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ānanda, just as a sugar crystal does not require any sugar at all to make itself sweeter. Nothing can become sweeter than sugar. Once something has crystallised into sugar, it cannot be sweetened any further. The very crystallisation indicates that the sweetness saturation has been reached. The American system of government may be better than the Russian system, but their sugars are both the same.

In the same way, you are *ānanda* by nature. When you are *ānanda*, you do not require any source of *ānanda*, any source of security. But this is exactly what you are seeking through all these *karmas*, means and ends. Therefore, the various means and ends mentioned in all four Vedas will only be of as much use, *tāvān sarveṣu vedeṣu*, as the small ponds and wells are when there is water, water, everywhere! When the ponds and wells are already flooded by water, where is the pond or the well, in fact!

All that *Kṛṣṇa* said in the previous verses was to create in *Arjuna* an interest in *karma-yoga*, which *Kṛṣṇa* has not yet talked about. He had only talked about *sāṅkhya*, knowledge. After asking *Arjuna* to listen to what he had to say about *karma-yoga*, he began praising it, saying that there was no possibility of losing anything or incurring any wrong result by its practice because *karma-yoga* is not mere *karma*. He then pointed out that people do *karmas* because they do not know what they really want. Since what they want is not very clear, they go after enjoyment and power. However, when what is wanted is very clear, the mind is settled. The storm is over and there is no more interest in experimentation. There is no more trying to see if this or that will do it. All experimentation stops because there is clarity with reference to what is wanted, which itself is a great blessing.

Then it becomes a question of whether you want to live a life of *sannyāsa* or *karma-yoga*, the only two lifestyles open to you. Between the two, you have a choice, but in fact, there is really very little choice because it all depends upon where you are. *Sannyāsa* may not be advisable at all; therefore, *karma-yoga* is preferable. Both have a common goal; both are meant for *mokṣa* in the form of knowledge. A *sannyāsī* works for *mokṣa* and so does a *karma-yogī*.

Although *Kṛṣṇa* has talked so much about *karma-yoga*, he has not actually said what it is. In the next verse, he explains it.

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।

मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥ ४७ ॥

karmaṇyevādhikāraṣte mā phaleṣu kadācana

mā karmaphalāheturbhūrmā te saṅgo'stvakarmani

Verse 47

कर्मणि *karmani* — in action; एव *eva* — only; ते *te* — your; अधिकारः *adhikārah* — choice; फलेषु *phaleṣu* — in the results; मा कदाचन *mā kadācana* — never; कर्म-फल-हेतुः *karma-phala-hetuḥ* — the cause of the results; मा भूः *mā bhūḥ* — do not be; अकर्मणि

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akarmani — in inaction; ते *te* — your; सङ्गः *sarigaḥ* — attachment; मा अस्तु *mā astu* — let it not be

Your choice is in action only, never in the results thereof. Do not be the author of the results of action. Let your attachment not be to inaction.

Śaṅkara takes the *karma* mentioned in this verse as purely scripturally enjoined *karma*, *vaidika-karma*, because that was what was under discussion. We shall look at it as any *karma*, rather than strictly *vaidika-karma*, since *karma-yoga* allows for it and *Śaṅkara* has said nothing to rule out the propriety of this approach.

The word *adhikāra* here means choice, your right, something over which you have power. This choice is only with reference to *karma*, the actions you perform. At no time, *mā kadācit*, however, is there a choice with reference to the results of actions, *phaleṣu*. Thus, with reference to all actions, you have a choice, but with reference to the results thereof, you have no choice whatsoever. This is a very simple statement of fact. Even for *vaidika-karma* there is a choice; you can do it, you need not do it, and you can do it differently. This capacity to do, not to do, and to do it differently makes you a *karma-adhikārī*. An animal, on the other hand, is not a *karma-adhikārī* because it does not have a choice in its actions, but is motivated only by its instincts.

