laws of nature enunciated in the last two or three centuries could not explain the happenings in the micro-world, scientists were able to come up with new laws which fit the micro-world. So too did they formulate laws that suited the macro-world also. But God seems to be beyond them, too:

Believers have a tendency to use every mystery as a proof of the presence of God. This has been cleverly used by the atheist to put them to ridicule. The primitive man was enveloped in dense ignorance. Every thing around him was a mystery for him. He thought that a father figure, invisible to him, was the cause of all the mysterious things. After some ages, he learnt to make fire. Fire came within his understanding and the shroud of ignorance was pushed back a little. And along with it, his God. When he learnt to cure some disease, the wall of ignorance and, along with it, his God, were pushed farther away. With gradual accumulation of knowledge about nature, by discovery of electricity, electronics, biochemistry and design of instruments, many mysteries disappeared into thin air. With organ transplants, satellites
whirling across the solar system, man's confidence in himself has increased so much that thoughts of God seldom cross his mind. God seemed to have little left to do. The atheist, therefore, derides the believer, "your God will vanish when your ignorance is completely dispelled. By corollary, it is your own ignorance you have designated god!" (From an entirely different consideration, the advaita philosophers arrived at a similar conclusion. According to them, when a person attains true knowledge, he ceases to be different from God. He himself is God.)

The atheist's gibes are, in a way, fostered by the believers themselves. They tend to take up partisan position of God versus science. Science and spirituality are both activities of the same mind. They are based (or should be based) on the same logic we are endowed with by nature. Like science, spirituality is an ever developing sphere of knowledge. We cannot put finality on any concept or prophet. As in science, so in spirituality, any hypothesis is valid until it is disproved by later knowledge.

God's presence should be believed by its own truth. This faith is not dependent on the explicability or otherwise of nature's phenomena.

The above discussion was presented because the soul in the body is considered God. Some religions and sects of the Hindu religion itself consider the soul as different from God. But Giita considers them same. The use of the word 'soul' is likely to cause some confusion in our further discussions. Therefore, the word 'self' will be used hereafter to denote it. In Giita, self is called the aatmaa, purusha, kshetrajna, akshara, dehi, jiiva etc. The universal self is known as Brahma, Parabrahma, Paramaatmaa, Purushottama, Mahes'vara. we shall refer to it as the Supreme Being.

There is a funny story narrated by S'rii
Raamakrishn'a Paramahamsa to illustrate how not to misunderstand this concept of the same self being present in all bodies.

A guru imparted this lesson to his pupils that the same God exists in all bodies. One of the pupils wanted to test this proposition in his own way. An intoxicated elephant was running amuck. The mahut was trying hard to control it. He was yelling out to all pedestrians to keep off. The pupil happened to be on the road at that time. He argued with himself, "The same God is in the elephant and me. Why will God injure God? Let me face the elephant without fear". So he did not move. The elephant lifted him high with its trunk and flung him away. The pupil was badly hurt. He was even more upset that he was misled by his guru with a false doctrine. He sped to his guru and accosted him, "Sir, you were wrong. Else why should the elephant hurt me?"

The Guru smiled and asked him, "God was not only in you and the elephant, but also in the mahut. When the mahut God asked you to keep off, why didn't the God in you comply?"

However, the same argument is put forward in Giita in verse XIII-28.

समं परशुराम इह सर्वत्र समवस्थितमोक्षरं न
हिनस्त्यात्मानात्मानं

saman pas'yan hi sarvatra samavasthitam iis'varam
da hinsti aatmanaav aatmaanam.

"As he sees the Lord present equally everywhere, he himself would not injure himself . . . . ."

If one firmly believes that the same self is present in all things, he would not injure any one because it amounts to injuring himself. Nor will he look down upon any one.

विद्या विनय संपन्ने ब्राह्मणे गति हस्तिनि
शून्य चैव स्वप्नाके च प्रभुदता स्म सर्वदर्शिनः
vidyaa vinaya sampanne braahman’e, gavi, hastini, s’uni ca eva, s’vapaake ca panditaah samadars’inaah. (V-16)

"sages see with an equal eye, a learned and modest braahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater"

Once the great S’ankaraacaaryya was going along a path. S’iva in the guise of a candaala (untouchable) came across his way. According to the custom of the day, a candaala was supposed to move away from the path of a brahmin. S’ankara asked him to get out of his way. The candaala, however, did not move. On the other hand, he asked the great man, "Whom are you asking to get out of your way, Sir? Is it this body that is untouchable? Is it not part of the same nature as yours is? We are eddies of the same stream. Or Is it the self which dwells in me that is untouchable? The same self is dwelling in you too!" S’ankara realised his error, He prostrated before the candaala for dispelling his delusion and composed the famous verses which say that God in the lowliest of forms must also be worshipped.

We could ask the same question of S’rii Krishn’a. "To whom is your teaching addressed? Is it to my body? You have already conceded that the body has to compulsively follow its inborn nature and that it cannot do otherwise. Or is it to the self in me? It is the same as the Universal Self which is all knowing and does not need to be enlightened. Further, it does not involve itself in action, cause and result". Yes, it is useless to tell the body. It is unnecessary to tell the self.

The dominant philosophy preached in Giita is advaita. This word means 'no second (thing)'. It enunciates that there is only one thing in the universe and that is the Supreme Being. Nature is born out of the Supreme Being and in that sense it is His manifestation. However,
it is conceded that Self (Supreme Being) and nature have both no beginning. It is proposed that all things in the universe come into existence by their union. Figuratively nature has been personified as the womb and Self as the inseminating father. Like in everything else in the universe, they are together in us also.

What keeps the Self bound to the body? It is said the gun'as bind the Self to the body. The noble proclivity binds him by arousing interest in knowledge. The ambitious tendency binds him by arousing interest in earthly pleasures. The stupid tendency binds him by delusion, indolence and ignorance.

Being together in the body what does each of them do?

कार्य कारण कर्त्त्वे प्रकृति हेतुरूच्यते
रूप स्मुखदुःखानां मोक्षत्वे हेतुरूच्यते

*kaarya kaaran'a karta'tve prakritih hetuh ucya'te
purushah sukha duhkhaanaam bhokritrive hetuh ucya'te.*

(XIII-20)

"Nature is the cause of event, cause and agent. Purusha (self) is said to be the cause of experiencing of pleasure and pain."

By the principle of inertia, every event should have a cause. Agent is the thing that gives rise to the cause. These are clearly stated to be in the realm of nature. All events or acts are the result of interaction of the components of nature. It is further clarified that self is responsible for feelings (of pleasure and pain). For this purpose, what does the self do? It attracts to itself the five sense organs and the mind (XV-7). Through them the self experiences the pleasure and anguish resulting from actions of the body. Without self, the body cannot live or act. The self supports the body, permits it to act
and witnesses its actions and enjoys (XII-22). Also, without
the body, the self cannot enjoy worldly pleasures. In this
mutual co-operation, cetanaa links the two.

You may employ an allegory to understand the
relationship. The ten organs and the mind form a team
of players. But they are under the stewardship of a
nonplaying captain, the self. The self activates them to
play without getting into the field itself. It watches their
performance, gives them directions and enjoys the thrills
and throbs of the game.

Due to such close mutual relationship between the
body and the self, the self often identifies itself with the
body. This identification or attachment is called sangam.
Sangam is a subtle force which transfers the responsibility
for the actions from the body to the self.

Can mere togetherness have such great influence?
In the physical sphere we are familiar with gravitational
attraction which exists between any two bodies. So far
as is known to day, nothing passes between them. The
force is apparently due to their being close to each other.
Biologists know that a mass of cultured cells are unlike
the cells of any tissues. If they are embedded close to
any tissue, they turn (differentiate) into that tissue. The
same cells, if they are placed in another tissue, take on
the form and functions of those tissue cells. It is common
experience that persons in the company of good people
generally turn out to be good. Many a youth of noble families
has been ruined by bad company. In more mundane
matters, a surity has to shell down money if the debtor
defaults, simply because he associated himself with the
transaction. Recognising the importance of association,
S'ankaraacaarya has put satsang (good company) as the
first of the four steps to mukti (salvation).

That every action shall have a result is an inexorable
law. The body does many acts. But it will be completely
decomposed into elements and merge with nature after death. It is the self which has to take the consequences of those actions because of its association with the body. This it is said to accomplish by getting into another body suitable for experiencing the results of the actions of the body. Therefore, the self in each body has to take birth in a different milieu. There is thus so much individualistic about each self that he has to carry the individuality from birth to birth till eternity or till it merges with the universal self (attains salvation). How can this be reconciled with the statement that there is the same self in all bodies?

Let us look at this analogy. A bank takes on rent a number of houses in the town for the residence of its employees. A separate individual lives in each of the houses. But the common tenant of all the houses is the bank. If, however, one of the employees breaks a fixture, he has to pay for it, and not the bank.

In his small but interesting book 'Atom and Self' the celebrated physicist, Kothari, gives an analogy from physics. In what is known as the two-slit experiment, light is passed through two holes in an opaque plate and their diffraction pattern is recorded on a photo plate on the other side. The pattern that appears on the photo plate when light passes through only one of the holes, is different from the pattern when light passes through both the holes. Electrons, being particles (generally), can be sent one at a time. Then we expect it to pass through one of the slits. But the pattern produced is that which would result if the electron passed through both the slits simultaneously. Commenting on this, Kothari says, "If we think of the total wave function of all the electrons in a piece of metal, the identity of individual electrons is completely and absolutely lost. Not a trace of separate individuality is left. The same is true even if we consider all the electrons in the universe... Such a wave function exists in an abstract mathematical space... not in physical
space. It is not a sort of an aggregate, a sum of many. In an aggregate, oneness is no more than a euphemism - for, the many are still visible, may be dimly, in the aggregate. The one-ness in quantum mechanics is a totally, fundamentally, new concept. It has no analogy, no parallel whatsoever in classical physics or everyday experience. Common sense utterly fails to be of any aid. The ONE is in an abstract space, the MANY in physical space." No wonder, the great sages threw up their hands and said that the Self is undescrivable.

Thus, though it is true that the body is a phase of universal nature (prakriti) and that the self is part of the universal self, for the duration of a person's life time, they remain distinct. We have to deal with them as distinct individuals for all practical purposes. S'rri Krishn'a addressed his teachings to this individual self, bound in the body.

Where does the self reside in the body? There are two statements in Giita in this regard which are often taken literally.

सर्वस्यं त्रं हृदि सर्विश्वात:  
sarvasya ca aham hridi sannivisht'ah (XV-15)
"I am placed in the heart of every one"

ईश्वर स्वर्ग भूताना इहदेशे मूर्जन तिष्ठाति  
iis'varah sarva bhuutaanaam hridese . . . tisath'ati
"The Lord stays in the heart of all beings"(XVIII-61)

The biological position is that our body is a multicellular organism. The same set of chromosomes carrying the same genes are present in every cell of the body. Our body is a colony of cells, each of which iscomplete in itself with entire complement of genes. Yet, the genes of cells in each organ direct only the relevant activity.
In the muscles, for instance, only the genes relating to muscular activity function. The rest of the genes lie quiescent. But if necessity arises, they can function. In plants and some lower animals, cells are totipotent i.e., any single cell from any tissue can be isolated and cultured to become the whole organism. If each cell has all the ability, self must be present in every one of them. One of the discriptions of the self in Giita says that it is "sarvendriya gun'aabhaasam" (illuminating every organ) It may be hinting at this.

In an object there are billions of molecules. Each of them is subject to gravity in the direction of the centre of the earth. But as long as the molecules are together, they appear to be attracted at a single point in the object. This point is called the centre of gravity. On a similar analogy, the self present in each individual cell appears to act from a single point. This may be called the 'centre of self' or the heart because heart is a synonym for centre. Hriddes'a or heart here is that centre and not the physical heart.

In some texts, mention was made about the time when the self might have entered the embryo. In the light of present knowledge of biology, it would be reasonable to expect his presence right from the time of fertilisation. A zygote is formed out of a fortuitous union of an ovum and sperm and it is destined to possess the nature that results from the genes that have come together. Since it is necessary that the self should enter a body with traits appropriate for the self to reap the results of actions in its previous birth, it should be construed that the choice is effected by the appropriate sperm (out of the millions that swarm the ovum) succeeding to fertilise it. Such conjectures have no scientific sanction yet.
REBIRTH AND EVOLUTION OF THE SELF

Rebirth or punarjanma is a basic tenet of Giita. It is not only to experience the results of actions of previous births but also to fulfil aspirations that remained unfulfilled in the previous life. But we do not remember anything of our previous lives. Parapsychologists have collected a number of reports of persons who claimed to remember some events of a previous birth for some time. Some of them have been verified and reports published in newspapers. However, they have not been established unimpeachably. Unfortunately some hoaxes also came to light. Rebirth is not yet ready for attention by science. But certainly it is a charming proposition.

We are familiar with the theory of evolution which we believe to be nature's way of achieving perfection of living beings. The theory proposes that variations of characters occur randomly by chance. If any of those new characters is useful in winning in a competition for food or mate, or in adjusting to a new environment, that individual will survive. The loser organisms perish. The progeny of the winner will perpetuate the new character.

Some philosophers see direction and purpose in the advent of new characters. They feel random variations cannot fully explain the process of evolution. "If evolution indeed depended on chance variations and competition for food and mate," they argue, "the millenia from the dawn of life to this day would not be adequate for the perfection of the marvellous complexity of the human being. Also, we do not always find the loser organisms becoming extinct. Both the winner and loser organisms exist side by side. Before our very eyes we see some species becoming extinct with no apparent competition or change of environment. Mutation breeders find that most mutations (sudden changes in characters) are unable to survive. Changes occurring in body cells cannot pass to offspring, only those occurring
in germ cells can be inherited by the progeny. Some of these arguments may be debatable. However, due to other strong evidences, the theory of evolution is reigning supreme as a scientific philosophy. The idea that there is a process in nature for the continuous achievement of perfection is now generally accepted. However, scientists have so far confined their attention to the form and function of the physical body. Psychology is still groping for scientific moorings. However, neurology which links the physical and chemical processes in the brain with the mind, is rapidly progressing. It may not be impossible, one day, to formulate evolution of the mind. Evolution through lives will then be their next goal.

Giita says this clearly. Arjuna asks what would happen if a practiser of yoga left his pursuit half way. S'rii Krishn'a says that such a person will be born in a noble family or a family of yogis. "There," he says, "he will regain the mental impressions of his previous birth and starting from that level of achievement will try further for the attainment of the goal. After many lives of effort, he will reach the supreme goal."(VI-41 to 45)

This is a unique feature of Giita that an evolutionary path has been laid for spiritual attainment. Though this has been laid for the individual and not a species, there is no reason why one should not lead to the other. Even in the case of biological evolution, the change comes first in the individual and is then extended to the species.

The limited life span followed by 'disappearance' into the unknown after the inevitable death is likely to drive people to resignation and despair and inaction. The next birth, where the consequences of the good and bad actions done in this life have to be experienced, may give them hope. It would also keep them off from vice. Fear of hell and the next birth is responsible to keep the majority of people on the right path.
The prospect of another life where unfinished aspirations can be achieved gives a person hope and perseverance. It strengthens the will to face the worst to uphold principles even at the cost of one's life. People compromise on principles and follow the line of least resistance just to prolong their lives for a few more years. Faith in rebirth will reduce this fear and promote maintenance of better standards of social behaviour.

The assurance that one continues his existence after death, albeit in another body, mitigates the sorrow and fear of death. This is a most common and inevitable calamity that strikes every family. Rebirth is a solace to all of them.

Viewed from any angle, there is no other device as useful as the postulation of rebirth for the betterment of human society. This is not like a fairy tale told to dispel the fear of children. The biological evolution is a solid parallel before us to convince us that nature always strives for perfection in a continuous and persistent effort.

The teachings of Giita are based on a tripod of three pillars namely, 1. the permanence of the self, 2. the existence of the same self in the bodies of all beings and 3. the rebirth of the self in another body, when it discards the previous one. It is, therefore, necessary to understand these features to our satisfaction to have firm faith in the rationale of the great book. Upanishads look at the universe and the happenings in it as the sport of the Supreme Being. Let us try a description of the sport in our present day language.

The Supreme Being was a mass of potential energy full of ability and no activity. He was just consciousness and eternal bliss. He was tired of the monotony of unvarying bliss and loneliness. He thought of creating variety and a game for him to witness. By his maaya, he parted with a small part of his energy and gave rise to prakriti (nature)
to whom he entrusted the task of producing as much variety as it could to amuse him with phantom forms. He wanted it to form some base rules for a game with the forms.

Since the Supreme Being did not want himself to play but only wished to witness, nature had to find a partner to play with because it would need at least two to play any game. It condensed part of the energy gifted by the Supreme Being into particles of matter. The first result of interaction of energy with matter is motion. Motion cannot take place without space and time. The mysterious and incomprehensible time and space were created. A game to be enjoyable should have opposing features. Therefore, some of the particles were made to bear positive and negative charges. With this, atoms, molecules and the infinite variety of nonliving and living things came into existence in a sequence of evolution. Variety and change, creation and dissolution of forms were the main activity of nature.

The Supreme Being watched from beyond space and time. He obviously could not enjoy the game fully from where he was. He was also apparently not satisfied by the mechanical things which were turned out. He sent out a small part of himself into each individual thing in order to have a closer look. His association at once galvanised them and enlivened them. In the body, especially the living body, a complicated machine produced a wide range of activities. The human body was the most interesting one which could raise to emotional pulses, purpose, ambition, success, failure, pleasure and pain. The fragment of the Supreme Being stationed in the body was soon attracted by the activities of the body by enjoying the fruits of the activity. He identified himself with the body forgetting that the body was just an instrument of the game. Like the onlooker of a chess game, he was tempted to prompt the moves. A film-goer fully understands that what he sees on the screen is only a phantom and not reality. Yet
he laughs, weeps or mutters with rage according to the run of the story. Similarly the self got engrossed in the goings on. He got more and more involved.

Meanwhile, the body became old and useless. He had to leave it. The game was not concluded and he longed to continue it. So he had to take birth in another body which was appropriate for the continuance of the game. The attitudes and interests of his past life continued to goad him. He had perforce to do certain things in order to experience the fruits of action in the past life. In the new life, he committed more acts of indiscretion in his quest for pleasure. He had to go to the next birth. He is now entangled and must go on from life to life.

But if only he stops for a moment to think why, at all, he entered the body in the first instance, and realises that he came just to witness and not to participate, that the body is only an instrument, and that he does not belong to the body but is the Supreme Being itself, he can immediately break away from this phantom world. What binds a film goer to his seat in the theatre?—only his interest in the unreal story. The moment he firmly knows that it is all a delusion, he will just walk out of the hall; nobody would bar his way. The self needs nothing else to become free except to know that he is free. He should not allow himself to be interested in the filmshow that is life, being enacted by nature. Most facets of human behaviour are the result of such non-physical influences within himself, between the mind, intellect, ego, discretion and will. External causes are only apparent. To get involved or not is one's own decision.

Mahatma Gandhi gave the same message in a political context. No one can enslave another. Slavery belongs to the mind. If you feel free and act free, you are free. The use of the passive voice—'we were enslaved' is not correct. It is the active voice—we enslaved ourselves
out of fear, for favour or due to inferiority complex.

This takes us to the question "what is the goal of man?" The goal of man is the goal of the self; because the ephemeral body with its inevitable end cannot have a goal. The goal of the self is to merge with the Supreme Being from which he was temporarily separated.

While most modern scientists are occupied with the development of theories to explain 'what' the universe is in terms of its own laws, some philosophical and theoretical scientists have begun to contemplate on the 'why' of it all. They started to seriously examine the data before them to discover the invisible law-giver behind the data. The renowned mathematician, Stephen Hawking observes, "There are certain fundamental numbers in the laws of science like the electrical charge of the electron, the ratio of the masses of the proton and electron. ... ... ... The remarkable fact is that the values of these numbers seem to have been very finely fine tuned to make possible the development of life. ... ... These laws may have originally been decreed by God. But it appears that he has since left the universe to evolve according to them and does not now involve in them".

Thus thinking men of the past and present are bound to come to the conclusion that all events in the universe are the handiwork of nature (prakriti). The Supreme Being is not involved in the events of the world. This has been repeatedly stressed in the Giita. It should be the endeavour of every self not to allow itself to be drawn into the pursuit of power, pelf and bodily pleasures but to lead a life of detachment with firm faith that the same Supreme Being dwells in all forms of nature.
THE VIRTUES

The message of Giita is simple. 1. A person is really the soul and not the body. That soul is a part of the universal self or the Supreme Being. 2. As long as the soul is interested in the activities of the body as directed by the mind, the soul is bound to the body and has to take births to take the consequences of actions which it has permitted the body to do. 3. The soul can release itself by the mere knowledge of the two facts mentioned and if it abandons interest in the activities of the body in accordance with its nature.

The sanskrit word jnaanam is usually translated as knowledge. But jnaanam is not merely to understand the above message by logic, reason and intellect. It also means living in accordance with it. In science we are familiar with the words theory and practice. In this connection, it would be illuminating to read the definition of jnaanam given in Chapter XIII of Giita.

"Absence of pride, ostentation and hypocrisy; uprightness, purity of body and mind, indifference to objects of senses, non-attachment, equanimity to likes and dislikes, patience, understanding properly the evil of birth, death, old age, sickness and pain, self-effacement, not clinging to son, wife, home etc., reverence to the teacher, solitude and dislike for crowds, unswerving devotion to God, constant spiritual knowledge and insight into the truth-this is jnaanam; all else is ajnaanam i.e. ignorance."

In the qualities included in the above list, only
the last two appear to speak of spiritual knowledge. All the rest are moral virtues. But these are inseparable from knowledge. Therefore, people who preach but do not practise are not jnaanis. They are only teachers.

Giita briefly sets out different paths for emancipation. Any one of them may be chosen according to one's own nature and ability— but followed with determination. But irrespective of the path chosen, the same moral virtues have to be practised. In fact, the practice of these virtues forms a preparatory requisite for spiritual adventure.

A brief explanation of these virtues is given in the following pages. They are essential not only for the spiritual aspirant but also to the man of the world. For a wholesome personality, development of the body, mind and spirit should go hand in hand. A healthy body, keen intellect, artistic perception, spiritual knowledge and, above all, firm faith in God, are the ingredients of a perfect man.
ELIMINATION OF EGO (AHAMKAARA)

The Latin word 'ego' means "I". The Sanskrit word 'aham' also means the same. To be aware of 'I' is known as aham-kaara. Ahamkaara is a component of the mental complex which gives the sense of individuality. It makes the person identify himself as distinct from others.

Nature has endowed every living being with this awareness so that it will look after its own welfare and protect itself against dangers, especially from others, not only of other species but also those of their own species. It is ahamkaara which gives them the spirit of competition. Competition, as we know, is considered the very basis of organic evolution. Instead of labelling such a basic trait by the name ahamkaara or ego which are generally understood as arrogance, we may give it a more expressive name 'ahambhaava' which literally means 'the concept of I'.

In us it gives the sense of belonging and possession. The word for my and mine in Sanskrit is mama. Therefore, the feeling that a certain thing belongs to me is called mamata or mamakaara. Mamata is used as a synonym for love, which really it is. Though etymologically both the words mean same, mamata has a more respectable connotation. Mamakaara, on the other hand, is understood, at least in spiritual parlance, as an attachment which it is desirable to shed.

I love a thing because I look upon it as mine or it belongs to me; or I belong to it. Thus, I love my body, my wife, my children, (usually) my parents, my relatives, my caste people, my village, my state, my language, my religion and my country. These are concentric circles of love. I am at the centre of them all. I also love things that bring me pleasure, temporary or enduring.
A magnet has a north pole at one end and a south pole at the other. If you cut it into two in the middle, the north-side piece instantly produces a south pole at the cut end. And the southside piece would give rise to a north pole at the cut end. You may go on cutting the magnet into smaller and smaller bits. But the smallest of them will have the two poles at either end. The two poles are an inseparable pair.

Similarly, love exists as a pair with hatred. Giita refers to love and hatred (raaga and dvesha) as a dvandva i.e. a pair. The love for mine reflects as dislike for that of others. We can easily see that it is because of mamakaara, an associate of ahamkaara. Though it is not impossible to separate them, it is pretty difficult. It needs effort.

Attraction and repulsion are exhibited only by a magnet, a charged or magnetised body. This analogy holds good in the mental plane in respect of love and hatred also. Hatred comes from an agitated mind, i.e. a charged mind. So does love prompted by self interest. In both these cases, ahamkaara is the charge.

Does it mean that love is as undesirable as hatred? Yes, if it is tainted by attachment. But Giita speaks of love for all things, not just those that belong to you, nor only fellow human beings but all things in the universe. That is universal love, 'sarva bhuuta daya'. Fellow humans are not mentioned by Giita in this context.

This universal love may be compared with gravity. Both love and gravity are attractive forces - one of the mind and the other of matter. In both cases, we do not yet know of any material pulls between the objects. Gravity is maximum when the two bodies are close together and weakens with increasing distance between them at a rate prescribed by the inverse square law. Similarly the bonds of love are stronger with near ones and less as the distance increases, though not with such mathematical
precision as gravity. What should, however, be noted is that gravity exists between noncharged bodies also - and it is never repulsive. Universal love also emerges similarly form uncharged minds and has no repulsive counterpart.

There are, thus two types of love. One is charged love that is the result of mamakaara. This is called raaga or mamata. This has a counterpart of hatred. The other is universal love, always attractive without the counterpart of hatred. Giita distinguishes them by calling them by two different names, raaga(mamata) and daya. This avoids the confusion caused by the use of the word love in both contexts.

Daya or universal love is born out of conviction that everything in the universe is one - there is no 'other' thing. Even if one loves all the human beings in the world, but not the animals and insects, that is not universal love. It is only mamata.

In worldly affairs, self interest has a great role to play. It is the main motive force for human activity. Without self interest and ambition, man would be inclined to be inactive and indolent. Self interest consists of not only self protection but also the ambition to be better than one's peers, to be perfect, to be applauded and to be held in esteem. The desire to excel goads one to perfection. This is evident in the field of sports and athletics. What we call healthy competition is born out of self interest.

The spiritual ideal, however, is selflessness. The chasm between selfishness and selflessness may look too wide to leap across. But there is a bridge across the chasm. It is enlightened self interest. If one gets on to it, then the transition is smooth. For example, a businessman wants to expand his business and earn profits. That is self interest. But a good businessman strives to please his customers with high quality and reasonable pricing. Through the reputation he thus builds up, he
expands his business. That is enlightened self interest.

Even mamata has its use. It is the bond which keeps families together as small units of mutual cooperation. Families are the training ground, even to the uneducated, for sacrificing a bit of self interest for the good of others.

On the other hand, many of our conflicts and troubles are due to love and hatred. The love for one's language, religion or country, if one is unguarded, soon deteriorates into hatred for other languages, religions or countries. Exploitation, corruption, deceit and robbery to amass wealth for oneself or for one's progeny are the commonest channels for a person's depravity. Unscrupulous methods for enjoyment of pleasure lead to moral ruin. All these are due to ahamkaara and mamakaara.

Another duo that arises from ahamkaara is self conceit and resentment of criticism. Self conceit leads to arrogance and ill-treatment of others. These traits are associated with gloating over success. When a person succeeds in what he is instrumental to do, he attributes it to his own abilities. He thinks he has done it. Such assumption of authorship of action is called kartritva. The more he succeeds, the more he is convinced of his invincibility. He begins to think less and less of God. Very often, he learns his lesson after he has had a very long rope from God. But sometimes, the lesson is put off to the next birth. Every successful man must be careful not to succumb to this failing born out of ahamkaara.

An arrogant person is rude and indifferent to others and looks down upon them. Even well meant advice irritates him. If the other person is also of a similar nature, the like poles begin to repel each other and in no time will they become bitter enemies. Many innocents will get drawn into the conflict and get hurt.

The Giita, therefore, places before us the ideal
"samam maanaavamaanrayoh". i.e. same to honour or insult.

Ahamkaara has its good and bad consequences based on whether the positive or negative side is used. Its elimination, coupled with universal love, is the only road to peace and prosperity of humanity. To be nir-mamah (without love of mine) and nir-ahamkaarah (selfless) are essential not only for spiritual progress but also for material advancement.

Shedding ego is not easy but can be achieved by constantly reminding oneself of the truth 1. that the same self resides in every one of us and 2. that one is not his physical body which he has to inevitably quit one day or the other.
AHIMSA OR NON-VIOLENCE

_Himsa_ or violence means causing pain. Not causing pain is, therefore, non-violence or a-himsa. It is a negative commandment, a don't. Though violence is generally understood as physical pain, many authorities include also the pain caused to the mind. In both cases, it is the mind which feels the pain.

Killing is considered the worst form of violence. Yet the act of killing is not always condemned. The soldier in war may kill those in the enemy ranks. The more the number of the enemy he kills, the more is he commended by his government or countrymen. In ancient days, killing the enemy was considered the duty of the heroic. It was not tainted with sin. On the other hand, he was supposed to go to heaven. In fact, killing the wicked (dusht'a samhaara) was one of the duties of a king. In the famous verse about incarnation of God, Giita affirms that He is born in this world again and again to destroy the wicked and protect the meek and establish dharma. We may, therefore, assume that killing, by itself, is not disapproved.

Soldiers may be freely killed at war; but not after taking them prisoner. A citizen cannot kill even a notorious criminal without becoming liable for punishment, even by hanging. An authorised judge alone can sentence the criminal to death. And it is the 'duty' of the executioner to hang those lawfully sentenced to death. Millions of animals are killed daily for food. It is not objected to. However, the practice of killing the animals as an offering before the altar is frowned upon in modern times (eventhough the killed animal will also be eaten as food). Thus we find that, so far as the society is concerned, a sort of licence is needed from the society to wipe off the stigma on killing. Killing _per se_ seems to be of little concern.
How does Gītā look at it? Death is an inevitable visitation in nature. Further, the body alone is killed; not the soul which is indestructible. He (the soul or self) neither kills nor is killed (na ayam hanti, na hanyate). In verse XI -33, Krishna says to Arjuna:

यथैवैते निहता: पूर्वमेव, निमित्तमात्रे भव सव्यसाचिन्
mayaa eva etaa nihatah puurvam eva
nimitta maatrah bhava Savyasaachin
"These have already been killed by me.

Be just the apparent reason (for their death)"

The message is clear. People get killed by divine dispensation. The killer is only apparently killing them. Hence the sin does not attach to him. Then why this commandment not to commit violence? Further, is this statement not likely to be perversely used by every killer to absolve himself of the sin? A fuller analysis of the matter is this: Like any other event in nature, killing is an act or event in nature which is neither sin nor merit (paap or pun'y ) in itself. If the soul (self) attaches itself to the act with a motive, it becomes a sin in the sense that the soul has to reap the consequences. If the killing is the result of his anger, greed, envy or arrogance, it becomes sin. If one killed dispassionately as his duty, no sin sticks to him. That is why the soldiers at war, judges and executioners are absolved of sin. If an animal was sacrificed at the altar with sincere faith that the goddess is to be worshipped that way, it would be no sin. But if the sacrifice was done with the hope of appeasing the goddess to fulfil one's desire, it would be sin. A butcher who kills animals as his profession attracts no sin. But a person, whose traditional profession is not selling meat, resorts to it to make profits, it would be sin.

Gandhiji's interpretation of ahimsa is very close to the Sermon on the Mount of Jesus Christ that one
should turn the other cheek to the person who has smitten him on one cheek. It is the acme of forgiveness and meekness. But Giita does not appear to conform to this in all situations. In verse I-46, Arjuna virtually uses the very words of the sermon:

\[
yadi maam apratiikaaram, as'astram, s'asta-paan'ayah
\]

\[
dhaartaraashtraah ran'e hanyuh, tat me kshemotaram bhavet.
\]

"While I remain unarmed and unretaliating, if the kauravas, with weapons in their arms, kill me, it would be better for me."

The purpose of the entire preaching in the Giita was precisely to disapprove such meek submission and goad Arjuna to fight (being his kshatriya duty). Even today, if a soldier turns pacific on the battle field, the same advice is pertinent.

There is a small parable of S'rii Raamakrishn'a Parama'hamsa which sheds some light on the pragmatic practice of ahimsa.

There was a venomous snake in a forest path. It used to bite every passer by without any provocation. People dreaded to traverse the path. One day a great sage came that way. The snake as usual stung him. But the poison did not affect him. He turned round and saw the snake looking at him in surprise and reverence. He said, "you have accumulated lot of sin by killing people without provocation. You will have to suffer great torture in hell for this, unless you atone for it by taking a vow never to bite any one hereafter".

The snake took his advice and stopped biting people. Urchins saw from a distance that the snake was not moving
from its place even after seeing them. They made bold to move closer to it. Yet it did not dart forward. They threw a stone at it. It was hurt. But it bore the pain patiently. They threw more stones till it was grievously injured and lay in utter pain.

The sage came again on his way back. He noticed that the snake was badly mutilated. He stroked it with sympathy and the snake was well again. The sage asked how it came to this state. The snake reproached him for his unwise advice which would have worked with animals but not with humans who would injure for no reason. The sage smiled and said, "I asked you not to bite. But did I forbid you to hiss?"

Gandhiji has the distinction of moulding ahimsa into a political weapon. Non-cooperation, passive resistance and non-retaliations to violence by authority were the salient features of the new method. It gave fearlessness, dignity and hope to the meek. Leaders of such protests need to be highly advanced in the spiritual field. Otherwise, the method can deteriorate into a farce. The method involves not merely non-violence, but the entire gamut of spiritual morals.

Injuring the mind is also himsa, though it rarely attracts penal attention. In our daily lives we inflict misery on others without being aware of it. Unsympathetic doctors, corrupt officials, greedy businessmen, hard hearted industrialists and arrogant workmen cause misery to their clientele. Every one who does not discharge his duties properly, every one who is needlessly harsh or rude, every one who is more concerned about his comforts without caring for the discomfiture of others is guilty of himsa. Compelling a person to do something without convincing him also has been interpreted as himsa.

Ahimsa is closely allied to the positive trait of daya or kindness. It is a trait that elevates the mind. It is also a social necessity. Giita seems to draw a distinction
between kindness and pity. Arjuna was overcome with pity (kripa) and remorse at the thought of killing thousands of his kinsmen and making widows of their wives, and refused to fight. But Krishna clearly disapproved it as feebleness of mind. (He even used the rather insinuating epithet klaibyam). Pity is an emotional surge which goes against the equanimity and poise one is required to maintain in happiness and sorrow. Dayaa, on the other hand, is to recognise the misery of a fellow being in order to alleviate it to the extent that lies in one's hands, without himself being upset. Ahimsa is enjoined not because it causes pain to the other man, but as a self discipline of restraining one's own demonic urges.

One of the basic themes on which Giita is constructed is that the same aatma (self) is present in all living beings, though their bodies are apparently different. One who understands this well would see himself in all beings and all beings in himself. Then, injury to any one will be injury to himself. this has been expressly said in verse XIII -29.

समं पर्यन्त हि सर्वं समवस्थितमिश्वरं
न हिनस्त्रयत्वनात्मानाः... ... ...

samam pas'yan hi sarvatra samavasthitam
na bhinasti aatmanaa aatmanam ... ... ...

"Seeing the supreme Lord present equally in everything, he will not injure himself ... ... "

This postulation of oneness of humanity is the soundest foundation of a peaceful society. The same sentiment has been expressed differently in the commandment, "do unto others what you would be done by". This is daya. If you put it negatively, "do not do unto others what you would not be done by", it is ahimsa. This was hailed as the greatest dharma elsewhere in Mahaabhaarat.
TRUTH OR SATYAM

Truth is a very common word. But it is very difficult to define it. We generally understand it as factual conveyance of a message i.e., conveying a fact without wilful distortion. When we ask "speak the truth" what we mean is "speak what you believe is truth". When a person sees a rope, thinks it is a snake and reports that he has seen a snake, he should be construed as having told the truth though the message is not true. Truth is thus subjective and has to be assessed with reference to the individual. The real truth is often elusive.

The word is also applied to abstract things and hypotheses. Here truth means consistency and permanence in time and space. Scientists strive to find the truths of nature. They observe events and try to relate them by a law which they believe will hold good consistently. These are truths every body can see. They are objective truths. But the laws may have to be superceded by others some time later when new information comes to light. A few centuries ago, scientists suggested that all inflammable objects have a substance called phlogiston which escapes in the flame. When they found that the substance remaining after burning, weighed more than the original substance, they suggested that phlogiston had negative weight! When it became known later that burning means the union of the substance with oxygen, phlogiston 'truth' had to be abandoned. This has occurred many more times during the development of science. We might say that the laws discovered by scientists are relatively constant and they are truths over a reasonable time i.e. for the present. Without the acceptance of such temporary truths, we would lose our moorings in the universe. A truth is true in the given context of time and space.

Philosophers define truth as that which is eternal,
i.e., it holds good for all time. In fact, they say that anything that changes cannot be said to be true. There is only one thing that conforms to their definition. That is the Supreme Brahman. Every thing else in this universe, which is a form of nature (prakriti) is subject to change or dissolution. All we perceive through our senses are only our subjective impressions of the real or true thing. All our knowledge is derived indirectly by effects and not directly. When you read the temperature with a thermometer, you are only measuring the expansion of mercury due to the temperature. When you measure out a piece of cloth with a metal meter rod, you will get a longer piece in summer than in winter, though the difference is negligible, i.e. it is true enough in our context. We may, therefore, accept the forms and events of nature as 'working truths' and not the absolute truth. Philosophers consider the perceived universe as a delusion and the Supreme Brahman as absolute truth. "brahma satyam, jagat mithya".

The above perception of truth by philosophers refers to our correct understanding of the eternal truth. It bears little relation to the behavioural truth of our day to day lives. Of more immediate importance socially is the truth in thought, word and deed of human beings. The great edict 'satyam vada' i.e. speak the truth, refers to the spoken word. Truth in action is designated as aarjavam.. The word literally means straightness or straight forwardness. This is approximately synonymous with honesty and is the antithesis of hypocrisy. When the mind entertains a bad motive, in order to hide it, the person attempts a smoke screen of lofty ideals and magnanimous deeds. Then his inner thoughts are at variance with his word and deed. To keep them in consonance is truth, honesty, frankness and right conduct. There is no attempt to cover up unsavoury thoughts or actions. If a boy copies in an examination, he is
dishonest. If he readily admits his action, he is truthful.

Keeping one's word (promise) is also traditionally considered truth. This demands consonance of present thought and word with future action. Raajaa Harischandra of lore is said to have suffered untold hardships to be true to his word. He actually suffered to keep his word. If he had said to sage Vis'vaamitra, "I did promise to give you so much money. But now I am in no position to pay you so much" he could not be held guilty of untruth, especially as his inability was genuine. If he had denied having made the promise, it would have been certainly wrong. Keeping one's word, of course, is no less important a virtue than truth. But the two are slightly different from one another.

A lie is the opposite of truth. Why does one utter a lie? He may be expecting a material benefit for himself by uttering a lie. Or he may be able to avoid some painful consequences. Or he may be afraid of bodily injury to himself by speaking the truth. The common factor behind all these excuses is self interest, his love for his body and his indifference to the harm it might cause to others. That is because he identified himself with his body and is affected by the short lived pleasures and pains of the body.

Faith or trust is an assumption of truth. It is the very basis of wholesome economic activity. Untruth in such matters only leads to chaos. Many medicines are sold in the market. The doctors who prescribe them and the patients who consume them keep faith in the manufacturer that they contain what they claim to contain. There are many instances of false claims made of new medicines or cover-ups of the harmful contents of some baby foods which have caused loss of much human life. Untruth thus leads to himsa.

To sift truth from untruth is not very easy. Society
has entrusted this work to courts presided over by learned judges. They depend on the deposition of witnesses on oath. The evidence so recorded is processed by rules of jurisprudence. The process has proved inadequate in many cases to get at the real truth which is at variance with the 'accepted truth'. Day by day, the gap between real truth and 'public' truth has been widening as more and more devices have come to be practised to prevent 'real truths' from seeing the light of day. We are witnessing the consequences of untruth disrupting our progress in all fields. If individuals fail to uphold truth, institutions made up of such individuals cannot protect it. Hence the importance of individuals being truthful.

The orderly run of the universe depends on the constancy or truthfulness of the observance of nature's laws by everything in nature. Electrons always keep to their orbits. Even if they are temporarily disturbed by force, they return to their tracks immediately. The genes in the DNA helix reproduce themselves in each cell division, millions of times without a fault. The laws relating to energy - matter relations are observed without exception. If human beings also observe the laws of nature, i.e., dharma, truthfully, they will progress towards perfection without breaks or set backs. But they are endowed with certain volition which they tend to misuse because of the faulty understanding of the absolute truth of the universe. Nature, however, sees to it that its truths are upheld and untruths are eventually eliminated. That is the meaning of the saying "Satyam eva jayate" which means, truth will prevail.

Can there be situations when truth had better be abandoned for the sake of better good?

A saint was sitting under a tree. A girl passed by him running desperately. In a few more minutes
two ruffian-looking persons came running to the spot. They asked the sage whether he saw a girl pass by and which way she fled. The sage sized up the situation. The fellows appeared to be out to molest her. He was in a dilemma. If he told the truth, she would be caught and molested. If he did not, he would be guilty of untruth. The sage thought for a split second and said, "Yes, a girl panting for breath passed by. But I cannot tell you which way she went because, it is my duty to protect her". The ruffians beat him up and went away. The saint was fearless. He did not mind the beating his body received. He saved his soul.

But look at this famous verse.

Satyam bruuyaat; priyam bruuyaat; na bruuyaat satyam apiyam.
priyam ca na anrutam bruuyaat. 
esha dharmah sanaatana.

"Speak truth; speak pleasantly; 
Do not speak unpleasant truth. 
Nor should you speak a pleasant lie. 
This is ancient dharma".

The second line permits abstaining from telling a truth which is unpleasant (or might lead to unpleasant consequences), especially if it does not materially alter anything or harm any body. Some Christian stories with religious overtones have written approvingly of hosting and hiding petty criminals. However, suppression of truth, called suppressio veri in legal language, is punishable in law if it hides a crime; because the intention is faulty. Evidently, law does not tolerate any hindrance to its right to punish the guilty.

Those who look upon truth as no more than a desideratum for the stability and smooth running of our economic and social systems, tend to lay down exceptions permitting departure from truth. Here is a story from Bhaagavat.
Vaamana, an *avataar* of Vishn'u, asked of Bali a gift of three feet of space. Despite being an *asura*, Bali inherited some sterling characters from his grand father, Prabhaada. One of them was unbounded munificence. So he readily acceded to the request of Vaamana. S'ukraacaarya, the chief preceptor of the *asuras*, was quick to see that the dwarf boy, Vaamana was no other than Vishn'u who came in this garb to put down Bali. So he intervened and asked Bali to take back his offer. In what is popularly called *S'ukra niitti*, he told Bali that one could utter a lie in the case of women, marriage affairs, or when life, honour or money was at stake. Somewhat like the condonation of killing in self defence, this provides a wide justification for lies. But people lie precisely for these reasons!

(To complete the story, Bali refused to accept the advice of his aacaaryya, stood by his word and gave the gift. Vaamana immediately grew enormously in size till one foot of his measured the entire earth. Another covered the entire sky. Then he asked Bali to show space for the third foot promised. Bali showed his own head. And Vaamana put his foot on his head and pressed him down to the nether world.)