When *Kṛṣṇa* told *Arjuna* that he did not have any choice over the results of action, he was not giving him a piece of advice; it was a statement of fact. A statement of fact is not an advice; it is teaching. That, water boils at 100°C, is a statement of fact. Here, also, with reference to actions and their results, the statement, ‘Your choice is only in action, never in the results thereof, *karmani eva adhikāraḥ te, mā phaleṣu kadācana,*’ is a statement of fact.

THE DEFINITION OF KARMA-YOGA

Yoga is defined in three different ways in the *Gītā*. The *karma-yoga* that *Kṛṣṇa* is praising is defined in two ways in this chapter.¹ The first is, evenness of the mind is called *karma-yoga*, *samatvaṃ yogaḥ ucyate* (*Gītā* – 2-48). The second is, discretion in action is called *karma-yoga*, *yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam* (*Gītā* – 2-50). Both definitions are necessary and need to be understood. Only then can *karma-yoga* be properly understood.

Samatva and *kauśala* are defining words for *karma-yoga*. *Samatva* is based on the sentence in the present verse — *karmani eva adhikāraḥ te, mā phaleṣu kadācana*. *Samatva* means sameness and sameness of mind is *karma-yoga*. *Karma* is also definitely involved in *karma-yoga*. Otherwise there would be no *karma-yoga*. There

¹ Third definition of *karma-yoga* is :

Dissociation from the association with pain (*Gītā* – 6-23)

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can be *karma* without *yoga*, but without *karma*, there can be no *karma-yoga*. If *karma-yoga* implies *karma*, then there must be sameness, *samatva*, with reference to *karma*. Let us see where this sameness is possible.

Sameness is not possible in the *karma* itself because you cannot do the same *karma* during the entire day, day after day, throughout your entire lifetime. Cooking is one *karma*, eating is another, and stirring the food in the pot is yet another. Removing the pot from fire is a different *karma* altogether. The *karmas* are therefore endless — sitting, standing, switching the stove on, switching it off, and so on. Obviously, then, the *karmas* cannot be the same because they are different.

Perhaps we can say that the results of *karmas*, the *karma-phalas*, are the same. Again, it is not possible. When you heat water, for example, there is one result and when you switch off the stove, there is another, entirely different result. The water that was hot slowly becomes cold as it loses its heat. Thus, different *karmas* are done for different results. The results vary. If you do not get a different result when you switch the stove on and off, you have a different kind of problem in that the stove is not functioning properly. Normally, the results will be different. Thus, neither *karmas* nor their results can be the same. In fact, different *karmas* are done for different results.

Every *karma* is desire-based; every action presupposes desire. Therefore, desire also cannot be the same. I do different *karmas* because I want different results. Desires are meant for results alone and the results are different. Thus, *samatva* is not in the *karma*, its results, or the desire upon which the *karma* is based.

In fact, *samatva* can only be with reference to your attitude concerning the results of action. While you have a choice over your action, you are helpless with reference to the result. You are not *Īśvara*; you are just an individual with limited knowledge, limited power, and ever so many desires. You have countless likes and dislikes, *rāga-dveṣas* to be fulfilled. Therefore, you undertake various activities.

KARMA IS TOTALLY DESIRE-BASED

Whatever be the nature of the *karmas* you do, they are all meant for fulfilling your *rāga-dveṣas* commonly called desires. *Rāga* is with reference to what you want to have, what you want to retain, and *dveṣa* is with reference to what you want to avoid, what you want to get rid of. That you want is *kāma*, desire. What you want is defined in terms of either *rāga* or *dveṣa*.

Everyone has likes and dislikes. They form the nature of an individual and are common to all. They may reveal how cultured, how sophisticated a person is, but the fact that everyone has likes and dislikes is common. There is no exception. Because of the presence of *rāga-dveṣas* alone, there are various activities and all the *karmas* undertaken are meant to produce the desired results because both *rāga* and *dveṣa* are

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result oriented. You want to accomplish this, 'this' being the result. It is not that you want to accomplish *karma*; you want to accomplish the result and for its sake, you do this *karma*.

Since you perform a particular *karma* to accomplish a specific end, it seems as though you have figured out which *karma* will produce which result. But then you find that what you had figured out is not that predictable. In fact, you find that you can get exactly the opposite of what you thought you would get! What you want is one thing, but what you do seems to be either inadequate or inappropriate as it produces the opposite result. If we analyse any result, we find that it always falls into one of the following categories — more than we want, less than we want, the opposite of what we want, or exactly what we want.

If you want to cross the road and you do so, finding yourself on the other side, you got what you wanted. The result was as you expected. If you wanted to cross the road to catch a bus and, while doing so, someone offered you a ride right to where you were going, you got more than you expected from crossing the road. Had you not crossed the road to get to the bus stop, you would not have met the person who offered a ride. Or, having wanted to cross the road, you may have found yourself in the hospital, having only reached the middle!

The result can be entirely different from what you wanted. You may have wanted a job but, instead, the person who interviewed you for the job you did not get, sold you what turned out to be a winning lottery ticket. You did not get the job you wanted, but you did get something entirely different and, in this case, most desirable — a million dollars!

All these situations are possible because you are not omniscient. Also, there is a certain helplessness involved. Therefore, keeping all your fingers crossed may not be enough; you may be better off by crossing your toes also!

What is up the sleeve of the future is always a wonder because we simply do not know what is coming next. We do not even know what our next thought is going to be — even after having lived for forty or fifty years! Yet, we talk about the future! This, then, is the helplessness of the individual, the *jīva*.

THE LIMITATIONS OF THE JĪVA

Wherever the *jīva* is, power wielded by that *jīva* is limited. Even *Indra's* wings are clipped. He does not have total overlordship because there are other domains where he is not even given entry. He may say, 'I am *Indra*!' and still be told to leave. Some one might say, 'You might be *Indra* in your own *loka*, but here you do not even have the status of a mosquito. Get out!' Thus, we find that no one's wingspan enables him or her to go everywhere. Such freedom, such limitlessness in terms of knowledge and power, is

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not there for anyone. Our knowledge and power are both limited. For want of knowledge, we cannot avoid what we want to avoid. Knowledge is not limitless. If it were, there would be no problem. Exactly what I want to happen would happen. I would know that this action would produce that result.

Limitless knowledge means limitless power also. If you have limitless power, you do not need to do anything other than think a thought. The thought you have will shape itself perfectly. God did not commit a mistake when he thought that an avocado would be the fruit that has a big pit; it was meant to be that way. It would not be an avocado if it did not have a big pit. An apple, on the other hand, should not have a big pit; only then is it an apple. This is how the creation is.

When there is omniscience, the thoughts are clean and complete. Nothing needs to be done. Thus, God did not need six days to create the world. It is not that on the first day God did this and on the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth days he did a few more things. Or that, having created everything else, he found there was no light and had to put a sun up there. How could he have done all those other things with no light? How could there be a first day without a sun? A day is due to the sun alone. Nor is it that God was doing a job that required him to do certain things on the first day so that he could paint on the next. On the third day he did not look at what he had done before, and decide that it was unsatisfactory, and rearrange the whole thing. God is not an architect! If the Lord is omniscient and omnipotent, all that is required is a *saṅkalpa*, a thought.

Even we, as mere mortals, do better in our dreams! We think of a world and it is there in front of us. If we think of a mountain, the mountain is up! If we think of a lion on the mountain, the lion is there! If we think of an African jungle, it is all there! We need not do anything nor do we have to go anywhere. It is all there; we created it. And if we want everyone to come and see our creation, they come in droves, in every imaginable means of transport, because we have the capacity to create them all in an instant. A capacity similar to this in the Lord, of course, is what is meant by omnipotence. That is why he is called a *satya-saṅkalpa*, one whose thought, *saṅkalpa*, is true, *satya*. When the thought is there, the whole thing is there. This is omnipotence.