Going further, a mischievous twist was given to truth in the Maha Bhaarata war. After Bhiishma fell, Dron'a became the chief of the Kaurava armies. He was invincible. The Paandava war council thought that the only way they could make him lay down his arms was to give him news that his beloved son As'vatthaama was dead. But they knew that he would not believe it unless the news came from Yudhishthir'a's mouth because it was known that he would never utter a lie. All his brothers, and even S'rii Krishna, pressed him to announce the news. Yudhishthir'a refused to oblige them. Then they killed an elephant named As'vatthaama and then asked Yudhishthir'a to announce its death in such
a manner that the word elephant came at the end. "As'vatthaama hatah kunjarah" i.e. Dead is As 'vvatthaama, the elephant. The last word was drowned in the sound of drums arranged for the purpose. Poor Dron'a laid down his arms and was killed. This is a 'technical truth' but a palpable untruth. It should be treated as a lie because of the intention behind it which was dishonest. The purity of the mind is the important thing and not the external word. It is said that for this single fault in his life, Yudhishth'ira was taken round hell as a punishment after his death. A modern court would have probably acquitted him.

To be truthful, a person need not do anything positive. He has just to be himself, say what he believes and do what he says. It is the liar who has to plan his lies. Truth comes naturally without effort. In that sense, "Satyam vada" is a negative commandment which actually says "Do not lie".

**APARIGRAHA OR NON-POSSESSION**

The desire to possess wealth is due to lobha or greed which is patently a manifestation of mamakaara (the sense of mine) which again is an off shoot of ahamkaara as we have seen. Greed is not easily quenched. If one acquires an object, he would soon covet another. The desire to acquire is not necessarily because the need is felt. The desire to possess seems to be due to two reasons. One is a pathological urge which has become a part of one's nature. The other is an ambition to have more than others. One may have all that he needs. But by comparing himself with others he wants either to match them or surpass them. Once possessed by this passion, he indulges in it for its own sake due to clouding of his wisdom.
Any one with a little thought can see that all earthly possessions are short lived. Like the railway berth which one 'possesses' for one night, men cling to their possessions for a few years till they are snatched away by the inevitable death. The love for one's wife and children is also a strong reason for amassing wealth in the hope of passing it on to them after his death. The son is a son only to his body but not to 'him'. So is the wife. Due to ahamkaara and mamakaara, he thinks only these two belong to him and that all other humanity does not.

The desire for possession is, therefore, incompatible with spiritual pursuit. Some persons with inborn abilities to produce and protect wealth may come to possess wealth. They should consider themselves as trustees of the wealth they possess and spend it for the common good of the society. They should renounce the ownership of the wealth they possess. That is called aparigraha or non-possession. It is voluntary renunciation of riches.

Recognition of the inevitability of leaving behind all the possessions at death may curb greed in some people. But in others, it may encourage them to amass as quickly as possible before death overtakes them. Unbridled greed leads to exploitation and crime. As death approaches, it gives immense worry about what would happen to his acquisitions after his demise. It will not permit the person to think of God even during the final moments. One has, therefore, to practise aparigraha from the early age.

Acceptance of gifts is known as parigraha. It has the rudiments of desire in it. It leads to expectation of gifts and later, of remuneration for services rendered. Then follows temptation to do only things that might fetch gifts and not necessarily what should be done. We see instances of officials being corrupted by wily persons
beginning with small gifts. Sant Tukaaram, poet Potana and the celebrated saint musician Tyagaaraaja are all said to have returned the gifts sent to them by kings because they felt that their acceptance would deflect them from their spiritual path. Non-acceptance of gifts is also known as aparigraha.

**TRIPTI OR CONTENTMENT.**

Contentment is an antidote to greed. The distinction of self versus others gives rise to comparison. Comparison arouses envy. Envy leads to the passion to possess and acquire material things and comforts. The whole chain is broken by contentment. Contentment with the satisfaction of biological needs will leave one’s mind free from agitation and allow it to contemplate on spiritual matters. Contentment is the key to mental tranquillity. If one is not contented, even his worship of God would be for the fulfilment of his material desires. The practice of contentment starts with curbing desires (vairaagyaam). It is the first step to renunciation of the fruits of action.

Gita emphasises the need for contentment in a number of contexts. The epithets used to describe a good yogi include phrases like 'nitya triptah' (always contented), 'santusht'ah yena kenacit' (content with anything), 'yadricchaa laabha santusht'ah' (contented with whatever comes of its own accord, i.e. without his specific effort.

The above epithets, along with phrases like 'sarva aarambha paritaagit' (one who renounces all initiation of action) in XII-16 and XIV-25, are likely to be misunderstood as suggesting that a beggar on the temple steps, who does nothing but is contented with the alms he receives, is an ideal person. No. The above phrases only emphasise that one should not be avaricious and initiate action to satisfy the averse. On the other hand, the early chapters clearly state that one should not be indolent doing nothing. Indolence is a taamasik trait.
Human progress is the result of the activity of thousands of great men over the ages. They were driven by insatiable thirst for true knowledge. Their ambition was not for acquiring material wealth for themselves but to achieve the welfare of humanity. Contentment is enjoined only with regard to personal acquisitions and possessions. Then only can one eschew envy which is an evil force. Ardent pursuit of perfection is desirable and calls for no halt.

Tripti is also used in another sense. It is the happiness one feels when he has done his duty. In this sense, a seeker feels contentment at several stages of his progress. A yogi is contented with himself by himself i.e., not by any external thing or event.

DAANAM OR CHARITY

Voluntarily parting with a part of one's possessions trains the mind to aparigraha or dispossession. When charity is given, the happiness the receiver experiences will give the donor a joy which is very elevating unlike sense pleasures. It initiates in him the realisation that the joy of others is also his joy. That will give him a practical experience of his being in all beings and all beings in him. Usually kindness is associated with charity.

It has been stressed in the Giita that charity should be given in a proper place, at a proper time, to a proper person (des'e, kaale ca paatre ca). There are many occasions prescribed in religious literature, when a charity should be given, to whom and in what form. If one throws a drink party to his friends (with the same addiction), being a taamasik act it does not have the merit of charity, eventhough he might have spent a huge amount on them. It does not meet the 'des'a, kaala and paatra' requirement. Charity in expectation of a return or publicity is derated as raajasik. Many donors are vain and crave for publicity and recognition for their
munificence. That also is a *raajasik* trait. "Let not the left hand know what the right hand gives" is a commendable commandment. The *saattvik* (desirable) type of charity is defined in XVII-20.

\[\text{daatavyam iti yat daanam diliyate anupakaarin'ah des'e kaale ca paatre ca tat daanam saattvikam smritam.}\]

"That charity given to a person who had not done a favour (to the donor) to a proper person, at a proper time and a proper place is said to be a saattvik charity".

The verse recognises a gift as charity only when it is given to a person who has not earlier helped the donor. If it is given to one who has helped, it becomes a remuneration. If it is given in expectation of a favour, it becomes a bribe.

From a social point of view, charity should not only help the recipient out of his immediate need but also help him in the long run to overcome his need permanently. If we toss a coin to a beggar, it may give him food for the day. But the next day he has to be helped again. On the other hand, if we care to study why he is poor and help to steer him out of his poverty, it would be a lasting benefit for him. Usually one becomes a beggar due to the *taamasik* quality of laziness and disinclination to work which should not be encouraged for his own good and the good of the society. A lazy beggar does not constitute a 'deserving' beggar. Gandhiji was of the same view. Since one may not have the time to study the circumstances of every beggar. Gandhiji
suggested that alleviation of poverty should be taken up by service organisations. Giving alms to individual beggars can be stopped and made to such organisations.

The above interpretation assumes that charity is to help the poor out of their difficulties. But it is presumptuousness, if not self conceit, to think that we can alter another's fortune by our effort. Charity should not give the donor a sense of pride that he has helped the recipient. It is prescribed as one of the preliminary steps in the purification of his own self to befit him to spiritual pursuit. The person receiving the charity should be looked upon as God in human form who has favoured us by giving us an opportunity to perform the pious duty of charity. Alms should be given with utmost humility.

We have stories in our puraan'aas of greatmen like emperor S'ibi who gave away flesh out of his own body; Karna, who gave away the shield he was born with, jeopardising his own life; and Rantideva who gave away the only morsel of food which he could secure after many days of starvation. They all gave with great reverence to the recipients. "Atithi devo bhava" is a familiar commandment.

_Tyaaga_ (renunciation or sacrifice) is a quality closely related to charity. _Tyaaga_ has acquired the additional meaning of sacrificing or giving up something for the sake of some one else. Such sacrifice, is no doubt, commendable; but it has an element of purpose or objective. The word does not seem to have been used in this sense in Giita. Renunciation is for its own sake and not to favour another person.

If two persons had applied for the same job and one of them abstains from the interview in order to leave the field free for the other candidate, he is sacrificing in favour of the other. It may be due to kindness,
pity or love. But probably he is not right. Because 1. He may be priding himself as the better candidate. 2. He is presumptuous that he is helping the other candidate. 3. He is depriving the employer of the best choice.

**APAISUNAM OR NON-SLANDERING.**

*Paisunam* means calumny, vilification and talebearing. One may appear to us bad in certain respects. It is only our opinion based on our limited exposure to him. That does not justify imposing our opinion on others by vilifying him in his absence. In this there is involved a certain cowardice to tell the person himself so that he may correct himself. There is an intention of inflicting on him a sly and surreptitious harm. This is dishonesty. That is why vilification behind one's back is to be avoided.

There is a moral verse, the last line of which is "*ranthra anveshii ca sarvatra, duushako muushako yathaa*". It means that like a mouse, the bad man is in search of holes everywhere. A bad man magnifies the faults of others while playing down his own faults or assuming that he himself is faultless. A writer aptly said that there is only one person in the world who is faultless. His name is 'T'. More figuratively, it has been said that when you point your pointing finger at another (pointing out his fault), remember that three other fingers are pointing at you. Christ came across a fallen woman who was condemned to death by stoning (such were the barbaric times). He intervened and said, "Let him who has no faults throw the first stone at her". Surely, there were none. Such stories and statements seem to imply that those who have faults of their own have no right to find fault with others. The corollary is that if one is faultless, he is entitled
to accuse. But this is not correct. To accuse another by itself is wrong. That is \textit{a-paisunam}.

The Christian commandment 'judge not lest thou shalt be judged' implies that judging others is a big enough sin to be judged by God on the judgement day (according to Christian faith). Fear of the judgement day, of hell or of other post-mortem punishment is a fairly effective device to keep people off sin. It is adopted by all religions using different terminology. But the spiritual seeker should avoid accusing others, not out of fear(even of divine wrath), but because of his commitment to right behaviour.

\textbf{MAARDAVAM OR GENTLENESS.}

This quality generally refers to speech. The expression and gestures should be soft or gentle. In what is referred to as 'penance of speech' verse XVII-15 of Giita mentions the following characters of speech which have to be cultivated. The spoken word should be true, pleasant, well-wishing and unexciting. In XII-15, describing the characteristics of a devotee it is said that he is not agitated by (the happenings of) the world, nor is the world agitated by him. Gentle speech puts the listener at ease and prevents the build up of emotions in him. Harsh speech is the result of a mind agitated by anger or intolerance. If one understands that all aberrations of behaviour are the result of a person's inherent constitution, he would not resort to admonition or harsh words. Whatever is to be communicated will be done softly and with kindness.

There is a small category of people who have a good heart but a sharp tongue. That is a matter of their style. They are better advised to desist from causing avoidable irritation to their listeners. This trait often comes to the fore in argument. It can be controlled by avoiding argument.
VINAYA OR MODESTY.

A spiritual seeker should not brag about his achievements. Nor should be approve of others flattering him. Achievements are the result of various natural factors and chance. He is only the apparent doer. Dambha or boastfulness is described as an asura (bad) character in Gita. Absence of self conceit or self esteem (na -ati-maanitaa) is listed under divine characters.

Knowledge should give humility because the more one knows, the more one realises that there is still a lot more to know. Great scientists are always modest. It is the lesser scientists and technologists who often gloat over their little gadgets and brag about having enslaved nature and even tend to become atheists. In Gita, the thoughts of a person possessing this asura attitude are given in direct speech (Chapter XVI).

"I have achieved this. I shall fullfil this desire also. I have so much money. I shall earn still more of it. I finished this enemy. I shall eliminate the others too. I am strong. I am the lord. I am the enjoyer. I am high born. Who else can compare with me!". He further boasts of his misknowledge saying "This world has no basis. There is no God. The scriptures are false. This world has no other cause than desire and the union of sexes".

Does it not sound familiar? We have heard this quite often from our pigmy technologists and immature advocates of scientific temper. Scientific temper does not consist merely of under-estimating nature or denial of the Supreme Being. Science is only a discipline of logic to evaluate each idea or belief and accept those that stand the scrutiny of well known criteria (pramaan'as) laid down in the quest for truth. The conclusions arrived at by these methods should have reasonable consistency to be accepted as truths. In modern times we use
the method of statistics to ascertain acceptable consistency. Hypotheses based on inference should explain satisfactorily the known phenomena. After all this, a person should have an open mind that these little truths are tentative and may have to be abandoned if further acquisition of knowledge proves them wrong. That open-ness of mind is real scientific temper and that is the basis of modesty.

Modesty is not to be understood as playing down achievements or not expressing the truth. It is the pride off achievement which should be curbed. Pride is born of ahamkaara that he is the karta. On the other hand, the achievement is the result of the incessant manifestation of the activity of nature (prakriti) in space and time. The person is only a cog in the huge machine.

We often hear people say, "I may say with pardonable pride that I have achieved.....". Yes. The listeners should pardon him for his pride. But he is guilty of clothing his pride in transparent 'humility'. He is not really modest. He is only pretending to be modest. If he is a spiritual seeker, he should drop this deception.

**ABHAYAM OR FEARLESSNESS.**

Fearlessness is a necessary attribute of a righteous person. At several places, Giita wants a yogi to be 'Viita raaga bhaya krodhah' The phrase means one without desire, fear and anger. One of the causes, probably the most potent cause, that prompts a person to swere from the right path is fear - fear of loss of his life, his possessions, his position, his comforts or his esteem in society.

A subordinate officer discovers that his superior has been tempted to give an unjust decision. He can bring it to the notice of a higher authority or at least disagree with him on the file. But he is afraid that it might boomerang on himself. May be, the higher authority
is hand in glove with his superior; may be, his superior, out of spite, will pin him down on some other count; he may be transferred to an inhospitable place or punished or even dismissed. He would, therefore, persuade himself to think, "After all, I am not appointed as the sole custodian of honesty in the country. Bringing to book one person, in a land where every other person is corrupt, is not going to change any thing. Why should I, then, jeopardise my future for this token confrontation with dishonesty? I will not lose anything if he is dishonest." Behind this deceptively perfect logic is his fear of his future. So he would pretend that the matter never came to his notice.

It is for similar reasons that no one comes forward to be a witness even in a case of a ghastly murder committed in broad day light in a busy road crossing. People are afraid of the grilling interrogation, the countless trips to the court and a possible revenge by the culprit if he is ultimately set free. The modern asuras count upon this fear of the average person while planning their crimes.

Great men have always upheld what they were convinced was right, even when they were alone in the protest, at the risk of their lives.

However, one cannot miss the social side of the matter. Fear of punishment, social derision, or the fear of hell, keep the common man away from the wrong path. It is the lack of fear of detection or punishment that is a major factor that encourages the criminal. That is why some countries, even to-day have dreaded punishments in their penal codes. Such draconian punishments may be valuable for the well being of the society. But they are of little use for the cleansing of the mind. It is the mind(self) which should be determined to be right for its own cleanliness (aatma s'uddhaye). That alone will help him along the path of spiritual advancement. Fear of consequences will not let such determined man flee from doing right.
Fear is a natural characteristic of all living things. It is a manifestation of ahamkāra. It is a sort of prognosis of possible danger to the organism. In that sense it is a biological necessity. But in the spiritual context, fear is the result of lack of faith in the concept of indestructibility of the self and the lack of appreciation of the fact that the short lived physical body has, inevitably, to die one day. A person is composed of two distinct entities, the inert body which can only act if activated and the self which can act or enjoy only through the instrument of body. The body may suffer the consequences of physical acts according to the laws of nature. But consequences of motives nurtured by the self must be suffered by the self by taking further births. If ahamkāra tells that a certain right action will result in a risk for the body, the self has two options before it. 1. To identify itself with the body, and abandon the right action in order to avoid the risk for the body. In that case the body will be saved but the self will have to reap the consequence of wrong action. 2. The self may see the truth that it is not the body and look after its own welfare ignoring the suffering it may cause for the body which, any how, has only a short existence. The self which knows, will take the second option.

Fear always puts this dilemma before the person, shall I save the body or shall I save the soul? To be fearless is to take a life long decision to care for the soul and not the body.

DAMA OR CONTROL OF ORGANS

Traditionally we are said to possess five sense organs (organs of perception) and five organs of action. Each of these organs is a vehicle of pleasure or pain for the mind. While their functioning is entirely in the realm
of nature, the self takes interest in them and enjoys the pleasure or pain.

One may pertinently ask the question, what is wrong in enjoying pleasures given by one's own organs? In fact, the younger generation exposed to modern culture often ask this question. There was a famous man in Greece, called Epicurus, who did not believe in life after death. He did not believe in a soul either. He was an atheist. He believed that with death our short life ends and that there is nothing else after that. Therefore, he advocated that people should enjoy bodily pleasures and make merry while the life lasts. Some poets like Omar Khayyam also composed lyrics asking people to eat, drink, mate and be happy. On the other hand there are the puritans for whom even smiling is taboo.

Sensual pleasures have two characteristics. They are never quenched and tend to make the person addicted to them. Secondly, they bring grief in the long run. We have only to look at the drug addicts to understand this. Drugs, drink and gambling have ruined many lives all through the thousands of years of human existence. Gambling includes other similar activities like horse races and lotteries.

Giita describes the steps of the downward drift in two famous verses, II-62 & 63.

ह्यायतो विश्वायान् पुंस स्मार्गस्तेयूपजायते
सज्रात् सज्जायते काम् कामात्रेनोपजायते
क्रोधा द्वारथित सम्मोह स्मायोहात् स्मृति विज्ञ:
स्मृति भ्रमा दुःखिन्नासो बुधिन्द्रास्त्रामर्यादति

dhyaayayah vishayaan pumsah sangah teshu
upajaayate

sangaat sanjaayate kaamah; kaamaat krodhah
abhijaayate
krodhaat bhavati sammohah, sammohat smrti-vibhramah

smrti bhrams'aat buddhi naas'ah, buddhinaas'aat pran'as'yati

"By thinking about the pleasures, one gets interested in them. From interest arises desire. Desire leads to anger (if the pleasure eludes him). Anger leads to infatuation (come-what-may attitude). Infatuation gives rise to loss of discretion. That leads to total nemesis of mind. He will be a wreck".

According to what is humourously called "Murphy's law", things always tend to go wrong. Physical systems come to a state of least energy, if they are able to. A hot body becomes cooler. A truck rolls down the hill. Murphy's law seems to apply in the mental plane also. It is common knowledge that vices tempt a person very strongly unlike virtues. The journey towards virtues is like an uphill walk. The journey towards vices is a downhill run. It requires the brakes of strong will to stop this accelerating velocity. In the mental complex, it is the mind, which is in direct command over the sense organs, which is the real culprit. **Buddhi** warns it against indulgence. But it is not strong enough to stop the mind. It is **dhriti** or will which has to take up this function of applying brakes. It has to be helped by the self in this exercise of restraint. **Mind**, discretion and will are three keys of the mental complex before the self. It is for the self to decide which key to press.

Arjuna was quite aware of this irresistible temptation when he put the question to Sri Krishna'a (III-36).

अष्ट कैन प्रयुक्तवधः पापम् चरति पुरुषः
अनिच्छाजनि वाच्यं, बलादिव नियोजितः

attha kena prayuktah ayam paapam
carati puurushah

anicchan api, vaarshn'eya, balaad iva niyojitaah?
"then, by what is a man impelled to sin as if driven
by force, even against his will?"

And in his reply, Krishna identified two vilest
enemies Kama & Krodha within the mind. They drive
man to vice compulsively. These should, therefore, be
controlled. But this is more easily said than done: One
obvious solution has been given in verse II-59.

विषया विनिवर्तने निराहारस्य देहिनः

Vishayaah vinivartante nir-aahaarasya dehinah

"pleasures will turn away from the famished soul"

This sentence has been interpreted in two ways
by commentators. One group said that niraahaara meant
starving of food (to the stomach). Based on this, starving
as a way of controlling senses has been advocated. The
other group have opined that it is not the starving of
the stomach that is intended, but the starving of the
relevant sense organs. The essential thing is that the
objects of pleasure must be made unavailable, a sort of
'out of sight, out of mind' principle.

I had a doctor friend who unfortunately contracted
the addiction to morphine. He used to inject small quantities
of morphine into his body himself. The dose gradually
increased till all his salary was not enough to meet the
cost of the drug he needed. He took to dishonest means
to earn more money. He used to sell away the medicines
supplied to his hospital even without opening of the
packages. Inevitably he was arrested, imprisoned for a
few months and, of course, lost his job. But in the prison,
he could not get the drug in spite of frantic appeals.
By the end of the period of imprisonment, he was cured
of his ruinous habit. Later on, a svaamiji admitted him
into his as'ram to look after the medical needs of its
inmates. Unavailability of the drug (starving) cured him.
From the above example, which is only one of many, it is reasonable to assume that adolescents should be protected from exposure to vices and temptations of sensual nature. Prevention is surely better than cure. Elders of society in the orient have always frowned on films and casinos which tempt youngsters of mouldable age. They have even set their face against co-educational institutions. Some societies veil their women from the sight of men. Under the influence of liberal social systems of rich nations, such resistance is crumbling. Now, some well meaning elders too even advocate free exposure to temptation on the plea that total restraint damages the normal psychology of man. The social opinion is swinging from one end to the other. Let us, however, note that Giita recognises physical control of organs (dama) as the first step to mental aversion to them.

But the very next phrase in the above verse is 'rasa varjam' (= the savour remains). If there is again access to the tempting object the habit returns with redoubled virility. Societies for rehabilitation of addicts know this very well. What should be done to remove these traces of desire?