THE RESULTS OF KARMA CAN NEVER BE PREDICTED

However, for you, power and knowledge being limited, certain situations cannot be avoided. For want of power, you cannot avoid certain illnesses or accidents, like falling from a tree. You know that you are falling and you may even know that you are accelerating downward at a speed of 32 feet per second per second. All this you know very well, but so what? Down you come! It matters not whether you are a great physicist or an ignoramus. One may know all the reasons as to why he or she is falling — the gravitational force, 32 feet per second per second, and so on — while someone else has

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no understanding of gravitation at all. All that is known is that he or she is coming down! But, for want of power, neither of them can avoid falling.

Limitation with respect to power and knowledge, then, is the status of an individual. If this is so, *Kṛṣṇa's* statement that one's choice is only over action — *karmaṇi eva adhikāraḥ te* — is very important. You may say that there is really no choice because so much is determined by your past, and so on, but that is an endless debate. The point is that you do have a choice. To understand that much is enough. You can perform a given action, you need not do it, or you can do it differently. That capacity you have; therefore, you do have choice. This is the reason why you do not do certain things and you can force yourself to do other things, even though you do not feel like doing them. Or you can do them differently.

As a human being, then you have this choice, *adhikāra*, but over the results of action, you have no choice whatsoever. Once you perform, the *karma*, the result is taken care of. What choice do you have? If you had a choice over the result, you need not have done the *karma* at all. If you had any power over the result, you would always be successful. But, because you are not omniscient, you do not know that a certain *karma* will produce a certain result. No one knows the ways of *karma*. To know how *karma* is going to produce its result and what result it is going to produce is very difficult to figure out. This is because, your own past *karmas* may be inhibiting the results of the present *karma*. Thus, all we know is good and bad luck.

Sometimes we find ourselves in the right place at the right time and, at other times, we are in the right place but not at the right time. In order to get the desired result, I have to be at the right place at the right time, but I do not always know which is the right time and place. I can only keep trying. This means that there seems to be an element, called luck, involved here. But, we do not call it luck; instead, we refer to it as previous *karma*. If the cause-effect relationship is understood, there is no question of luck. It is simply replaced by past *karma*. Being at the right place at the right time is *karma* and being at the wrong place is also *karma*. Therefore, we really do not know; we can only go by our choice, our free will.

THE USE OF ONE'S FREE WILL

You have a free will, just as there is a free wheel in a car. You can only go by that. Whether the brakes will work or not is anyone's guess. You can check them, but at any time, they can give way. That is why they have special ramps every few miles on the highways for runaway trucks whose brakes have failed. It is not that every truck driver takes to the road without first having checked the brakes, but that anything can go wrong at any time. This is because when things are put together, their tendency is to fall apart. Whether it is a human system or any other system, the tendency is always the same. This

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tendency to fall apart applies to relationships and houses also. In fact, we often spend more time maintaining our house than living in it!

Therefore, here, you can only go by your free will. There is nothing else you can do. What the result will be depends on so many unknown factors that it is always a question mark. Whether what you want from a particular *karma* will happen as you expected is anyone's guess. Since you do not have a complete choice over the results of action, you had better recognise this limitation. Limitation here is not helplessness. Helplessness is felt only when you do not accept the limitation and, therefore, it has a negative connotation, whereas acknowledging limitation is being objective. Therefore, dismissing the concept of helplessness from our minds, we recognise our limitations as individuals.

Because there is a limitation in knowledge and power, I cannot figure out exactly what I want. Nor do I know exactly what any given action will produce. When I understand this limitation, I can respond to the results of action in terms of *samatva*, evenness of mind. Any result can be responded to in either of two ways: dispassionately with *samatva* or like a yo-yo, elated because I got what I wanted or suicidal because I did not. And, if someone saves me from suicide, I will respond again like a yo-yo, feeling that I could not even commit suicide successfully, thereby developing yet another complex! This yo-yo response is because I think that I am the author of every result of action when, in fact, I am only the author of action.

Depression is created by some onerous responsibility you have assumed, one that is absolutely illegitimate. You take what does not belong to you and then smart under it because you cannot always produce what you want. This is a fact. Then why do you not just accept the fact? All that is required is to accept it objectively, to accept that this is how the creation is. This is what you are made up of and no one else, even a Swami, is made any differently. All human beings have the same types of limitations. According to the *śāstra*, even the *devas* have the same limitations, albeit with some small differences between them just as there are between human beings. Similarly, while the President of the United States definitely has more power than other people, still he cannot appoint anyone he chooses as a judge. Once he realises that he does not have a majority, he begins to withdraw quietly, proving that even presidential power is limited. Everyone's thumb has its size! Even if it swells, it can only become so big.

THE CAUSE OF ONE'S SENSE OF FAILURE

Similarly, everyone has power only to a limited extent. You can improve your power, but only to a limited degree. Knowledge also is limited and can be improved upon only in a limited way. Any thing else, such as your skills, health, longevity, your environment, are all limited and can be improved upon. But the improvement is always limited. Thus, there can only be an improved limitation. If this fact is understood clearly,

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then you do not take up the responsibility of authoring the results of action, as you like. If you think you are the author of the results of action, you cannot but have a sense of failure. Is it not true?

What is being discussed here is *yoga*; it is not *jñāna*. It is simply an empirical, pragmatic attitude and has nothing to do with *ātmā* and *anātmā*, the reality, *Brahman*, and so on. It is simply looking at yourself as you are in the world, seeing how the world is and your own position in the scheme of things. To convey this attitude to *Arjuna*, *Kṛṣṇa* said, 'Do not be the cause of the result of action, *mā karmaphalahētuḥ bhūh*, because you are not.'

Then what are you? You are merely the cause of action, *karma-hetu*, not the cause of the result of action, *karma-phala-hetu*. You are the author of *karma*, but not of the result thereof. Given this fact, the most appropriate thing to do is to take whatever result comes with an even attitude, *samatva*. By not getting what you want, you become wiser. Not getting what you want does not mean you have become a failure. It means only that your limited knowledge has improved somewhat. You have become wiser. Or, if the result is more than you expected, you are also wise. In addition, if you try again, thinking you will again get more, and the result is not as you expected, you say, 'What luck!' Still, you have become wiser. Whether you gain or do not gain, there is always wisdom to gain. There is definitely something to learn. To know that you are the author of the action, but not of the result thereof, produces *samatva*.

In this context, *samatva* is nothing more than a pragmatic attitude. To make it *karma-yoga*, we have to go one step further because *karma-yoga* implies the acceptance of *Īśvara*. Unless you accept *Īśvara*, there is no *karma-yoga*. There are a lot of people who are pragmatic and who take whatever happens in their stride and then proceed because they know it is all in the game of living and doing. They are more or less pragmatic, more or less objective, because, of course, they have their bad days. This is simple *samatva*.

KARMA-YOGA REQUIRES THE RECOGNITION OF ĪŚVARA

Samatva as *yoga*, on the other hand, requires one more aspect, recognition of *Īśvara*. Once we say the result of one's action is not within our control, and that it is taken care of, the next question is — what is it that takes care of it? All results are taken care of by certain laws, the body of which we call either the law of *dharma* or the law of *karma*. In fact, it is a law of *karma*. Other than the physical laws that we know and do not know, there does seem to be another order of law. We are always finding orders within orders. For example, when you lift your hand, physical laws are naturally at work, but there are also many other laws involved. Lifting the hand involves will. You have a thought and up it goes! There is nothing physical about this aspect of lifting your hand. You need not push any button.

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Thus, although we find that this physical body, this anatomical structure, is standing on this earth according to physical law, it is born into this world by certain biological as well as physical laws. There are also physiological and psychological laws. We find, then, that there are laws within laws so that when I perform a simple *karma*, even my past *karmas* may infringe upon the result that I want from this particular action. We really do not know if this happens or not. Because we find ourselves lucky or not very lucky, we appreciate that there is some law at work. Whatever is the law that governs the *karma* and its result is the law of *karma* and that law of *karma* includes various other laws also.