The technique is well known to most mothers. When a child throws tantrums asking for the impossible, the mother diverts its mind to something else that interests the child - a doll or a sweet. The same technique has to be adopted to turn away an addict from his vice. But, whichever object within the universe is chosen as the agent of diversion, that object is ephemeral, i.e., short lived as everything in this perceptible universe is. Therefore, the Supreme Being, beyond the universe, ever-existing, should be the thing to which the mind is to be hitched on. This is what is stated in the remaining part of the above verse; "rasah api asya param driisht'vaa nivartate" (=even the savour will turn away from him when he sees
the Supreme Being). Restraining organs from indulging in pleasures of undesirable nature is called dama.

Of all the bodily cravings, the most formidable one is the sexual urge. It is a natural dispensation of fulfilling nature's purpose of reproduction and perpetuation of the species of ephemeral individuals. However, abstinence or continence (brahmacarya) has been regarded as an important practice of spirituality. It is strictly forbidden in the period of life known as brahmacarya aas'ramam (the stage of boyhood and youth set apart for learning).

Lots of discussions have been held on the need, practicability, desirability and moral authority with regard to celibacy. Describing the manifestations of God, it was said in verse VII-11, "dharma-aviruddhah bhutaeteshu kaamah asmi" i.e., God is the sexual desire that is not opposed to dharma in beings. Also, in X-28, he says "prajanah ca asmi kandarpah" i.e., I am the cupid, the progenitor. Bearing children was always held very sacred in all ancient religions. And marriage is the most pompous social function sanctified by religions even today.

Therefore, it is to be understood that dama does not mean putting organs to disuse. It is the prevention of their misuse or abuse. It only means abstaining from improper (dhrama viruddha) pleasures.

Naturalists contend that man is also a mammal like dog, mouse or cat; and, therefore, should not inhibit natural urges which fellow animals indulge in. Such inhibitions, say the psychiatrists, may result in mental diseases. If we look at the process of evolution in nature in its endeavours towards perfection, we see certain landmark stages in the process. The advent of charged particles among the disparate subatomic particles was one such stage which led to the distinctive organisation of matter. The next distinctive stage was the formation of self-duplicating molecules leading to the advent of life. The next important stage is the advent of man with intelligence.
and memory coupled with great suppleness of muscles. Apart from the natural life funcions, he is able to monitor and control natural urges for social good. It is a new step in evolution. If animal urges are natural, their regulation is equally natural. In regulating our urges, we are not acting against nature. On the other hand, we are furthering its purpose.

Why, then, do some people fall a prey to the urges and passions? That is because progress in nature is not in one go; it is a trial and error process. From apparent disorder and random interactions between opposing trends, order arises. Culture, vyavasaaya, samskriti and samskaara are all words which allude to the effort we make to control natural urges. In this progress towards perfection, we are still in the very early stages. Very often, unfortunately, our animal instincts are getting the better of our restraint (culture). Some times it appears that we have had a set back or slide down. But surely, nature (or God, if you choose, who has crated nature with a mandate to produce variety, evolution and perfection) will have its way in due course. We should do well to fall in line.

**S'AMA OR CONTROL OF MIND**

The seat of temptation towards sensual pleasures is not the organ concerned but the mind. In fact, mind itself has been clubbed with the indriyaas. Physical restraint of organs is relatively easier than the control of the mind. Most of us, when in society, thus restrain our urges. But the mind indulges freely in the contemplation of the pleasure. Of this person, Giita says in verse III-6:

कर्मेन्द्रियाणि संयम्य य आस्ते मनसा स्वरुः
इंद्रियायानां विमुखत्मा मिथ्याचार स्त्र सुच्यते

karmendriyan'i samyamya, yah aaste manasaa smaran.
"the deluded man who restrains his functional organs but continues to brood over the objects of organ pleasures, is said to be a hypocrite"

The control of mind from temptations is known as S'ama or mano-nigraha i.e., control of mind. It consists of developing disinterest in worldly pleasures by recognising the harm they do and turning the mind towards the Supreme Being. The ideal state of mind is the unperturbed, tranquil mind (manah-praasaadam). Traditionally six urges or passions are recognised as the six internal enemies (ari shad'vargam) They are, kaama (desire), krodha(anger), lobha(greed), moha(infatuation), mada(arrogance), and maatsarya (envy).

**Desire (kaama)** is the prime motivator of action, good or bad. Desires can be natural, harmless, ruinous or desirable. Desire for food and water when hungry or thirsty is natural and has to be quenched in order to live. Desire for tasty foods and drinks is apparently harmless but has the potential of blowing up to harmful levels, if unguarded. Sex which fulfils nature's purpose should be considered noble and should be approached with the piety it deserves. The pleasure of sex is the prasaad we receive for worshipping God (nature) in that form. Sex of the householder (grīhastha) only for procreation is included in Bhahmacarya.

One may mischievously ask, 'Isn't the desire for liberation (mukti) also a desire?' Yes, it is; and a desirable one too. It is the only desirable desire.

The antidote to desire is disinterest or vairaagyaam and contentment or tripti with whatever is available of its own accord, (yadricchaa-laabha santusht'ih).
Lobha: In the absence of contentment, desire deteriorates into greed or lobha. You may be familiar with the story written by Tolstoy "How much land does a man need?"

A rich tribal chief wanted to sell some of his land. He set a strange measure of the land that would be sold for a fixed amount. The buyer would get as much land as he can encircle from sunrise to sunset. One of the buyers came with a fast running horse, packed lunch and water. He mounted the horse precisely as the sun rose and immediately spurred him into a gallop. He strode east for about three hours dropping flags to mark his boundary. He felt a little tired and thirsty. But he did not stop to rest. He sipped a little water from his bottle while still riding on horse back. He turned southward. The sun was getting hotter. He perspired heavily. But he continued. Even at noon, he bit his lunch while on horse back hardly slowing down his pace. Just as he was thinking of turning west, he saw to his left a big patch of fertile land with thick vegetation. He could not resist the temptation to include the patch in his bargain. He took pretty long time encircling the land. By the time he came back to his original projected route, the sun was already going down. Anxiety over-took him. He began to spur his horse madly. But the poor creature was also tired and fell into a slow trot. He made a diagonal turn to the starting point to save time. But just as he was having a glimpse of the short peak at the starting point, he saw to his left another fertile patch which he estimated could be encircled in quarter of an hour. He went round that bit also. The sun appeared to be descending faster than he expected. He began whipping the horse. The poor animal could bear the ordeal no longer and dropped down dead. In desperation he threw away his baggage and began to run as hard as
he could. Soon the flag post was visible and people were crying out encouragingly to him. With renewed vigour, he ran faster than he ever did in his life. But the poor body stumbled, he fell down on his face and gave up the ghost. The chief of the tribe and his men came to the spot and confirmed that he was dead. The chief smiled sadly. He ordered his men to dig a pit of six feet to bury the dead man. That was all the land the greedy fellow really needed.

The man in the story only harmed himself by his greed. But how many persons do we find around us who think very lightly of human lives while they pursue their never-queued greed!

**Moha:** When delusion and senselessness combine with desire, that would be *moha*. It is delusion plus infatuation. Abandonment of reason is the hallmark of *moha*. It is in such abundance in almost every one of us that we hardly identify it as an undesirable trait. When we weep over the death of our dear ones, it is *moha*. When a person is after a woman who does not love him, it is *moha*. Pampering a child, out of a mistaken notion of love, while the child is falling into wrong ways is due to *moha*. Obduracy resulting from ignorance is *moha*. In fact, love (*mamata*) and hatred are *moha*. Moha is like darkness concealing objects and the only antidote for it is the light of knowledge. Knowledge of truth dispels ignorance.

In one of the famous Bhajagovinda's *lokas*, S'ankaraacaarya advises us to fight the attraction for the physical beauty of a woman by constantly reminding ourselves that it is only flesh and sinews. This is one way of practicing *vaairaaagya*, contemplating on the reality of the objects around us behind the image conjured up by the mind. Delusion is like a beautiful gift wrap over a worthless article. Remove the wrap and you will no longer covet the object.
Krodha: Anger arises out of nonfulfilment of desires or one’s own designs. Things happen due to a number of factors not all of which are under his control. This reality is missed due to ignorance (moha). Due to ahankaara, the person assumes that he is the doer and, therefore, obstacles arouse intense hatred in him which is expressed as anger. A person seized with uncontrollable anger loses reason and behaves as a mad man. Even viewed from the worldly angle, anger is a negative force which spoils more than it remedies a situation. Many a rishi in puraana's, when disturbed from penance, lost his temper and delivered a curse and lost the merit of penance that far earned.

Mada: which may be translated as snobbery, self conceit and arrogance, is born out of attributing to his own efforts one's success in undertakings or amassing wealth. He begins to think that whatever he does is right. He loses all traces of humility and is thus his own stumbling block for his spiritual progress.

Envy or maatsarya is the dissatisfaction that arises out of comparing oneself with others. It soon turns into hatred for the other, if he cannot match the other. If he is himself the better, it causes mada. It is like a smouldering fire in the heart which can burst into flames at the slightest spark or provocation from outside. The poor are generally envious of the rich. Politicians make use of this smouldering envy in people to fan it into flames of revolution and destruction, in the hope of pillaging in the wreckage. Most social upheavals can be traced to envy, either of the people or of their leaders. If envy can be sublimated to healthy competition, it would do society some good. But competition as a motive is a raajasik force which may at any time become envy. The ideal thing is to strive for perfection for its own sake.
Conquest over these six internal enemies and vairaga are essentially the products of restraint of the mind and its tranquillity. That mental restraint is s'ama. Behind every improper act is a passion-passion for pleasure, for possession, for praise, for money or for sex. In fact, if there were no passions, there would be perfect peace in the world. Hence the need for restraint of passions, s'ama. S'ama is not only essential for the beginner in spiritual pursuit but also to one who has reached the final stage of spiritual practice.

Dama is the physical restraint of expression of internal passions. One who is capable of such restraint is considered 'civilised'. S'ama is the elimination of passions from the mind itself. One who has cultivated it is considered 'cultured'.

**TITIKSHA OR ENDURANCE.**

S'rii S'ankaraaacaarya prescribed four exercises for spiritual aspirants. This quaternity is known as 'saadhana catusht'ayam'. One of them is known as 'S'ama-adi shatka sampatti' (i.e. the six qualities commencing with s'ama). Three among them are s'ama, dama and titikshaa. Titiksha is the tolerance to pairs of experiences like heat and cold, hunger and thirst, esteem and insult, pleasure and pain etc.

Experiences come to us from three sources. Some of them arise from the desires of the mind. Control of the mind so as to avoid them is s'ama. Some experiences result from the employment of our organs. Control of organs of pleasure to avoid such experiences is dama. The causation of these two types of experiences is from within our body and hence can be avoided by controlling the mind and body.

The third set of experiences come from outside,
from natural factors. They cannot be avoided by our effort. One has to put up with them. The consequences of actions done in the previous birth (praarabdha) are also usually clubbed with these unavoidable experiences which have to be endured.

Is this just a common sense advice that 'what cannot be cured must be endured'? Does it sound defeatist or escapist? The modern man might say, "If there is cold, we shall fight it with heaters. If there is heat, we shall combat it with air conditioning and refrigeration. Why should we bear them?" Titiksha comes out of the faith that these external factors affect the body and not the self within. The self within is eternal, not hurt by weapons nor burnt by fire. If we understand this truth, not just intellectually, but actually live it, endurance is automatic and needs no effort. Endurance by effort is only a preliminary step for what would become automatic later. To know that I am not the body is the very basis of spiritual emancipation. Nay, it is spiritual emancipation. That is why, at the very beginning of the teaching, Giita says that heat and cold and pleasure and pain are produced by the contact of the sense centres of the body (with the environment); that they come and go, do not last long. And they should be endured (II-14). The next verse (II--15) emphasises its importance.

यं हि न व्यधयन्ते पुरुषं पुरुषर्वथं
समुद:खुलें धीरं सोऽदृशुत्त्वाय कल्पते

Yam hi na vyadhayanti ete purusham
purusharshabha,
am-a-dukhaha-sukham dhiiram,
sah amittattvaaya kalpate.

"That sobre person who is not troubled by them and treats sorrow and pleasure alike, is competent to be immortal".
This word 'immortal' (amritatvam) is used again and again in Gita. There are two interpretations of the word. 1. When the self joins the Supreme Being, it becomes eternal. But even now he is akshara or the one who does not perish. Where, then, is the question of his 'becoming' immortal? He is immortal. 2. Everything that is born has to die. Having been already born, he must die. He cannot avoid death (of the body) in this life. But he can avoid his next death by avoiding next birth i.e. by joining the Supreme Being. Immortality, therefore, does not mean 'no death' as the word 'a + mrit' would indicate. It means no birth.

Titiksha has wider applicability in human interactions. We know that all actions of human beings are determined by the nature and attitudes they are born with. Most of their actions are accordingly 'natural' and they have little control on them. In a sense, they are as natural as a cyclone or an earthquake which are phenomena of nature. If we should endure natural phenomena, for the same reason we should also endure human aberrations which are equally natural. Animal behaviour sometimes appears intelligent and sometimes instinctive, i.e. natural. Scientists believe that their behaviour is all instinctive except in primates. We should try to assess how much of human behaviour is instinctive, i.e. natural; we should endure at least the instinctive part. An insane man or a man not in his senses is not punished for a crime which would entail heavy punishment in the case of a normal man.

Here we may get introduced to an allied virtue called forbearance and forgiveness (Kshama). It is an extension of endurance because, if endurance is perfect and complete, the question of retaliation does not arise. True endurance includes non-retribution. Forgiving is to consider the harmer as if he has done no harm at all.
Apart from the spiritual value, forgiveness is also of great benefit in worldly affairs. First and foremost, it prevents escalation of ill feelings. If the other person is not of demonic temperament, he may, when sobriety returns after some time, see the futility of continued enmity. If he has also a spark of good in him, he may see his folly and become a changed man. It is a little contribution to peace in the world. The renowned yogi Vemana says in one of his verses that if an enemy, who deserves to be killed, falls into your hands, it is better to let him go after doing him a favour.

Spiritually speaking, forgiveness is not so much a favour done to the harmer as it is a measure of cleansing one's own mind. A seeker cannot afford to waste his time in a triviality like retaliation against the folly of an uncultured and misguided man who is too weak willed to control his passions. Further, he understands that the same self dwells in both of them. How, then, can he retaliate against himself? It is such perfect thinking which made Jesus Christ endure crucifixion with the words on his lips "Oh, God, pardon them because they know not what they do".

It is, however, not suggested that crime should go unpunished. Punishing is the duty entrusted to a kshatriya (the State or the administration in modern parlance) in accordance with the code (smriti) in vogue. In the discharge of that duty, the kshatriya should not waver due to feelings of pity or affection. If a kshatriya is enjoined by the society to discharge the duties of punishment and he happens to be a spiritual aspirant, the punishments he gives in accordance with the code handed to him by the society, do not block his spiritual progress so long as he takes no personal interest in it.
For the individual seeker, forgiving is concomitant to elimination of hatred and mamata. Giita repeatedly stresses the equal treatment to friend and foe. In verse VI-9.

सहिष्णुज्ञातायमस्य मध्यस्थ द्वेष्यवन्यं प्रयत्न
साधुप्रवगी च पापेशु समाबुद्धिः विशिष्यते

suhrid, mitra arī, udaassīina, madhyastha, dvēshya, bandhushu
saadhushu, api ca paapeshu, samabuddhih visishyate.

"He excels who has the same mind towards a good hearted person, a friend, enemy, an unconcerned person, a middleman, a person worthy of hatred, relatives, saints and sinners"

The list includes all possible relationships one may have with persons out in the society. It is recommended that all of them should be treated alike.

'INBORN TENDENCIES OR GUN'AAS

All men are born virtually with the same anatomy and physiology. Yet they are distinct from one another so that we can recognise a person even from a long distance without much effort. Their mental attitudes are also as distinctively recognisable as their external features are. Consequently their responses to similar events also differ giving them a distinct individuality. This is not just the result of different upbringing or differing situations. It seems to be due to their individual tendencies and attitudes which come naturally to them. Often they find it difficult to overcome them. Actually no two individuals are identical in their approach to matters of life, dealings with fellowmen or response to particular events. There are as many
tendencies as there are human beings. For convenience of understanding, the ancients grouped them into three broad categories.

One group are lazy and easy going who make no effort to understand things before acting. They are not capable of controlling their urges. Without offending any one, we may consider them relatively less evolved, still clinging to their animal instincts. Since this group is characterised by an unilluminated mind, they are called taamasiks. Tamas means darkness. The rakshasas of the puraanaas typify such persons.

The second group are very active, often over-active, with strong likes and dislikes, deep emotions and feelings. They are self conscious, usually self conceited. Strong emotions often cloud reason and they are generally indiscrete and exhibit vanity and bravado. One of the several meanings of rajas being passion and emotion, this tendency is called raajasik.

The third group of persons are characterised by deliberation and rectitude, duty and devotion and sincerity. Their passions are very much under control. They are seekers of knowledge. They subordinate their personal benefit to rightness of action (dharma). Sat means good and truthful. This group is, therefore, called saattviks.

The three tendencies or gun aas as they are called in Giita, are endowed by the ancients a much deeper role in the universe than just categorising people. Sattva, rajas and tamas are taken to represent dharma, activity and inertia in the universe. They also are supposed to represent truth, antitruth (distortion) and ignorance. The manifestation of nature (prakriti) itself is said to be governed by the three propensities.
Born of nature (prakriti) these gun'as are present in all the manifestations of nature, including the human body also, in various proportions. Depending on which of them predominates, the person is known as saattvik, raajasik or taamasik. The three gun'as are also said to bind the self to the body by luring him with knowledge, desire and laziness respectively. They are considered so important that a whole chapter and about 40 more verses in Giiita are related to the gun'as detailing how each activity is influenced by the dominant gun'a.

A saattvik person is keen to acquire true knowledge which he gets by his ability to analyse and discern what is right and what is not; what to indulge in and what to refrain from. Knowledge gives an aura to him. His personality is marked by two cardinal traits viz., absence of self interest and conformity with the precept of the ancient sages. He is committed to the duties enjoined by them. Though he is not interested in the result of his actions and is not perturbed by their success or failure, he puts his heart and soul into whatever he does. Whatever he does, he does with firmness, determination and unshakable faith. Whether it is charity, worship or other religious rites, he seeks no personal benefit from them but does them meticulously as a matter of duty. He is not after easy pleasures which leave a trail of remorse. On the other hand, he pursues enduring happiness that comes at the end of arduous effort. He likes foods which are tasty, nutritious, meeting the requirements of the body, causing no discomfort but dispelling illhealth.

A raajasik person is a man of the world, characterised by deep self interest, ambition and vanity. He would go to any length to gain his ends. From charity, worship and religious rites also, he expects return, recognition and publicity. Even while he gives alms, he frets at having to spend his money. He is not steadfast
and may abandon a work half way, if hee thinks it will cause him bodily strain not commensurate with the outcome (for him). If he does put in great effort, it is for show or to cause pain to his opponents. He has no proper perspective of right and wrong. The motives for his perseverance are the fulfilment of his desires and acquisition of wealth. He is after easy pleasures which will eventually bring him sorrow. He is swayed by strong likes and dislikes. He likes foods which are very spicy, saltish, acidic, pungent or bitter, which might even cause him discomfort. He likes to have his food steaming hot.

A taamaasik person carries no charisma about him because his basic features are foolishness, dullness, indolence and lack of reason. He is endowed with deep passions and poor discretion. His perceptions are perverse, seeing right as wrong and vice versa; wrong time, wrong place and wrong method mark his actions. If, at all, he gives alms, it will be to an undeserving person at the wrong time and place. When he performs religious rites, he does not conform to instructions, is indifferent to the hymns or attendant charity. He is generally lazy and is a procrastinator. But occasionally he would plunge into action due to some passion as if it were the only thing to do. He would persist in it blindly without caring to see whether he is harming others or even himself. He would not even consider whether it is within his capability. Such stupid obduracy is characteristic of him. (This obduracy is to be clearly distinguished from the determination of the saattvik person which comes out of conviction in the rightness of action after acquiring full knowledge). The taamasik person seeks pleasures which bring him misery both at beginning and end (like addiction to narcotics). He likes foods which are stale, left over and unclean.

Tamas is the worst of the three gun'as and
should be shunned. *Rajas* is helpful to the man of the world if he avoids excesses. But the seeker should try to get over it. *Sattva* is the best of them. However, since even *sattva* also binds the self in the body albeit for a noble purpose, the ideal thing is to be without all the three. Such a person is called *gunaatiita*.

**S'RADDHA OR FAITH AND SINCERETY**

*S'raddha* has been generally translated as faith. Faith is the firm acceptance of a concept, a firm belief. But s'raddha includes action in conformity with faith. *S'raddha* is a motive force with a direction. According to Giita, *s'raddha* depends on the predominant gun'a of a person. In general, a *saattvik* person does a thing fully conforming to procedures, as a duty and without an eye on the outcome. A *raajasik* does follow the procedures but does with great show and ostentation and for a benefit to himself. The *tamasik* will have little regard to procedures. His object is to harm others.

Weak faith or lack of faith comes out of ignorance or doubt. One has to clear all doubts to his full satisfaction so as to develop firm faith. Giita warns (IV-40) that a doubting person will have happiness neither in this world nor beyond. He will only perish. There is a humorous parable of Raamakrishn'a Paramahamsa in this regard.

A disciple had to cross a river on urgent work. There was no raft available. Nor did he know swimming. He went to his guru and sought his help. The guru picked up a small paper, wrote something on it, rolled it into a talisman and tied it on his arm and said, "My dear fellow, this is a very powerful talisman of exceptional power. With this on your arm, you can just walk on water as if it were land. Go ahead". The
disciple started off and was soon walking over the water as effortlessly as on land. He was very happy.

But the disciple was curious to know what the talisman contained. When he reached the middle of the stream, he could no longer restrain his inquisitiveness. He untied the talisman from his arm and opened it. It had a small scroll of paper on which was written a single word, "RAAMA". He exclaimed in utter disbelief, "Oh! This is all!". That very moment he sank into the water.

Persons of raajasik nature may start off quite sincerely. But gradually, the faith weakens when the results do not follow quickly. They tend to abandon the work halfway. To prevent such drop outs, the stories accompanying every vrat usually cite the ill that befalls if the vrat is discontinued half way. Such a belief is very wide spread. Arjuna himself had this in mind when he asked Krishn'a what would happen to a person who is unable to compete a spiritual exercise. Krishna assured him, "na hi kalyaan'akrit kas'cit durgatim, taata, gacchati" i.e. any one who does good, never comes to grief. This categorical assurance is an inspiration for those who hesitate to begin, lest they should abandon halfway.

People worship different forms of God. Sometimes it depends on the objective of worship. One who is setting out to learn may worship Sarasvati; another who is frustrated with miseries may choose to worship Saturn, the lord of miseries. Traditionally people have isht'a daivas in each family. It may be Raama, Krishn'a, Amba, Kaali etc. People of other religions like Islam or Christianity may worship their own forms. A doubt can arise whether such a legion of different gods will cause the benefits of worship to elude the worshippers. Verse VII-21 dispels this doubt.
**REFLECTIONS ON GIITA**

चो चो यां यां तनुं भक्तं श्रद्धायां विच्छलं तस्य तस्याः चलां श्रद्धा ताभेव विद्यामः

yah yah yaam yaam anum bhaktah s'raddhayaa arcitum icchati
tasya tasya acalaam s' raddhaam taam eva vidadhaami aham.

"Whatever form a devotee wishes to worship with faith, I (God) make that faith of his steady".

स तथा श्रद्धा युक्त सत्स्याराम मीहते

laphate ca taath kaaman mayaa eva vihitaan hi taan.

"He endeavours to propitiate him (that form) with that faith. And from him (that form) he obtains desires-benefits which are decreed by me alone".

Some very important concepts have been made clear in the above two verses.

1. God helps us to have steady faith in whatever form we choose to worship for whatever purpose.

2. He does not mind which form you choose to worship.

3. The form we choose is immaterial. It is the faith which is important.

4. If we worship a form with desire, that desire will be fulfilled.

5. Our wishes are granted by the decree of God, though they may appear to have been given by the form worshipped by us.

What exactly is the 'form' which occurs in the above discussion? The word 'tanu' used in the first
verse means the body, form or manifestation. It follows that the forms are not the pure Supreme Being (because he is formless). They are embodied beings. In the next verse, these have been called devas. It has further been said that those who worship the devas go to the devas and those who worship 'me' i.e., the Supreme Being, come to 'me'. The existence of a separate class of beings called devas is also found in verse IV-12. It was said there that propitiation of devas will fulfil desires. In III-11 also it has been said that the devas and humans should foster each other's welfare. This discussion does not seem to fit into vedaanta (philosophy). It is slipping into the veda part of knowledge which deals with the methods of obtaining material benefits through worship of relevant gods.

For the present purpose, we may conclude that it does not matter which deva or god we worship. It is the faith that matters in giving us the result (as ordained by God).

Closely related to faith is the quality of steadfastness or determination (dhriti). By this quality, the person persists in his set course of good action even in the face of obstacles, set backs or distractions. This steadfastness is also coloured by gun'a. The toamasik person is also obdurate in clinging to vices and wrong acts refusing to reason. The raajasik person displays determination in pursuit of money, fame and passion. It is the saattvik person who is steadfast in good deeds which he undertakes after satisfying himself that it is his duty.

We often meet with people who, after listening to a talk, decide on the spur of the moment to start a practice - may be yoga, meditation, pooja etc. After just a few days, they discontinue. Today one may be a follower of one baba, tomorrow of another. Such fickle
person ends up with nothing. People who have not sat still even for a few minutes, assert that the efficiency of meditation is not a fact. They fail to appreciate the importance of long practice. One will not believe that the human body is capable of such marvellous feats, until one sees them in the Olympics. The athletes have achieved them after strenuous practice with great perseverance i.e., s'radddha. Our mind is also capable of obtaining great insight into the truth of the universe, if it is cultivated with s'radddha like the athletes. Without s'radddha, there is no endeavour; without endeavour there is no perfection; without perfection, there is no evolution. S'radddha is, therefore, the corner stone of human progress.

**SVADHARMA OR ONE’S OWN DUTY.**

As explained in the first chapter, nature is the cause of all activity in the universe and the relationship between cause and effect. The self (both universal and individual) is only a witness and enjoyer. The body, including the mental complex and the attitudes are part of nature - need to be activated to act. But their actions are in accordance with the capability or limitations built into them by inheritance. That is called svabhaava or innate nature. Even the jnaani, it has been said, can do little while the body goes after its nature. He has to be content with the awareness that he is not the doer and the gun'as are indulging in their attitudes. (III-28).

Biologically viewed also, a person is endowed with certain physical and mental characters in the form of inherited genes. By and large, he has to act in accordance with them. It is a basic characteristic of nature that no two individuals are exactly identical. Persons differ widely in their tastes and abilities. The welfare
of the society consists in taking from each individual the service he is capable of rendering and coordinating their services for the overall benefit of the society.

We are familiar today with aptitude tests to help in choosing branches of study or technology as well as in recruiting employees. Managers of business and industry allot work to their employees according to their skill and ability. Even a layman knows that there is no point sending a poltroon into the army.

Our ancients who studied human nature in greater depth than physical sciences, were aware of the need to put the right man to the right job. For this purpose, they identified four broad groups of persons with distinct aptitudes. In those days the socially important vocations were not as varied as today. So they were content with four divisions to whom they entrusted duties that matched with their nature.

Group 1. These people are generally endowed with a predominantly saattvik temperament, peace loving, capable of critical analysis of events and inclined to academic and spiritual pursuits.

This group, called the Braahman'aas, were required to know by heart the vedas and s'aastras and pass them on to the next generation without distortion of sound or sense. In those ancient times, when writing was not as prevalent as today, there could have been no other way of preserving the great treatises of knowledge. We should be thankful to them for their foresight which has made this knowledge available to us today verbatim. The Brahmaan'aas were also entrusted with the perpetuation of various religious rites. They were the custodians of moral and spiritual values in the society by disseminating them by example and precept. In the modern context, they are the academicians, scientists and judges.
Group 2. These are characterised by valour, courage, leadership and ability to organise people and enforce discipline. They are predominantly raajasik in temperament.

This group, called the Kshatriyas, were entrusted with governance, warfare, political diplomacy and maintenance of law and order by punishing crime. In our times, these could be equated with the army, police, administrators and political leaders.

Group 3. These people are thrifty, capable of careful husbanding of resources and producing wealth and protecting it, and amassing it. They have a blend of saattvik and raajasik temperament.

This group; called the Vais'yaas, were entrusted with agriculture, animal husbandry, trade and business. This group is easily identified even today as the businessmen, industrialists and bankers. They form the backbone of the economy of the society.

Group 4. These people have bodily strength and manual skills but not academic or entrepreneurial bent of mind. Others who are unambitious and predominantly taamasik have also been included in this group which is a sort of miscellaneous group.

This group, called the S'udras, chiefly constitute the labour force, the artisans and craftsmen. Even today, the labour constitutes a powerful and substantial section of the society on whom depends the productivity of the nation.

Economists identify four basic factors of production. Similarly, the ancients have identified these basic groups for the sound and all round spiritual and material development of the society with sensible distribution of activity matching with their aptitudes and abilities. This ensured employment for every one
and no over-crowding in any particular activity by ill suited aspirants.

_Dharma_ has many meanings of which two are pertinent here. It means the characteristic property of a thing or being. For example, we say that sweetness is the _dharma_ (property) of sugar. _Dharma_ also means right conduct. These two meanings are blended in the word _svadharma_. But what is right conduct? How do we know it? Who determines it?

There is a verse in the epilogue of Vishn'u Sahasranaamam, a compilation of the thousand epithets of Vishn'u, given in the Mahaabhaarata.

_सर्वार्गमानामाचारः प्रथमं परिकल्पितः_
_आचार प्रभवो धर्मः; धर्मस्य प्रधुरचुचः_

`sarva aagamaanaam aacaarah prathamam parikalpitah_

*aacaara prabhavah dharmaah, dharmaasya prabhuh acyutah.*

"Custom (usage) was formed before the scriptures (came). Dharma is born out of custom. Vishn'u is the Lord of Dharma."

Of the many meanings of aagama, the relevant meaning here is _sastraik code_ or scripture. The codes come after a usage or custom is established. Dharma is the adherence to those codes. And God is the lord or supervisor of dharma. i.e., violation of dharma will be a sin.

To give a parallel analogy, people bring into use a language. Grammar comes into use later to fix the existing usages into a frame. Thereafter, grammar becomes dictate, though people themselves made both the language and the grammar.
All modern codes of justice or constitutions are born in a similar manner. Society itself evolves a code for itself. But its violation becomes a punishable offence. There is a famous dictum, "Dharmo rakshati rakshitah" which means that if the dharma is protected (by us) it protects (us).

Any violation of dharma will offend God because he is the lord of dharma, 's'as'vata dharma goptaa" i.e. protector of the eternal dharma (XI-18). God has declared (IV-7) that whenever there is decline of dharma and rise of adharma, He will create himself (born by himself).

There are four ways to determine what is right and what is not.

1. One's own sense of right: This is what buddhi does in the mental complex. It is an in-built sense of justice and fair conduct which is fortified by dhriti, linked to the self. But very often, it is clouded by ahamkaara and manas(mind). Giita says that desire is located in indriyas, manas and buddhi (III-40). Therefore, buddhi is also likely to be deflected by self interest. It is not an absolutely reliable guide, at least most of the time.

2. Social consensus: Usually it is the social consensus that ultimately takes shape as a code of conduct. Disapproval or ostracism by one's immediate society greatly influences human conduct, overriding his built-in notions of right and wrong. Society, often, due to an innate leader worship, entrusts the authority to a few leaders. If the leaders, out of ignorance or by design, misinterpret, dharma gets distorted. If all the leaders in an isolated small society are foolish and taamasik, morbid or wicked, dangerous customs will begin to reign supreme. Most ethnic and religious confrontations can be seen to be the result of such group foolishness and cruelty in a
society or their ill informed leaders. Therefore, social consensus also is not a reliable guide.

3. Legislation: This is an authorised version of social consensus on a larger scale. If the members of the legislatures are devoted to social welfare in thought, word and deed, this organised system of collective social consensus will work well. It is, however, almost impossible to gather together so many spiritually advanced people. More often, members who are ignorant of the implications of a regulation, or who have a vested interest in it, or who have malicious political or selfish benefit out of it, may raise their hands and the regulation, even if faulty, becomes a law. It is thereafter upheld by courts. In a democracy, there is perpetual risk of numbers hijacking justice.

4. Scriptures: These have been written by selfless sages who had nothing but the good of humanity at heart. They desired neither money nor fame. In fact, the authorship of some of the scriptures is not even known. It is not reasonable to suspect that they would have preached what they did not believe in; or that they intended to cheat later generations. Therefore, it would be safest to follow their teachings many of which have stood the test of time. However, they were also written by human beings based on the circumstances prevailing in their times. They may need to be adapted suitably without altogether distorting the spirit. Giita says (XVI - 24):

\textit{tasmaat' s'astram pramaan'am te kaarya akaar Ya vyavasthitau}

\textit{jnaatvaa s'astra vidhaana-uktam karma kartum iha arhasi.}
"Therefore, for determining what should or should not be done, s'aastra is the authority for you. Knowing the rules of scriptures you should do your work in this world."

The duty (dharma) prescribed in accordance with one's own nature is svadharma (one's own duty). Obviously svadharma includes the vocations suggested to the four categories of people described above. Verse XVIII-45 assures that being devoted to their respective duties, men attain perfection. Let us have a look at verses XVIII-47 and 48 which further emphasise the importance of sticking to one's dharma even if it may appear defective.

क्षेयानू स्वधर्मा विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुस्थितात्
स्वभावनियतंकर्म कुत्वंत्रायोऽति किल्लिबिषम्
S'reyaan svadharmah vigun'ah par'dharmaat su-anushthitaat
svabhavaa niyatam karma kurvan na aapnoti kilbisham

"Even a defective svadharma is preferable to well performed dharma of others. By doing work prescribed by one's nature, one does not incur sin".

सहजं कर्मं कौन्तेय सदोषमयं न त्यजेत्
सर्वारंभा हि दोषभं भृगेनागिरिवर्गवृताः:
sahajam karma, kaunteya, sa-dosham api na tyajet
sarva aarambhaah hi doshena dhuumen aghin
iva aavritaah

"One should not give up work suited to one's nature even if it is defective; (for) every work (in this world) is covered with blemish, like fire covered with smoke."

Every work in this world is defective in the sense that it binds the self to the result. Also, as we have seen earlier, the work itself is not of importance. It
is the devotion with which it is carried out and the steadfastness with which one adheres to his dharma which pleases God, the Lord and Protector of Dharma.

Here is a story from ancient literature which illustrates the point. A person was performing long penance for attaining high spiritual perfection. A bird flying over his head shed its droppings on his head. He became angry and looked at the bird with an angry stare. The bird at once dropped down dead. He became aware of the power he attained as a result of his penance. He thought that there was no more need to continue his penance since he reached (as he thought) his goal. He set out into the world. He stopped in front of a house and cried out for alms. (Saadhuus were expected to live on alms from house holders). The lady of the house was serving her husband at the time and was late in bringing alms for him. He grew angry that an accomplished sage like him should have been kept waiting so long by an ordinary housewife. He stared at her angrily expecting her to drop down like the bird. But nothing happened. On the other hand, she smiled at him and said, "I am not that poor bird to drop dead by your stare". He was surprised how she came to know of the bird episode. He understood that she was at a higher stage than himself. (The reason as we should know is, she devotedly performed her duty as a housewife, namely, serving her husband well. That gave her greater spiritual status than the sage who was proud, arrogant and angry despite his long penance). The sage bowed before her and said, "Pardon my self conceit. But tell me what I should do to attain perfection." She advised him to go to one, Dharma vyaadha, to learn more about spiritual practice.

The sage went to Dharmavyaadha after a pretty long search. When he met him, the fellow was slaughtering goats, removing their skins and bowels and
cutting different parts and selling the meat to customers. The sage was overtaken with revulsion at the sight and wondered whether the lady had played a practical joke on him. But he was surprised when the butcher saw him, welcomed him and said, "So you have been sent to me by that venerable lady!" After a long wait, the butcher closed his shop and turned to the sage and said, "You were wondering how a butcher who kills animals everyday could be spiritual. The goats are already destined to die. I am only the instrument, doing the duty enjoined by my family profession. At any rate, it is only their physical bodies that die which must, any how, be cast off by the self which is not killed at all". The message of the story is clear. It is the same as has been set out in the two preceding verses of Giita.

Verse III-35 is more forthright in declaring unambiguously that it is better to die doing one's own dharma than opting out for another's dharma. This is the greatest stress laid on adherence to svadharma.

Socially speaking, division of labour is a sound principle. Some evolved insects like ants, bees and termites meticulously observe this because their mental complex has not been weakened by the six internal enemies.

Caste was doing well for a long time. But today, caste is acquired by birth. Giita does not mention it. Caste, according to it, is by aptitude and vocation (gun'a karma vibhaagas'ah). In olden days, the son was invariably an apprentice to his father from childhood. Marriages were confined to peers in the same vocation for the sake of benefits associated with such marriages. Probably genetics and family environment also lent a helping hand in early acquisition of specific skills and knowledge by the succeeding generations. A whole
set of such factors were responsible for adopting caste by birth.

Sveami Vivekānanda strongly believed in caste. He declared, "I do not propose any levelling of castes. Caste is a very good thing. There is no country without caste". He suggested occasional 'readjustments'. For instance, we could have groups such as the scientific and academic community (the so-called intellectuals), the administrative community (which includes the army, police, civil services and peoples' representatives), the business community (which should include businessmen, industrialists, bankers, farmers and labour). Vivekānanda envisaged eventual elimination of labour with large scale mechanisation and automation. They might then become technologists. His most significant and meaningful statement on caste is worth deep consideration. "The plan in India is to make everybody a Brahmin, i.e., the ideal community. Down the history attempts have always been made to raise the lower classes. We have only to raise them without bringing down anybody."

The message of Gītā appears to be that one should identify his true nature and develop his personality to perfection, rather than allow himself to be lured by the success of others in their fields. The identification of nature seems to be crucial. Vaalmiiki was a hunter until his nature was revealed to him by sage Naarada. Thereafter, he blossomed into a great poet - the first poet of the world - and gave the world the immortal Rāamaayan'a. If a person shifts from one activity to another, it is because the other activity seems to give more money; or because he is jealous of some one in that vocation and wished to pull him down by entering the field himself. The motive is faulty. It is a set back to his spiritual progress. Decimation of
self-interest is the first step of the spiritual staircase. Hence the insistence on susadharma.

Incidentally, it is also emphasised that the good of the society and the fulfilment of all its needs should be given a higher priority over individual interest.

Similarly, an individual also can give to himself a particular vow or discipline (niyam) and adhere to it. The niyam itself is not so important as the strict adherence to it, because it is s'raddha which pleases God. One may vow to starve on a particular day of the week. Another may delete a particular article from his food. And so on.

Gandhiji vowed that he would not drink milk. Once he was very ill and the doctors insisted that he must take milk in order to survive. He would not agree. A clever ploy was employed by his well-wishers. When he took the vow, they said, he had only the cow's and buffalo's milk in his mind because that was the only milk consumed by the people. Therefore, they argued that drinking goat's milk will not violate his niyam. Gandhiji succumbed to the ploy. It spared him for the great task he was born to accomplish. But spiritually, it was a dialectical juggle with which he could not reconcile himself fully for a long time.

In simple terms, the message is "Be yourself. Do not imitate others." - an advice valid in all fields of activity.

But why was this apparently social issue included in this great but concise spiritual guide book as God's dictum? And why was it given so great emphasis?

The Supreme Being created prakriti (nature) with a mandate to produce diversity. Thus He is responsible for the variation. So there is nothing strange in the declaration that He created the castes. That
is why, in the same breath, Krishna says that this does not touch him. Since every individual has a different nature, each has his own svabhaava. Any work is neither good nor bad in itself. It is just an event in nature. It is the motive which makes it good or bad. It is the s'raddhaa that is important. The Lord assures that by doing one's duty with devotion, a person can get his emancipation. Work is worship. No work is high, none low. Castes are meant to complement each other for the benefit of the society. It is the evil genius of man that makes them confront each other.

GOOD AND BAD PEOPLE

From the dawn of humanity, there have existed two classes of people, the good and the bad. Giita acknowledges this and categorises them as those endowed with divine and demonic qualities. (XVI). It has been figuratively stated that for all beings that were born, nature is the womb and God, the seed. All of them are God's children. If so, why are some of them demonic? In the puraan'aas, Kas'yapa prajaapati is said to have had two wives, Diti and Aditi. All the children of the former were demons and all those of the latter were devas.

In a genetical study conducted in U.S.A., 1600 and odd descendants of a person who married twice were traced. The first wife was an educated and noble lady and the second was an illiterate and feeble minded one. The descendants of the noble lady were all educated and normal citizens, some held high positions as teachers, clergymen and judges and one of them was the vice-president of the country. None of them was ever convicted for crime.
On the other hand, the progeny of the second wife were all below average; some were criminals and prostitutes. Many went to jail for crimes and not even one held an esteemed position.

The above case study is strikingly similar to the puraan’ik story of the birth of the devas and asuras. Incidentally, it dispels the unfounded belief still persisting in some people that the seed of male parent alone determines the potentialities of the progeny.

The geneticists presume that vice and crime are the result of genes for feeble minded-ness. That explains why Buddha, Jesus and Gandhi have not been able to reduce the violence in the world. The mythological avataars could do no better.

With advancement of the science of genetics and breeding, varieties with desired characters are being bred in plants and animals. In human beings it has not yet been possible to breed for characters because of the high pedestal on which society has placed lust, mistaken for love, far above the interest of the society. The advances in biotechnology and extra-uterine pregnancy may probably, in future, make it possible to breed for divine virtues and eliminate the genes for taamasik characters, if not the rajjasik ones too. For the present we have to contend with the demonic traits.

Giiita seems to offer little hope in the matter. According to it, God seems to have condemned the demonics to rebirth in aasuric wombs (XVI-19) and go down to the lowest states (XVI-20).

From the social point of view, their elimination or at least reformation is necessary, because they constitute the greatest source of human misery. Education, training and environment can do some good.
Fortunately, however, the two categories are not strictly exclusive. Most people have some good and some bad characters. Also, they are good or bad according to circumstances. There are instances of bad men turning good after an emotional experience. If they persevere under the guidance of an able guru, there is no reason why they should not evolve from one birth to another.

God seems to have good reason for this dispensation. We probably could not appreciate the value of good except by comparison with bad. If there were no bad in the world in the form of sense attractions, all men would have been good. Then they would not be born again and creation would come to a standstill. Hence the need for bad people. The satisfaction of life is only a continuous achievement of progress towards perfection. The progress can only be measured against a scale of bad.

The bad people also have souls which are part of the same Supreme Being as ours. We should not, therefore, abhor them. On the other hand, we should be thankful to the Lord that He has blessed us with good qualities. We should also thank Him for placing before us models of what we could become if we are not vigilant. The spiritually advanced ones have a role to play in weaning the persons with demonic attitudes from vice by setting a good example and persuading them to turn Godwards.
THE IDEAL SEEKER

After the detailed appraisal of the virtues to be cultivated by a seeker, it would be useful to describe an ideal seeker who possesses them.

You can see that he keeps himself and his surroundings very clean. It is generally presumed that a spiritual person does not care for his personal upkeep. We imagine a person with an unkempt beard, dishevelled hair and unwashed clothes. Far from it. A seeker takes good care of his body. Of course, he would not wear gaudy, showy and costly apparel. But he is always trim in his well washed clothes. He takes healthy foods without craving for taste. Surely, he keeps tobacco, coffee and narcotics at a distance. Moderation and temperence in food, sleep and recreation mark him out.

He avoids crowds and prefers solitude which he utilises for the study of spiritual literature or meditation. When he is in company, he is very frugal with his words and never boasts of himself. He is frank and honest, seldom hiding anything. He never utters a lie, nor breaks his word. He never speaks ill of others, especially in their absence. He speaks softly and pleasantly. No harsh word will ever escape his lips because he does not get angry.

He is very sympathetic, kind and generous. While he is generous in helping others, he is averse to accept even gifts. He is not interested in amassing wealth or property either for himself or his progeny. However, he would earn honestly without causing pain to others. He would use his earnings for the welfare of the society and not exclusively for his family. He is contented with his lot and happy with what he gets. He is neither ambitious nor envious of his peers. But on that count, he is not resigned to inaction. On the other hand, he
is ever active and cheerful. He always carries a smile on his face and can laugh heartily over a healthy joke.

Duty is his motto. He does not do anything for his personal gain or pleasure. He engages himself in activities prescribed by his scriptures, or those that come naturally to him. He neither prides over his success nor broods over his failures. He takes them all in his stride. He takes decisions after careful consideration. Once the decision has been taken, he is firm in his resolve and pursues the work to its conclusion. He is unmoved by praise or criticism. He bears pleasure or pain with the same equanimity with which he bears changes in weather or natural phenomena.

He does enjoy pleasures through his senses like a beautiful scenery or charming music. He however, does not crave for them. He sees in them the marvellous perfection in nature and the kindness of God in providing them. He would enjoy moderate sex with his duly wedded wife, mainly for begetting children and never loses himself in the pleasure. Sex for him is a fulfilment of God's purpose and not merely a source of personal pleasure.

He firmly believes that his body is only his temporary abode and an instrument for doing good. Therefore, he is not afraid of death. If he sees some one die, he is not grieved; but he thinks of the problems of the survivors and how he can be of some help to them.

Above all, he has unshakable faith in God. He incessantly thinks of him, his magnificent creation and its infinite beauty. Whatever he does, he does it in the name of God, to further his purpose. He leaves the result in His hands.
THE SPIRITUAL PATHS.

Giita accepts the truth that men differ from one another in their inherent nature, level of understanding, strength of will and to some extent, in skills. A single path does not suit everybody. Therefore, it gives a working knowledge of different paths which all lead to the same goal. It is for the spiritual aspirant to choose one which suits him best. Very often, a guru chooses the path for the disciple after assessing his nature and ability. The details of each step and the opportune moment when the next step is to be taken, is advised by the guru. If the aspirant is sincere, he gets the necessary steadfastness in pursuing the chosen path to reach the goal (by the grace of God).

Verses 8 to 12 of chapter XII illustrate this point.

1. Fix your mind exclusively in Him. There is no doubt that you will live in Him ever after.

2. If you cannot fix your thoughts steadily on Him, then seek Him by practising meditation.

3. If you are unable even to seek Him by practice, then dedicate yourself to work for Him. Even by doing things for His sake, you shall reach perfection.

4. If you are unable to do even this, then, with self control, renounce the fruits of all action.

It appears from this that the four paths have been arranged in order of ease of adoption. Or, probably, in an order of efficiency.

In the next verse, however, the following order of merit has been given: 1. Renunciation of fruits of action, 2. Practise of meditation, 3. Knowledge, 4. Practice of keeping the mind in God.

In the first group, renunciation of fruits of action is placed last. In the second group it heads the list. The different approaches are, therefore, to be looked upon as alternatives and not necessarily indicating degrees of efficiency. It is also not to be presumed, though all of them lead to the same goal, the effort to be invested in each is the same.

Now let us consider the different paths.
THE PATH OF ACTION (KARMA YOGA)

There is incessant activity in nature. In fact, nature is incessant activity and nothing more (interaction of energy and matter in space and time). Since our bodies are part of nature, they are continuously active, i.e. doing some work or other. We cannot stay without work even for a second. Even when there is no externally perceptible action, breathing, pulsation of the heart, thinking etc. go on. Not to do anything is to be dead.

Nature is a chain of actions or events, one leading to the other. In a pair of events adjacent to each other in time, if the earlier one is called the cause, the subsequent one is the act (karma). If the one is called the act, the second one is the result (karma-phala or just phala). This relationship between cause and effect is said to be forged by nature and not by the Supreme Being. Such relationship in the physical world is well known and forms the basis of the laws of science.

In what is called Brownian movement, the molecules of a fluid are in constant motion, hitting each other like billiard balls. If ball A hits ball B from the east, B will move west. But suppose that B was already hit by C a little earlier from the north; B was, therefore, proceeding south when it was hit by A from the east. Then B will move neither west nor south but will go south west. This is a case of two causes for an effect. But there can be more causes too. Then the prediction of the result will become more difficult. Some times, the cause may not be easily known. Then prediction may not be possible. Such a situation of multiple and cryptic causes seems to exist in human behaviour.

Giita enumerates five factors for the accomplishment of any (human) action. (XVIII-14).
There are different interpretations of the above words by the great commentators. Adhisht'aanam means approach, basis, place, seat etc. But the commentators feel that the word means the body. In that case, the next word karta, the doer, is interpreted as the self(soul). But according to XIII-21, all action is in the realm of nature i.e., the body; and the self is only the witness and permitter. In the case of the ignorant, the self may get interested in the act or its result. But in a jnâani, there is no question of the self becoming the doer.

It is to be noted that four of the factors are nature's. 1. time and place of occurrence, 2. the body with its composition in respect of gun'as, faith, mental complex etc., 3. the precision of the instruments used or the capability of the organs employed in the act and 4. the way they are used.

The fifth factor is daivam. The word means, a diety, divine power, providence, will, destiny and chance. Modern scientists will jump for the word chance, because they have developed statistical methods to estimate, if not determine, chance. It will fit into their professional norm of not involving God in their affairs. Physicists have come across instances where the course of an interaction or the nature of a particle cannot be defined with precision. May be, we lack the knowledge
of all the factors involved. May be, indeterminability is really a phenomenon of the universe. Their inability has been labelled the 'uncertainty principle'. The common man calls it chance. The philosophers call it providence. But naming it has not advanced our understanding even a wee bit.

If we accept the fifth factor as God, how does He involve himself in particular events?

Once there was an elephant merchant. At the time of his death, he had a flock of 17 elephants. He wrote a will that half of them shall go to his eldest son, a third of them to his second son and one ninth of them to his third son. Since 17 is an indivisible number, the sons were puzzled how they should share them in accordance with the will.

Fortunately for them, the Mahaamantri of the country was passing by, riding an elephant as befitted his high position. The sons approached him for help. The wise minister thought for a short while and asked them to add his elephant also to their flock for a little time. The number now became 18. The eldest son was given half the number, i.e. 9. The second got six. The third son got two. The total of the elephants they got was 17. The minister's elephant remained. He mounted his elephant and rode off.

Did the minister's elephant participate in the division or not? The answer is both yes and no. God is like the minister's elephant. He does not participate in the event. Yet, at the same time, without him the event cannot take place. This is only a children's riddle. But it bears semblance to the great riddle of God's intervention in the affairs of men.

The self residing in the body is a small part (ams'a) of him. It has been categorically stated that
this *ams'ā* of God is not involved in action (XII--21); he is not responsible for action, or the relation between cause and effect. He does not also cause any one to act (V-14). But he permits the body to act.

But, in respect of God, it has been stated that all things merge into him at the end of epoch and He releases them at the beginning of the next epoch. It has been figuratively stated that he puts the seed in the great womb of nature to produce the infinite variety of beings. He claimed responsibility for the three gun'ās (VII-12). Giita states unambiguously that He created the four classes of people. He gives firm resolve to those sincerely attempting to do good work. He grants them the achievement of their objective. He also assured that he would look after the welfare of those who always think of him. Finally see this verse XVIII-61.

*ईश्वर स्वर्गमुनां हदेशेञ्जुर्न तिष्ठति ध्रामयन् सत्त्वमुनानि यन्त्रान्य ठानि मायया*  

*is'varah sarva bhuutaanaam hriddes’e arjuna, tishth'ati bhrāmayan sarva bhuutaani yantra-aaruuudh'aani maayayaa.*  

"The lord abides in the hearts of all beings, causing them to go round by His maaya (as if) mounted on a machine".

The above references indicate that directly or indirectly, God is guiding the course of events in nature, i.e., that He is doing. However, at many places it has been reiterated that these acts do not affect Him or bind Him.

Individual commentators differ widely in reconciling this apparent contradiction. The consensus is as follows.
The Supreme Being has four facets.

1. He is potential energy in a state of awareness and happiness. He has neither form nor attributes. Therefore, he cannot be described. He is eternal and infinite. It is in Him that emancipated souls merge. He is called Parama-aatma, or nirgun'a paramaatma, i.e. the great self with no attributes.

2. The second facet is that of the Lord who is responsible for the creation, maintenance and dissolution of the Universe. In this facet also he has no form. He activates nature. He helps the souls that strive to re-identify their oneness with the Supreme Being. He is powerful to do, undo or alter (kartum, akartum, anyadhaa kartum, sarva s'aktimaan). It is this facet which is generally called Is'vara, or God in various religions. As a creator, he is called Brahma, as a maintainer, he is known as Vishn'u and as the dissolver, he is S'iiva.

3. The third facet is the incarnate God. He gets into a physical body in order to be able to act. He makes midcourse corrections to the run of the universe by upholding dharma whenever the need arises. We call him an Avataaram.

4. The fourth facet is the embodied self in living beings. It is often enveloped in ignorance of its true identity and by delusion identifies itself with the body which is its temporary abode. It gets interested in its actions and covets the pleasures through the organs of the body. It is liable to be hijacked by the mind and ego of the body. By knowing the truth of his identity and renouncing the authorship of actions done by the body and the results of such actions, it is free to merge with the Supreme Being. Thus he becomes immortal.
By using the same word 'aatma' for all these four facets, some confusion arises. After resolving the contradictions, we may accept that God does intervene in events in the form of chance, whereby the results of our actions become unpredictable.

Some actions of man are entirely physical. Neither the mind nor the self are involved in them eg., breathing, heart beat etc. If there is a faulty action that relates to them, the result will be suffered by the body itself according to laws of nature. The cause and effect are both within the sphere of science.

Some actions, such as eating when hungry, involve both the body and the mind. Mind is an activity of the physical entity, brain. Therefore, such actions are also subject to natural laws and fall within the scope of scientific investigation.

But some actions prompted by emotions like desire, greed, infatuation, anger, conceit and envy, involve the body, mind and the self. Such actions have a physical component as well as a non-physical component. The result of the physical component is suffered by the body. But the consequences of the non-physical component (in which self is involved) has to be reaped by the self only. At the present state of science, this part of the cause and effect is beyond the realm of scientific investigation, because self itself is still eluding science. This cause and effect relation in which self is involved is similar but not identical with that in the physical sphere. The events of one life and those of the next do not seem to have event-to-event correspondence. It is the total deficiency or merit that seems to be reflected in the next birth. Giita speaks of only birth in good or bad circumstances according to the actions of the previous birth. It does not, like a penal code, specify the reward or punishment for each action. Karma (action), good or bad, will lead to rebirth. The goal
set for the soul is to avoid rebirth and merge with the Supreme Being of whom it is a part. *Karma* is a hurdle in the achievement of this union. *Karma* pushes the soul into the cycle of successive births. This cycle is called the *samsāra cakra*. The tie up of the soul to this cycle because of *karma* is called the bond of action (*karma bandha*). Since it consists of subjecting the soul to rebirth, it is also called the bondage of birth (*bhava bandha*).

During the present life, for various reasons, the result of our actions is not always what we expect. If we resort to action to fulfil a desire, and the result turns out to be otherwise, it causes sorrow or misery. In fact, other than natural causes, the most important cause of our worries is the failure to get the expected result. To avoid misery of failure in this birth and also to be free from the bondage of rebirth, the first solution that suggests itself is not to do *karma*.

But to be without action is impossible because, at least for discharge of routine functions needed for the sustenance of the body, we have to do work (*karma*). And even thoughts are actions, especially so far as the self is concerned. What, then, is the technique by which we may indulge in work and yet evade its consequence? Here is the most important and famous verse of Giita (II-47).

\[\text{कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन,}\\
\text{मा कर्मफल हेतुष्यः}\]

\[\text{Karman'\text{ी} \text{eva} \ adhikāraṁ \ te, \ maa \ phaleshu}\\
\text{kadaacana}\\
\text{maa karma-phaia \ hetuh \ bhuuh... ... ...}\]

"You have the right only to do; never to the results. Let not the fruits of action be your motive".

Man does not consciously do anything without a motive or object. The actions of the involuntary
organs, probably, take place without a conscious motive. But all external action has a motive behind. Motive is the expected result of the action. If that motive is to be eschewed, man will, naturally, be inclined not to act at all. That would go against nature's purpose and indirectly that of the Supreme Being who endowed nature with the purpose. Therefore, Krishn'a hastened to add,

मा ते संन्योग्यक्रमार्य

"Let there be not inclination to inaction".

In the above verse, the word 'adhikaraarah' has been translated as 'right' because that is the sense in which the word is employed in Indian languages today. The word also means 'duty' which appears to hint at our responsibility to work. That is why, the verse, later, forbids inaction. We may give a free translation as "to do alone is in your hands, and not the result thereof". Krishn'a says that he himself is always active though there is nothing that he does not possess and nothing that he should wish to possess.

Not taking interest in the result amounts to being indifferent to success or failure of his attempt; or to profit or loss. Such an equanimity of mind is called yoga. This yoga pertains to the intellect or understanding (buddhi). It is a mental attitude which is accomplished. Therefore, this yoga is called buddhi yoga. If this equanimity is practised, misery of failure will diminish. But Giita promises more.

बुध्दियुक्तह जाहातीह उभे सुकृतदुष्कृते
तस्मात् योगाय युज्यस्य योगः कर्मसु कौशलम्

buddhi yuktah jahaati tha ubhe sukrita dushkrite
tasmaat yogaaya yuyyasva. Yogah karmasu
taus'alam.
"He who is yoked to buddhi (i.e. becomes equanimous) casts away here both good and evil. Therefore, strive for yoga. Yoga is skill in action."

In the last line of the verse, 'skill' in this context seems to mean 'the right method' or technology. Yoga is the proper way of action. However, this sentence is being employed as a motto by some craftsmen and technologists in the ordinary sense of the word.

By the foregoing discussion, an impression might have been created that only bad action is to be avoided as it is sure to give a bad result. But even good acts bind. There are certain rites mentioned in veda which promise heaven after death. Heaven has been described as a pleasure house where one could enjoy the company of charming apsaras. It is a lure few can resist. The promise of veda is not false. But verse IX-21 describes the fate of people who succumb to the temptation.

ते तं भृक्तवा स्वर्गलोकं विशालं क्षीणे पुण्ये मर्यालोकं विशालिते
एवं त्रयी धर्ममुप्रयत्रा: गतागतं कामकामं लघन्ते

`te tam bhuktyaa svargalokam vis’aaalam Kshiin’e pun’ye martya lokam vis’anti. evam trayii dharmam anuprapannaah gata-aagatam koama-koamaah labhante."

"Having enjoyed the (pleasures of) the spaceous world of heaven, they enter (again) the world of mortals on the expiry of their merit. Thus, those who crave desires and follow the procedures of the vedas, obtain only this going and coming back."

Clearly vedic rites promising heaven are discouraged. Even good deeds give bondage to the birth-death cycle, because they are done with an interest in the result. What does it matter whether the shackles
are of iron or gold? Both bind. Therefore, even good deeds should be done only without interest in the outcome. It is the interest that binds; not the action.

It must be emphasised that the buddhi yogi is also required to possess all the virtues a spiritual seeker is expected to acquire as listed in the previous chapter, especially, the control of mind.

Success and failure are the same to a person only when he does the work without a personal desire. He does it as a duty. Like a soldier at war who kills as a duty and not out of personal ill will, he does not attract any sin by such duty. It is as good as his not having done the act. He does not then carry the burden of the consequences of the action and need not take another birth on this score.

His mind then attains tranquillity and becomes capable of concentration and stability in samaadhi (concentration on the Supreme Being). This tranquillity is the divine state. After entering into this state he will not be deluded again. Here one sentence occurs which needs explanation.

स्थित्वाय स्थायित्वात्मकालेऽपि ब्रह्मनिर्वाणगृच्छति

sthitvaa asyaam antakaale api brahma nirvaan'om ricchati.

"Being in this (state) at the time of death, (one) will attain the bliss of God".

The adverb api used in the sanskrit, has several meanings. If we take it to mean 'also' or 'too', it would mean that if one is in that state at the hour of death also, he would attain nirvaan'a. At the time of death, many fears and anxieties beset the mind which may disturb the mind from samaadhi. If he had been in samaadhi all his life but got disturbed from it at the last moment, this interpretation would mean that
he will not attain nirvaana'a.

Api also means 'even' or 'even though'. If this meaning is accepted, it would mean that even if he never attained the samaadhi any time during his life, if he got it at the last moment, he would attain nirvaana'a. Antakaala need not necessarily mean the time of death. It may just mean the later part of life. The point involved in this interpretation is that attainment of samaadhi in the later part of his life (which can be after long practice), will nullify the consequences of earlier actions. The same question arises with the attainment of perfection late in life by any other path. Giita seems to support this view that all earlier karma in a life is decimated by attaining the state of perfection at the last moment, whether it is by karma yogaa, jnaana yoga or Bhakti yoga.

The thoughts at the time of death are believed to be of importance in deciding the course of rebirth (VIII-6). The self is said to get that, on which the mind is set during the last moments. One becomes what he thinks. There is a puraan'ik story of a sage, who took care of an injured cub of a deer. While rearing the animal he began doting over it to such an extent that, at the time of death, he was only thinking of the deer. He was born as a deer in his next birth.

Ajaamiila was a pious brahmin who fell a victim to lust for a lowly woman. He took to vices and never thought of God in the rest of his life. He had a son named Naaraayan'a whom he loved much. As death drew near, he was worrying about his son who was away and was calling out his name, "Naaraayan'aa, Naaraayan'aa". The emissaries of both heaven and hell came to claim his soul. Those from hell recounted his wretched life while those from heaven cited his repetition of God's name. Ultimately the emissaries from heaven won the argument.
This story from Bhaagavat is intended to emphasise the powerful benefit of repeating God's name at the time of exit. Ajaamiila did not utter the name intending God's name. It was his son he intended. Intention is more important than the act, in spiritual matters because the self suffers the consequence of intention only and not of action. The story, however, seems to have reconciled the contradiction by saying that the utterance of God's name purified him. One should not dilute buddhiyoga by misunderstanding the objective of such stories. Further let us look at this unequivocal declaration in verse V-15.

\begin{quote}
\text{"The Lord does not take the sin or merit of anybody. Knowledge is enveloped by ignorance and thereby men are deluded (to think like that)".}
\end{quote}

Every one must experience the consequences of the good or evil he does. God will not intervene in this natural law. Only fools wishfully hope that God will salvage them from sin.

Fulfilment of desire is the motive for most actions. Buddhi yoga requires the abandonment of the motive. Then what is the work a desireless man should do?

Verses III-9 to 15 convey to us the rationale of ancients. God is said to have created men along with 'yajna' whereby they could fulfill their desires. The 'gods' give us many things to satisfy our needs.
It is, therefore, our duty to repay our gratitude to them by performing yajna. By such mutual relationship they are asked to achieve the welfare of both of them. To enjoy their gifts without pleasing them (with yajna) would amount to theft. Living beings come into existence from food; food is produced from rain; rain is produced by yajna; yajna is born of work; work originates in prakriti (nature). Prakriti springs from the Supreme Being. Therefore, the all pervading Supreme Being is established in yajna.

This is set in ancient language. Let us see what our environmentalists say today. Life on our planet is solely dependent on the energy received from the sun. The plants capture the energy by their leaves. Water from the seas evaporates due to sun's energy and comes back to earth as rain to sustain plants. Plants sustain animals, including man. Figuratively we could say that plant gods are giving us food. Therefore, we should offer them protection and please them. Plant gods and men should foster each other for their mutual welfare. This is approximately what the verses wish to convey.

It is further said that work other than yajna will bind the person to the wheel of rebirth. Yajna is, therefore, the only work a spiritual man is advised to do; even that, without desire or attachment.

Considering the importance attached to Yajna, it is necessary to understand what it means. The most common concept of yajna is the performance of certain religious rites prescribed by veda, in front of the holy fire. It is generally known as the havan and translated as sacrifice. But yajna, has a more general meaning as we can see from Giita itself. In Chapter IV, a number of yajnas are cited, practised by persons according to their inclinations. "Some sacrifice the function of organs
in the fire of self control". This is a figurative way of saying that control of senses is a yajna. Similarly control of ego, control of breath, restrictions of food, and charity are all listed as yajnas. The householder is prescribed a mahaa yajna which includes Brahma yajna (teaching of scriptures) Pitriyajna (propitiation of dead ancestors), Daiva yajna (propitiation of gods). Bhuuta yajna (feeding all living beings) and nri yajna (hosting guests with devotion). There are certain vedic rites prescribed for obtaining specific results. These are desire oriented. Giita does not speak high of them. Since the rites are based on the three gun'as, we are advised to go beyond them. They are ancient technologies. Even if they are replaced by modern technologies, they can still be called yajnas. Any act which has an element of sacrifice, renunciation or discipline seems to be called a yajna when accomplished with devotion. All actions devoid of self interest and intended for the welfare of the entire humanity, done with devotion, may be called yajnas.

Government servants (most of them) discharge their duties perfunctorily without interest in the outcome. Giita is not happy with half-hearted work. A yogi should do a work with the same fervour of an ignorant man interested in the result - but without attachment. Yoga is efficiency in action. A person who has become desireless and contented with himself has no work he needs to do. He neither gains by doing nor loses by abstaining. Yet he should not resort to inaction or negligent action. (III-17&18).

People have a tendency to do what a great man does. The great man's behaviour becomes the standard for them. If the man of knowledge abstains from action, the people will follow suit and stop doing anything. Krishn'a himself says, "I have nothing
that I have not achieved nor anything I have to achieve. Yet, I engage myself in action. If I do not do so, the people will follow my path and become inactive. Thereby the world will be ruined". It is the duty of the great man to do, not for himself, but for the sake of the good of the world. Some of the vedic rites promise both material and spiritual benefits. People may undertake such rites with full commitment and sincerity. When a learned man comes across such a person, he should not divert him from such work straight away. That may lead him to inaction. Such a man who is possessing the desirable trait of devotion and steadfastness should be encouraged slowly by the learned man to renounce the result, by his own example. One should never forget that action is always better than inaction.

Now our question is answered. The desireless person should be as busy as the ambitious one. But he should work for the good of the society in accordance with the prescribed codes. And whatever he thus undertakes should be done with utmost efficiency. Activity, which is nature's purpose (and therefore, God's purpose) should never be given up.

This idea has been developed a little further. All action fulfils God's purpose, if only the self interest in the result is removed. God is seated in every one's heart dictating action. Even if one resists, out of ignorance, to obey the dictate, it is futile. Nature will compel him to do it. God is getting his work done through us. We are only the instruments. Since this is the true position, the best thing is to surrender the result to Him and go ahead with action. A person acting in this manner, renouncing authorship of action and attachment to the result is not bound to action.

How do we know which action fulfils god's
purpose? It is for this, that mankind had been divided into aptitude classes. Work that conforms to one's in-born nature must be considered as God's purpose. By doing work that is *svadharma*, the person serves God's purpose because these abilities were conferred on him by God only to shape him into a suitable instrument. One who understands this position will not arrogate to himself authorship of action and would not swerve from his *svadharma*.

The foregoing discussion serves the purpose of informing us of the true nature of the universe and our role in it. It is theoretical knowledge. The important thing is to put it into practice. Every action should be assessed on the basis of his knowledge before setting out to act.

Most people have enough comprehension of good and bad action due to the *buddhi* component of the mental complex. But they are led to bad action inspite of themselves as if pushed by a force. This force is neither *svabhaava* (in-born nature) nor God's dictate. It is their prime internal enemy, the desire, greed and passion. This has the capability of putting reason out of action and misleading it into seeing right as wrong and wrong as right. Under its influence, the person begins to convince himself with spurious and specious arguments that the path shown by the desire is the best or that no ill may result from it. Possessed by intense desire, the person does things as if in a hypnotic trance. Eradication of the enemy of desire is the first and most crucial step.

Where does this desire exist? Giita says that it is seated in the organs, mind and even *buddhi*. Therefore, it advises us first to start with the control of organs (*dama*) and proceed with the control of mind (*s'ama*). It warns us that eventhough we may strive
with a discerning buddhi, the organs will carry off the mind by force (II-60).

One method of controlling them is to starve them of their objects by spurning to covet them. Unavailability of the object blunts the desire for it. This should be supplemented by an alternative occupation for the mind, preferably with God. Keeping oneself busy with selfless permitted activity for the welfare of humanity would also leave no time to muse over sensual pleasures. Eternal vigilence also can keep one off from improper desires. Even a single unguarded moment can be disastrous at times.

Spirituality cannot overlook the ground realities of life. It is not every one who can abandon the responsibilities of family life or material enterprise. In fact, such persons constitute the majority. The aas'rama dharma were designed with such people in mind. A person is supposed to concentrate on acquisition of knowledge in his boyhood and early adolescence. Like the caterpillar that does nothing but eat all its time, the boy should avidly gather all knowledge that would be of use to him in his adult life. During youth and middle age he has to marry and settle down to the duties of a householder earning enough to sustain his family and to help the needy and to look after unexpected guests. At the approach of old age, he should renounce the responsibilities (handing them over to the next generation). He would then turn to more intense spiritual practice. Finally he should become a samnyaasi.

A house holder is enjoined to earn, care for his family and guests, give charity and practise all the virtues preliminary to total renunciation. Careful husbanding of resources and production of wealth needs some special characteristics which are gifted by nature only to a few. It will be the svadharma of such gifted
persons to become entrepreneurs and produce wealth. But they should curb greed and rapacity and utilise their earnings for the rehabilitation of the less gifted and ungifted people. As long as they develop the saattvik attitude of doing everything as a duty to God for the welfare of all beings, they satisfy the requirements for liberation from the bonds of action. Earning and enterprise per se are no bar to spiritual progress. If one possesses the knowledge (including practice) of how to do work with yoga, whatever he may do, does not bind him. All work done with spiritual knowledge is decimated in the fire of knowledge (jnaana. (IV-17).

Similarly, any person, in any walk of life, qualifies for liberation if he does his duty with devotion and free from attachment. One need not alter his vocation for practising karma yoga. In deed, karma yoga is the yoga of work. One may not achieve perfection but even a little practice of the yoga is assured of commensurate benefit.

Renunciation of the fruits of action is the easiest spiritual path to every one of the world. It needs no special religious rites, methods of meditation or worship. Work itself is worship.
THE PATH OF KNOWLEDGE

In adopting the path of action, a person acts not for his own interest but to fulfil God's purpose. In the path of knowledge, he understands the basis of such action. He understands the truth of the universe and God. By acting in accordance with such knowledge, he attains perfection (siddhi). The path of action is just following a thumb rule. In the path of knowledge, one decides his action according to his own light. He is like a scientist in search of truth. The knowledge he acquires by his search gives him discrimination. It dispels darkness enveloping his self and prepares the person to have wisdom and spiritual vision.

How does knowledge help the soul to avoid rebirth and remain for ever united to the Supreme Being? As we have already seen, the mind forms images of external stimuli received by it. The soul enjoys them. It is bound to the body only by the interest it takes in those images, like a cine goer to his seat. It mistakes the images for reality. It begins to covet more and more such experiences and moves closer and closer to the body and mind and identifies itself with them, forgetting that they are mere instruments. As this ignorance grows thicker and thicker, it blacks out the awareness of the self of its true identity. This attachment to the body leads to rebirth. The only thing the self needs to do to set itself free, is to dispel its ignorance and regain its awareness. Ignorance can be dispelled by nothing else but knowledge.

The karma yogi starts with practice and ultimately attains knowledge. The jnaana yogi (follower of the path of knowledge) starts with knowing and gets to practice. In both cases, it is the knowledge and its implementation which release the embodied soul.
The knowledge to be known is very simple. "I am not this body; I am part of the Supreme Being, the absolute". So far as these words are concerned, there is no difficulty in knowing their meaning. This is only the first step. The next step is to prove it to himself by discussion and inference. During the process, he learns not to be afraid of death nor grieve for the loss of near and dear ones, because death is only of the body and not the soul. He would learn not to covet possessions because the desire presupposes an 'I'. But he knows 'I' does not exist in this body alone. The same is present in every one. And so on. At this stage, he knows the phenomena of the self but not the self itself. The final stage is, of course, to lose his individual identity without a trace and become one with the Supreme Being.

The first requirement of the follower of the path of knowledge is to have the passion for knowledge (jijnasa). Giita says that hardly one in thousand will attempt to know the Supreme Being. And amongst the thousands that may attempt to know, rarely does one know him. (VII-3). To get this knowledge, one is advised to approach a jnaani who had a glimpse of the Supreme Being. He should serve the guru with humility and learn by careful questioning (IV-34). Thus Giita seems to suggest that knowledge should be obtained through a guru and not by oneself. All doubts about action should be cleared by knowledge. Since the pursuit of knowledge should be single minded one should have controlled his mind and become sincerely devoted. (IV-39).

Doubt is a great obstacle for success. Even in every day life, we know that confidence wins half the battle. Confidence comes from faith. Doubt is absence of faith. It has been said, 's'uddhaavaan labhate jnaanam' i.e. the sincere man of faith will achieve knowledge. Also a warning has been issued (IV-40):
अज्ञार्थचार्यद्धानार्थ संस्कृतमा विनिश्चयि

नायंत्रकोडेज्ति न परं न उखं संस्कृतमनः:

oijnah ca as'taddha-dhaanaah ca sams'ayaatmaa
vinas'yati.

na ayam lokah asti,na parah, na sukham,
sams'ayaatmanah.

"The ignorant, faithless and doubting man will perish.
For a doubting person, there is neither this world
nor the world beyond nor happiness".

Knowledge dispels doubt and gives faith. Giita
does not advocate blind faith (though there is nothing
basically wrong in placing faith in the teachings of
a really perfect jnaani ). But a man endowed with intellect
should clear his doubt by reason and knowledge. After
teaching Arjuna all that needs to be taught, Krishna
says to him:

विमृश्य एतदशेषेण यथैः चविशि तथा कुरु

vimris'ya etat aseshen'a, yathaa icchasi tatha
kuru,

"Reflect on it fully and do as you choose".

And Arjuna says,

स्थितोजस्मि गतसंदेहः करिष्ये वचनं तव

sthitah asmi gata-sandezah, karishye vacanam
tava.

"I stand with all my doubts cleared; I shall obey your
word".

That is the ideal relationship between the teacher
and the disciple. The teacher does not impose a decision
on the student. He only enlightens him. The student,
after clearing all his doubts, carries out the precept.
Some times, under the influence of imperfect knowledge of science, we tend to be of two minds about God. While an inner urge prompts us to pray, we tend to pose questions before us such as, "Does He really exist? If he does exist, does he indeed listen to our prayers uttered in so many different languages? How can He listen to millions of prayers around the world and have enough time to create circumstances that favour the grant of all their prayers? When He had laid down inviolable laws for nature, will He himself break them for the sake of a devotee?" and so on. We are also confused by conflicting interpretations and opinions of great commentators on important issues like the identity of the individual self with the Supreme Being.

Some analogies are given in sacred books to help us vividly to comprehend certain concepts. If one such analogy is not scientifically correct, we tend to lose faith in the whole teaching. For example, there is one famous and oft repeated analogy called the "bhramara kiitaka nyaayam". It says that a person is transformed into what is constantly dinned into him 'just as the worm which a mud wasp keeps in its nest is turned into a wasp by its constant humming around the nest! Unfortunately, that is not the fact. The insect is not transformed into the wasp. The wasp benumbs a caterpillar and places it in its nest and lays its eggs on it. After hatching, the young ones of the wasp, feed on the benumbed insect which was kept there by the mother, ready for them when they hatch out. When fully grown, the wasps emerge out of the mud nest. The common man who only sees the worm being kept inside and sealed by the humming mother wasp and a wasp emerge out of the nest, is led to think that the worm was transformed into a wasp.

A student who has just learnt this marvelous
phenomenon of nature, may say to himself, "if the great sages have not correctly understood this easily verifiable little truth, is it likely that they understood the great truth about the unseen God?" This raises doubt in his head about the authenticity of the entire philosophy propounded by the sages.

The sage was not a biologist. He has only chosen a commonly observed happening as an analogy. He does not vouchsafe for its exactitude. Instead of finding fault with the choice of the analogy, one should analyse with reason and logic and verify by practice the proposition of the philosopher and convince himself of the validity of the proposition, rather than the analogy.

One should also guard against perverse application of these philosophic axioms. For instance, one cannot kill a person and say, "I have killed him with no interest in the outcome. After all, the soul is immortal. Who can kill it? He has already been killed by God. I am only the instrument". It is to prevent such pseudo-vedaantik justifications of bad conduct that it has been prescribed that some preliminary discipline of acquisition of certain virtues is essential for spiritual initiation. Without the attendant virtues, no path can be of any help. A guru is expected to take care of such pitfalls.

Knowledge is not mere parrot like repetition of the sentences. It is also not mere understanding intellectually the argument as professors of philosophy can do. It is to apply it in life, every moment of life and in every decision in life. The definition of knowledge is given in Chapter XIII, given in the preamble to the section of this book on virtues. It includes in the definiton all the virtues to be practised.

The word jnaanam means both the process of knowing as well as knowledge itself. In the above
definition, *jnaanam* is to be understood as the process of knowledge because immediately following the definition of *jnaanam* is the description of the thing to be known. What is it to be known? Of course, the Supreme Being. It cannot be described by any of the words in use; because they can describe only things of the perceivable nature. Giita attempts a description in an inimitable way with pairs of seemingly contradicting epithets.

It is said to be existing (*sat*) and non-existing (*asat*). Philosophers resolve this paradox by explaining that He is beyond existence and non-existence. Nature (*prakriti*) which is also part of him is non-existing in the sense that it exists for some time and becomes non-existant. Nature is, therefore, considered by some as the non-existing or impermanent character of the Supreme Being.

It is without senses (sense organs). Yet it illuminates all organs (because, He has endowed them with the ability to sense).

It has no gun'as. But it experiences the gun'as (as the embodied soul, It enjoys them by virtue of being in the body. In fact its interest in them is said to be the cause of the soul being subject to rebirths).

It is inside all beings and outside them too. It is moving and unmoving too. It is far away; yet It is very close (In fact, It is seated in the very heart of every being). It is undivided; but appears divided (as individual souls in the beings). It supports all beings. It also destroys and creates them again. It is the cause of the universe. But it is unconcerned about its manifestations.

It stands enveloping everything in the universe. Therefore, it is poetically said that It has Its face, eyes,
ears and heads all over. Since It is in every body, all their eyes and ears etc. belong to It. Though It is so large as to envelop everything, It is too subtle to be known. It is the light of all lights. But it is beyond darkness. In one of the verses of Bhaagavat, it is said "beyond the worlds and their denizens, there is total darkness. God shines beyond the great darkness".

It is knowledge, the thing to be known and the goal of knowledge. It is seated in the hearts of all. You could add to the beauty of the statement by saying "It is the knower, It is the process of knowing and It is the thing to be known". This recalls to our mind what a great physicist said about the attempts to 'see' the electron, 'Now we should understand who sees? What is seeing? and what is to be seen?'

The proposition in Giita is that knowledge is not something to be acquired. Man already possesses it. But it is enveloped by opaque ignorance. It is the ignorance which has to dispelled. Then, knowledge will shine bright like the sun (V-16). A famous sculpter said, "The idol you wish to hew is already present in the stone. You have only to chisel out all that is not the idol. Then the idol will emerge. That is what needs all your skill". So it is with knowledge. Most of our effort is needed for removing ignorance and all its consequences. When you succeed with it, knowledge shines of its own accord.

There are said to be four classes of people who worship God. Those who are in trouble,(aartah) those who desire worldly possessions, like wealth, power and fame,(arthaarthi) those who crave to know Him (jijnaasuh) and those who have known Him (jnaaniiis). Among them, the last group, i.e. those who have known Him are dearest to Him and He to them (VII-16 &17).
God considers a jnaani as Himself. It is hard to find such a perfect jnaani because one can attain that state at the end of many births of practice (VII-19). There is nothing as sanctifying as jnaanam (nahi jnaanena sadris'am pavitram iha vidyate). Knowledge is like a fire which burns away all karma (VI-37) i.e. it sanctifies all work and delinks it from the good or evil consequences. Thus it releases the jnaani from the bond of karma.

Even a sinner of the first order, can cross the sea of evil by the boat of knowledge (IV-36). This blank cheque should be properly understood. A jnaani cannot commit sins. A sinner does not possess jnaanam; if he did, he would not commit sin. What, then is the value of this assurance? What is obviously meant is that even if one had committed sins earlier, if he becomes a jnaani later, the past sins will be annulled and he is rescued from rebirth. We may recall that a similar assurance was given that a karma yogi who has entered the divine state of equanimity and tranquillity even at the moment of death will attain nirvaan'a. (II-72). A similar blank cheque is also available to the bhakta (devotee) as we shall see later. That shows that all paths are equally effective; that the law of cause and effect does not operate in respect of souls who have perfected themselves to a stage of merging with the Supreme Being.
THE PATH OF MEDITATION

Archimedes had a problem to solve. The king's crown was made of gold. He wanted to know whether it was all gold or had a mixture of a baser metal. This had to be found without chipping the crown. That was the problem entrusted to him. He thought about it deeply even forgetting his food. When he got into the bath tub and felt lighter, the solution suddenly dawned on him in a flash. But it was preceded by intense concentration of mind for many hours, probably, days. Many scientists, big and small, have discovered truths after similar concentration on a single thought - while they worked, while they ate and even while they slept. Bhagavaan Buddha renounced his family and princely comforts and sat thinking deeply about the cause and remedy for human misery. After months of penance (deep thinking) the enlightenment came in a flash. It would appear that the total ability of the mind is brought to bear on a single issue like light brought to a focus through a convex lens. It is a sort of mental karate.

Short spells of such concentration are occasionally experienced by many people, especially in the face of problems that they must solve. The mind is then so absorbed in the single thought to the exclusion of all others for that brief moment, that the outside world disappears for them. At that moment, usually, the little truth which they have been seeking, reveals itself to them in a flash. Such concentration is possible only when the subject of the thought is their most favourite one and at that moment, no other thoughts cross their mind.

Similarly, if we want to know the Supreme Being through meditation, we should have an ardent desire to know It to the exclusion of everything else in the
world. But our mind is so much attracted by worldly matters that the mind incessantly wanders away from the Supreme Being about which it has not yet known anything.

Ramakrishna Paramhamsa gives a fitting analogy. If you wish to thread a needle, you must make the thread pointed by twisting all the fibres close to the thread. Then only will the thread enter the needle hole. So too, if you wish to enter the divine state, all the filaments of desire directed outward should be withdrawn into the mind, as the turtle withdraws its limbs.

This discipline is called yoga. It is rightly defined by Patanjali, the authority on yoga, as 'citta vritti nirodha' i.e., control of the activity of the mind. Meditation is primarily a discipline of the mind which would be of help whatever be the path chosen.

The science of neurology is still on its way to discover the working of the mind on the basis of the anatomy and biochemistry of the neurons. After the discovery of the Quantum, physics has found that matter is not little bits of solid atoms. It is an intricate web of abstract 'nonphysical' something that has so far been called energy. Coherence of energy or particles produces surprising phenomena, never heard before, such as the lasers. Perfect coherence of atoms produces superconductivity by which electric current may flow perpetually without resistance. Physicist Lawrence Domash believes that similar coherence of atoms in the nerve cells of the brain may account for higher consciousness.

We are familiar with the ripples set up by dropping a pebble in a placid pond. They spread concentrically to the shores in waves of crests and troughs. Suppose that we drop two or more pebbles at different points in the tank. Each point of contact gives rise to a
wave. These waves, from the different points, cross each other and produce what is called an interference pattern. This pattern can reveal the events which have caused the ripples.

Laser is a light of coherent waves. If, by using a particular technique, an object is illuminated by a laser beam and photographed on a plate, an interference pattern is impressed on the plate which is called a hologram. If we look at the plate in ordinary light, we see only a chaos of lines. But if it is illuminated by the same quality laser beam, an image of the object in three dimensions appears. Even if a small section of the plate is thus illuminated, an image of the whole object is seen, not just the corresponding part. (May be, it is a little less distinct in detail).

There is some speculation that the universe is perhaps like a hologram. Every event and thought probably contributes to the vast interference pattern, like pebbles dropped in the pond. The individual mind, which is a part of the universe, carries with it a small section of the large hologram of the universe. That means it carries all the information that ever was in the universe, being a small piece of the all pervading hologram of the universe. If the brain can scan that piece of holographic 'plate', with coherent waves (of thought) of the requisite quality, the mind might have access to all the information in the universe.

This is yet a mere speculation. Yoga seems to promote some such ability. By concentration, some measure of coherence seems to be produced. That gives the mind a glimpse of the true nature of things which is not available to ordinary intellect. It may not be long before science also discovers the means of achieving the full potential of the mind.
Here is the technique which Giita prescribes for meditation.

Before one attempts yoga, he should first control his desires and interest in worldly affairs. He should develop tranquillity of the mind, unperturbed by pleasure and pain, heat and cold. To him a pebble or a piece of gold should be the same. He should see no distinction between friend and foe. He should be moderate in all matters, neither eating too much nor too little; neither sleeping too much nor too little. He should be fearless. He should observe celebacy.

A yogi must meditate alone in solitude. He should select a clean place neither too high nor too low. He should make a seat of Kus'a grass (mat) on which is spread a deer skin and over it a cloth. His body, neck and head should be straight (in one line). He should sit firm and motionless. He should fix his gaze on the tip of his nose and not look around. He should stop all activity of his organs and get into a happy and unperturbed mood. He should keep his mind on the object of his meditation, i.e., Supreme Being, and think of nothing else.

Concentration will not come all at once. The mind will wander in many directions even without the person being aware of it. Every time he comes to know it, he should bring back his mind and set it on the object of meditation. The mind should then be delinked from all arising thoughts and attain the happy state of tranquillity by slow degrees. He should persist in his effort with a steadfast will.

For fixing the mind on God, or rather, to keep off other thoughts from the mind, different teachers advocate different techniques. The use of a flame, an idol, or a form as a preliminary object of concentration is advised by some. It is better to take guidance from
a single chosen teacher in such matters.

The control of the mind is, no doubt, very difficult in the beginning. But by steady practice, coupled with vairaagya (indifference to worldly pleasures), one can hope to achieve the goal. Yoga is impossible for a person who has not controlled his mind (VI-36).

Arjuna posed the question, "What will happen to a person, who attempts meditation sincerely but gives up due to lack of control on his mind? Will he lose both ways and perish like a dissipated cloud?" Krishn'a assures him that he who does a good thing will never come to grief. He will be born in favourable environment and regain the impressions of previous birth and complete the unfinished yoga. No harm will befall on him who fails to reach the goal in the life.

Eventually, he will attain the state of union with the Supreme Being which gives him divine peace and happiness of God's realm. This is known as Siddhi. One who has achieved this goal is marked by his equal attitude to all things. he sees himself in all things and all beings in himself. So too does he see God in everything and everything in God. For him God is everywhere; he sees nothing other than Him in the universe. These, we easily recognise, are characteristics which constitute knowledge (jnaanam). Thus jnaanam dawns on him by meditating on the Supreme Being; and jnaanam liberates him. Such a yogi may be engaged in work. But still he always remains in God.
THE PATH OF DEVOTION (BHAKTI)

The human mind has broadly two faculties, namely, reason and feeling. As made out earlier, the two functions seem to be located in different parts of the brain, apparently with some interconnections. Feelings are experienced by the soul dwelling in the body. In this, according to some philosophers, citta, a fourth component of the mental complex (antahkaran'a) acts as the medium. Happiness which is the goal of humanity, is a feeling. Further, soul becomes subject to rebirth by experiencing the feelings and not by the physical actions themselves. Hence the importance of feelings.

Love is a natural feeling. The love that exists between the mother and her child is a natural feeling, especially when the child is young and unable to fend for itself. In the child, perhaps, it is a need for security. But the need seems to persist till the end of life. It exists as a search for a protector or guardian. It needs a lot of alertness and effort to face the problems of the world. Most people find this too much of a strain to bear. They would prefer, if possible, to place their problems in the hands of some one else in whom they have faith, and be at peace. When we place a patient in the hands of a doctor, or a difficult law suit in the hands of a lawyer, we experience a bit of such relief. The facet of God with attributes and compassion (iisvara) fills the need. The need may not be felt when one is succeeding in his attempts. But when one faces failure or danger and feels helpless, the urge to surrender to a protector, surges up. Of the four types of people who turn to God, the first one is the 'aarta' i.e. one in distress.

Both reason and feeling can be put to use to reach the Supreme Being. Reason understands him through intellect and then follows the concomitant conduct.
Feeling on the other hand first experiences him through conduct and then understands him. The path of reason is akin to our modern scientific approach. The path of feeling appears to be 'blind faith' till the realisation dawns when one is approaching perfection. While accumulated and recorded experiences form the basis for the path of reason, the experiences of a guru who has reached perfection forms the basis for the path of feeling. Ultimately, both paths lead to the same knowledge which gives mukti or liberation.

Reason is cold and dry. Feeling, especially love, is warm and pleasant (and moist? for, we refer to a kind heart as 'aardra hriday' i.e.. a moist heart). Even during practice it is pleasant and beautiful. The path of love is better suited to those whose intellect is not of a high order. The intellectual approach, called the path of knowledge (jnaana maarga) is relatively more difficult for them because the object to be comprehended has neither form nor attributes.

Giita says, (XII-5)

कलेशोधिकतरस्तेशामव्यक्तासक्तचेतसाम्
अव्यक्ता हि गतिः ख देहवद्विद्वारवाप्यते

kles'ah adhikataraḥ teshaam avyakta-aasakta cetasaam,
avyaktaa hi gatih duhkham dehavadbhih aavapyaate.

"The difficulty of those whose thoughts are set on the unmanifested is greater because the goal of the unmanifested is hard to reach by those who possess the body".

The mind which is a product of nature has its limitations. Biologically, it is limited by the genes inherited by the body. Mind being the instrument of
comprehension, one finds it hard to comprehend the formless and unknowable Supreme Being. (In fact, that is the reason why scientists have not been able to comprehend the Supreme Being). Giita, therefore, shows the relatively easier way through feeling, love and devotion to iisvara. In verses XII-6 & 7, Krishn'ā (as god) assures that He would straightaway deliver from successive deaths and births those who lay their actions in Him, keep their minds exclusively on Him and worship Him. In this path, one has only to offer all actions to God and constantly be thinking of Him and nothing else. The God to be thought about is that facet of God with attributes and form. How does God lift His devotee out of the cycle of births? Verses X-10 & 11 spell this out clearly; to those who are constantly devoted to Him and worship Him with love, He grants the concentration of mind by which they understand Him and go to Him. Out of compassion for them, He destroys their ignorance and gives them wisdom (jnaanam). Here again, it is ultimately jnaanam which liberates.

Thus, the devotee himself need not possess the competence to recognize God. God himself will grant him the necessary knowledge. There lies the ease of this method, especially for those who are not endowed with high intellectual abilities. To the Bhakta, God grants the knowledge while the jijnaasu (one who pursues knowledge) has to acquire it by his own efforts. Here is an example often cited in religious literature.

The young ones of a monkey cling to the belly of their mother while she hops from one tree to another. The responsibility for clinging rests with the young ones. If they lose their grip, they will fall down. On the other hand, the young kittens totally depend on the mother for transport from place to place. The mother holds them with its mouth and moves. Here, the responsibility of holding completely rests with the mother.
The kitten has left it to her with full faith. The *jnaani* is compared to the young one of the monkey and the *bhakta* to the kitten.

What is meant by leaving all actions in God? Whatever one does, whatever one eats, whatever one gives and whatever austerities one performs, it should be done as an offering to God (not for himself). Then those acts will not bind him. In effect, it is the path of action. In both methods, it is the interest in the result for himself that has to be renounced. In the path of bhakti, the work is done for Him. Therefore, the result, if any is for Him only. Raamakrishna Paramahamsa gives an analogy. A servant does all the household works with care. But the result of the work belongs to the master. So he has no self interest in the result. When he does the same work in his own house, then he develops interest in the result of the work.

An old lady was a regular visitor to Raamakrishna. She was very fond of her grandchild and attended to all her needs with affection. She was always thinking of her child wherever she was. One day, she approached the saint and expressed her desire to retire from the world and spend her last days at Brindaavan worhsipping the Lord. The saint told her, "You are very fond of your grand daughter. Even if you go to Brindaavan, the thoughts of your grand daughter will continue to haunt you. How can you fix your mind on God? Instead, remain here itself. Fondle your grand child as much as you please. But think of her as Raadhikaa herself as you shower your affection on her. Feed and dress her to your heart's content; but always think within yourself that through those acts, you are offering your worship to the goddess of Brindaavan. All the good of living in Brindaavan will come to you of its
own accord". From this, we get an idea of what it is to offer to God all that we do.

Regarding the exclusive contemplation of God, there are three identical verses in Giita. (IX-34, XI-55 and XVIII-55).

मन्यनामाभ मद्धभक्तः मद्धाजी मां नमस्कृतु मायेवैवैयत्स यु क्वेवममत्वानं मत्यराब्धम:

\textit{manmanaah bhava, madbhaktah, madyaaji maamm namaskuru}

\textit{maam eva eshyasi yuktva avam atmaanam mat-paaraayan’ch.}

मन्यनामाभ मद्धभक्तः मद्धाजी मां नमस्कृतु मायेवैवैयत्स सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियेिसि मे

\textit{manmanaah bhava, madbhaktah, madyaaji, maam namaskuru}

\textit{maam eva eshyasi, satyam te partijaane priyah asi me.}

मत्कर्मकृत्यत्मरम: मद्धक: सज्जवर्जितः
निवैरस्त्वर्धूतेनु यत्स मायेति पाण्डव

\textit{maat-karma-krit, mat-paramah, madbhaktah, sanga varjita}

\textit{nir-vairah sarva bhuteshu yah, sah maam eti paandava.}

"Fix your mind on Me. Be devoted to Me. Worship me. Thus having disciplined yourself, you will come to me. This is true. I assure you. You are dear to me. He who does my work, has me as his goal, is free from attachment and bears no enmity to all creatures, will go to Me".

This promise is reiterated in two other very famous verses.
अन्याःप्रियाधिनां नाच जनाः पर्युपासाते
तेषाः नित्याबियुक्तानां योगक्रेम वहाम्बहम्

ananyaḥ cintayantah maam ye janaah paryu
paasate,
teshaam nitya-abhiyuktaanaam, yoga-kshemam
vahaami aham.

"For those who meditate on me exclusively and
worship me, I shall bear the responsibility of their
welfare".

"Yoga kshemam" means giving what they do not
have and preserving what they have. In ordinary usage,
it means welfare. Whether this is in respect of worldly
welfare or in respect of spiritual welfare is a matter
for interpretation. The majority of interpreters feel that
it means that the Lord will bear all our cares and sorrows
if we leave everything to Him.

सर्वं दर्शनम् परित्यजय सामीकं सरणं ब्रज
अहं तवा सर्वं पापेः भ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः
sarva dharmaan parityajya maam ekam s'aran'am
vraja
aham tvoa sarva paapebhyaah mokshayishyaami
maa s'ucah. (XVIII-66).

"Set aside all dharmas and take shelter under
me. I shall deliver you from all sins. Leave all
sorrow (and be at peace)".

"Set aside all dharmaas" should not be taken
to mean, 'do not waste time in practising all dharmaas'.
It only assures that even if one does not know about
all dharmas (and may commit sin out of ignorance),
by taking shelter under the Lord, He will see that
one is absolved of all sin. This is more explicitly explained
in verses LX-30 &31. Incidentally, this verse has given
the interpretation for the word 'yoga kshemam' of the previous verse, that it is the spiritual welfare that the lord will take care of.

In two verses of chapter IX, 30 and 31, the Lord says "Even if a man of the vilest conduct worships me with undistracted devotion, he must be reckoned as a righteous person because he has rightly resolved. Soon he will become a person of good conduct and obtain lasting peace. Know it for certain, na me bhaktah pran'asyati, NEVER DOES MY DEVOTEE PERISH". A similar assurance was given in the case of the jnaani also. This is not to be understood that sins will be absolved by mere puja. 'Samyag vyavasthitah' are significant words. It consists of repentence for past sins and a strong resolve not to repeat them. That is again indicated in the second verse that he will soon become a man of good conduct. That change of mind is the gift of God. Like jnaanam, Bhakti also can destroy the results of action provided it is sincere and not superficial.

What is the form in which God should be constantly contemplated? Bhakti is a feeling. It is love for God. Supreme Brahman without form and attributes cannot be an object of love. He can only be an object of understanding. The God with compassion (even if he has no form) can be an object of love. An incarnate God is more suited as an object of devotion. In Chapter X, God has revealed that he is seen in every being and thing that is perfect, beautiful or great. In fact, he is present in every being and, therefore, any thing can be an object of worship as God. This has not been elaborately dealt with in Giita but only suggestively hinted. It may be because as long as the love is targeted to God, the form which is worshipped is of little significance. However, if the devotion is
not directed to God but at the form, it makes a difference. There is mention in Giita of other inferior gods whom people worship for gaining some benefits. Though worship of such gods is also helped by God by increasing their s'radha (VII-21), it is clearly stated that those who worship those gods go to them; and those who worship Him, go to Him (VII-23).

Some great devotees have worshipped Him as father, some as mother, some as sweet heart. The gopiis worshipped Him as their lover. Intense longing for Him brings His grace early. The devotee should love Him as passionately as an ordinary man would love his wife or child. The intensity of worldly passion should be transformed into passion for Him. There is a Telugu saying, 'Kaami gaaka, moksha kaami kaad'u'. It means that unless one had been a passionate lover, he cannot become an ardent seeker of moksha. Bhakti is a passion; it is meant for a man of passion and not for a man of cold reason. Vaishn'avacaran is believed to have said that if one looked upon his wife or beloved as the chosen deity, the mind easily turns Godward. You may recall the advice Sri Raamakrishna gave to the old lady with a grand child.

Some psychologists look upon bhakti not so much as objective worship but as a subjective sublimation of passion, similar to the disciplining of intellect through meditation.

Many devotees have attained the goal by worship of idols. God is already there in the idol as he is everywhere. But by investing the God in it and worshipping with deep devotion, God will receive the worship, because the worship is directed at the Lord through the idol. The shod'as'opacaara puuja (16 offerings) is done to the idol as if it were the person of God. They offer a seat, water to drink, wash the
feet, give it a bath, cloth to wear, incense to smell and something to eat. Giita has tacitly recognised this form of worship when it says that the Lord would accept a leaf, a flower, a fruit or even water which is offered with devotion (IX-26). The actual word used is 'as'naami' which means, 'I eat'. A personal God with human attributes is surely intended.

Repetition of his name (japa), offering food (nivedanam) singing His praise (bhajan), offering flowers (puuja) are all employed as service to the Lord.

The incarnate God (Avataar) and the best in each class of beings can be worshipped because He is present in them. With one more step, all beings are eligible to be worshipped as the embodied self in them is also God. When we help some one or care for even an animal, we should do it in a spirit of service to the Lord.

Once, during a discourse to his disciples, Raamakrishn'a said, "With the knowledge that the whole universe is the household of the Lord, one should show pity on all creatures". Stopping abruptly after the sentence, he went into a trance of contemplation. After some time, he came to himself and said, as if to himself, "Pity the creatures! Fie! you, who are lower than a worm, how dare you speak of pity to creatures? Who are you to show pity on them? No, no. It is not pity to creatures, but service to them in the consciousness that they are verily God Himself."

There are eight verses listing the qualities of a Bhakta who is dear to God. The mind of the Bhakta is firmly and perpetually fixed in God. He is a man of few words, but full of compassion and friendliness. He arouses no fear in others, nor is he afraid of others. He has no hatred for his enemies, his attitude to them being the same as towards his friends. Being a person of immense patience and self restraint, he is well
composed, marked by equality of response to opposing influences like heat and cold, pleasure and pain, praise and censure, respect and disrespect. He takes them all in his stride. He is neither elated by happy events nor depressed by unhappy ones. He would not stick to a fixed abode. In fact, he would not consider anything as his own. He does not presume that he does anything because he considers that all events happen due to His will. He does not expect favours and is quite contented with his lot. He is pure in body and mind. For all his apparent passivity, he is a man of firm resolve and capable and efficient in action.
GLOSSARY

All the Sanskrit words used in this book have been explained then and there. However, for the convenience of the reader, the more important Sanskrit words have been explained in this glossary.

Aatma: Soul or self dwelling in the body.

Abhyaasah: Practice (of concentration or meditation).

Ahamkaarah: Self sense; a component of the antahkaran'a or mental complex; a function of the mind which causes the organism to consider itself as distinct from others. The self, when shrouded by ignorance, also tends to feel the same. It is considered one of the eight aspects of prakriti i.e. nature.

Ajnaanam: Ignorance, absence of knowledge of truth.

Antahkaran'am: The mental complex consisting of manas, buddhi and ahamkaara. Many authorities include a fourth component, citta. In common parlance, it is the mind.

Asura: A bad person. adj. aasurik.

Avataarah: An incarnation of God.

Bhakti: Devotion or faith in God, iis'vara, the facet of the Supreme Being with attributes like compassion but with or without form; or in an incarnate God; or in an idol or other object in which divinity is invested.

Bhakta: One possessing devotion, a devotee.

Bhavabandhah: The entanglement of the self in the cycle of births.

Bhuuta : 1. An element (earth, water, air, fire and space)

2. A living being, a creature.
Brahma: 1. The Supreme Being. 2. The creator. 3. Nature (prakriti) which gives rise to all forms.

Brahmacarya: Leading a life of restraint especially celibacy.

Buddhih: Discrimination, understanding, intellect. A component of the mental complex, discriminating right and wrong. It is one of the eight aspects of nature or prakriti.

Budddhiyoga: Intellectual communion with the Supreme Being. A method of understanding by logic and reason in order to keep the mind unperturbed in success or failure.

Cetanaa: Consciousness, animation. That which makes the body machine function. Considered the link between the body and the soul.

Daivam: Providence, destiny, luck, chance.

Damah: Restraint of desires mostly by the control of organs.

Dayaa: Compassion, sympathy, unselfish love for all beings.


Dhriti: Firmness, steadiness, self command, will.

Dvandvam: A pair; pairs of opposite experiences or emotions such as pleasure and pain, esteem and derision, heat and cold, success and failure, love and hatred etc.

Gun'aaah: Constituent behavioural types of all material substances. In human beings they are proclivities or personality types. There are three types: 1. the noble (sattva) 2. the ambitious (rajas) 3. the indolent and stupid (tamas).
Iis'vaarah: God. The facet of the Supreme Being which involves itself with the created universe. Compassionate and responsive to prayer.

Indriyah: Organ. Traditionally, five sense organs and five organs of function are recognized. Mind is also considered an indriya. They are instruments (karaṇ'as) of perception and action. They tempt the self with worldly pleasures.

Japa: Repetition of God's name audibly or within oneself.

Jijnaasa: The strong urge to know.

Jijnaasuh: One with a yearning to know.

Jnaanam: 1. The process of knowing 2. Knowledge which includes its implementation in life.

Jneyam: The thing to be known, the Supreme Being.

Karma: Work, action. It has two components, the motive and its execution.

Karmabandham: Literally, it means the bond of work. It is the bond between the self and the result of action. It comes into effect when the self motivates or takes interest in the action or work. It results in rebirth.

Karmaphalam: The result or consequence of an action. It has two components: 1. the purely physical result in accordance with the laws of nature and 2. the result of the motive (karaṇabandha) which the self has to undergo in the form of rebirth.

Karma yogah: The path of liberation of self by doing work without attachment and without coveting the result.

Kartritvam: Authorship of action. The assumption by self that it is doing a work (which happens in the course of nature). Such assumption also gives Karaṇabandha, because it involves motive.
Kshetram: The body and mind, made up of elements of nature and the functional faculties. It is the nature's part of the person, the other part being the self.

Kshetrajnah: Literally it means 'one who knows the body'. Jnaa, to know, also means 'consider'. The self which is aware of the body and considers the body as itself is the kshetrajna (embodied self). It is also known as purusha, a facet of the Supreme Being which dwells in all bodies. Since it does not perish, it is also called the akshara. Like prakriti, it has existed from eternity. So the physical nature is called the apara prakriti while the purusha is called the para prakriti. Both have come out of the Supreme Being by maayaa to give rise to creation.

Lobhah: Greed or avarice, considered one of the six internal enemies.

Maayaa: Illusion. In Saankhya philosophy, nature is called maayaa. The Supreme Being is said to have created this universe by giving rise to the para and apara prakritis by maayaa.

Mamakaarah: Sense of belonging. It is an off-spring of ahamkaara which makes the organism think of things as 'mine' or belonging to 'me'. It is an attachment to things. 'mamata' of the same etymology is used as a synonym for love. It is attachment rather than love.

Mohah: Delusion, blind passion, ignorance. It is one of the six internal enemies which shrouds the self with ignorance.

Mokshah: Liberation (of embodied self from the shacles of bodies to merge with the Supreme Being. Syn. Mukti.

Nirvaan'am: Mukti, Moksha, eternal bliss. Final liberation of self and its reunion with the Supreme Being. It is the goal of man.
Paramaatma: Supreme Being, Supreme Self, Purushottama, Parabrahma, Mahes'vara.

Prakriti: Nature. Primordial 'substance' which manifests in the ever changing and perpetually active universe by its infinite variation.

Purushah: Embodied self, Kshetrajna, aatma, jiiva.

Puuja: Worship, usually as offering sixteen forms of service to a form or idol looked upon as a personal God.

Rajas: One of the three gun'as which causes activity and ambition. Syn. Rajogun'aa. adj. raajasik.


Samnyaasah: Renunciation of all works prompted by desire or motive.

Samsaara: 1. The course of worldly life, mundane existance, 2. Succession of births.

Sattvagun'a: The noble proclivity which gives desire for knowledge, selfless duty and righteousness. adj. Saattvik.


Siddhi : Perfection.

Svabhaava: Sva = own; bhaava = disposition. Innate property, the natural traits one is born with.

Svadharma: One's own duty in accordance with his inherent nature; the occupation enjoined to one's own caste, one's own religion.

S'amah: Elimination of passions from the mind, tranquillity.

S'raddhaa: Faith, sincerity, full involvement in what is taken up.
Tamas: Darkness, ignorance. Tamogun'a, one of the Gun'as which causes ignorance, delusion, imprudence and indolence. adj. taamasik.

Titiksha: Endurance, forbearence.

Vairagaagyam: Renunciation of interest in worldly pleasures and objects.


WHAT HAVE I LEARNT FROM BHAGAVAT GIITA?

I am a part of the ever blissful and imperishable Supreme Being, destined to remain in this body till its death. My goal is to get back and unite with the Supreme Being as early as possible.

What keeps me back from my goal? If I take interest in the pleasures that the body gives me; if, lured by those pleasures, I impel the body to indulge in such actions; and if I assume that I do the actions which the body does in consonance with its nature; I shall be liable to take their consequences by taking more births.

I would have preferred to avoid all action so that I need not take another birth to suffer the consequences. But living in this body, it is not possible. Even eating and drinking is action. Therefore, I shall only learn to give up taking interest in actions or their success or failure. I shall be ever vigilant and control the mind from straying towards worldly pleasures.

Is there anything positive that I can do which will not bind me? Yes. All the other beings in the universe also are inhabited by parts of the same Supreme Being. It means that I am present in all of them too. Therefore, I shall be kind to them, give them charity, relieve their suffering and enlighten those who are in ignorance. I shall do nothing for myself (i.e. this body) but use this body to strive to reach perfection.
I shall take up a vocation that suits my nature and serve the society through that vocation as a sacred duty to God.

I shall meditate on the Supreme Being by driving away all other thoughts from my mind. Though it is very difficult, I shall persist with perseverance.

The easier way is to worship God in some chosen form. I shall do everything in his name, as his bidding and leave the result to him. I shall love him as dearly as I love my wife and children. I shall imagine his form in front of me, wash his feet, offer flowers and food and sing for him. I leave my welfare in his hands and be in peace.

In short, selfishness binds me to the world of rebirth. Selflessness releases me to join the Supreme Being.
ABOUT THE BOOK

There are a number of books, written by the wisest of the world, telling us what to do and what not to do. But right and wrong cannot be absolutely determined for all men, for all times, and for all situations. Ultimately the individual has to determine every time, which one to choose of the alternatives before him. He needs the satisfaction that he had done right. No one wants to carry the burden of a smouldering doubt that, probably, he had chosen the wrong course.

To have firm faith of being in the right, one should know the basis for deciding right and wrong. Bhagavad Giita seeks to set out this basis before us. The great book does not dictate. It just explains and leaves the decision to us.

Giita, however, is in a language many centuries old. Great thinkers have placed different interpretations on the text. In the fast changing world of today, when science, logic and reason dominate our thinking, there is need to take another look at the book and confirm that it is still relevant.

This book focusses the new light on the eternal truths of Giita for the modern, educated reader, revealing the roots of our value system.