No law is created by me. I am not the author of any law. If I were, I would not be helpless. I would always be able to accomplish whatever I wanted. There would be no problem. I could even reorganise the law to suit myself. I would not even need to cover the distance to reach a certain place; the place would come to me. Or, I could think about being in a certain place and I would be there immediately. However, this is not the case. Therefore, we try to go by the laws and, at the same time, we do not know very much about them.

RECOGNIZING THE AUTHOR OF THE LAWS

As one who knows very little, I can only go by the known laws and know that the laws are not authored by me. Then the question may arise as to who authored them? Certainly not my grandfather. He and his father and grandfathers before him were themselves all born of these laws. They existed because of the laws and they left the planet because of the same laws. The laws that bring people into being also take care of them and, then, take care of them for good! You find these laws always operating and no given person can be considered to be the author of them. To recognise the author, then, is to take one more step.

You must first recognise that the author of the laws produces the results of action and that the laws themselves do not. When you go one step further and recognise the author as *Īśvara*, the Lord, you have the beginnings of *karma-yoga*. There are still more steps to go, but this, at least, is the beginning: the creation is not created by me. Therefore, whoever did create it is *Īśvara* and this same *Īśvara*, is the giver of the results of action.

When you receive money from someone, month after month, the postman is the one who actually gives you the money. But this does not mean that the postman is a benevolent person who goes about distributing money to everyone like Santa Claus. There is someone other than the postman who is to be thanked. Similarly, the *karma-phala*, the result, is produced by the law and the law itself is produced by another intelligent being. That all-intelligent being, *Brahman*, is called *Īśvara*, the Lord,

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with reference to the creation. He is the Overlord, in fact, the top man, and the boss, not limited by time, space, or anything.

THE NATURE OF THE AUTHOR

The Veda comes in here to address the question of the author and his creation. From that *Brahman* alone, the five elements are born; therefore, with reference to the creation, that *Brahman* is considered to be *Parameśvara*. Not only is he *Parameśvara*, the author, the maker of the creation, *nimittakāraṇa*, he is also the material. This is another important point. Because the world, *jagat* is *mithyā* having no independent existence apart from *Brahman*, it requires only a *mithyā* cause, called *māyā*. *Māyā* also being *mithyā*, has no independent existence apart from the *satya*, *Brahman*, whereas *satya* does not depend upon anything for its existence. In the *māyā*, there is *satya*. Being *mithyā*, the *jagat* is also *satya* and so are we. It is not that originally there was *Brahman* and now we have to cross over everything to reach that *Brahman*. Everything is *Brahman*. Wherever there is *mithyā*, there is *satya* and that *satya* is the basis, *adhiṣṭhāna*, for everything.

Therefore, that *Parameśvara* himself, who is *param brahma* and who is the cause of the creation *nimitta-kāraṇa*, who is omniscient, *sarvajña*, and omnipotent, *sarvaśaktimān*, is also the material cause of the creation, *upādāna-kāraṇa*. Thus, he is not only the maker of the results of action, but also the very law, the very result of action, in fact. Because our topic is *karma-yoga*, we will not go beyond this point here since, to do so, becomes *jñāna*. We say, then, that *Īśvara* is the maker of the laws and, also, that the laws are not separate from him. The results of action, coming as they do from the laws that are not separate from *Īśvara*, the Lord, and they come from *Īśvara*. It is this recognition of *Īśvara* that converts the simple *samatva* to *karma-yoga*.

Without *Īśvara*, what we have been discussing is nothing more than a pragmatic approach to life. But, here, we are dealing with a purely religious approach, which is entirely different because it recognises *Īśvara*, the Lord, as the giver of the results of action, *karma-phala-dātā*, and oneself as only the doer of action, *karma-kartā*. Therefore, to be a *karma-yogī*, one has to accept *Īśvara*.

Īśvara now has one more definition — one who has all-knowledge, *sarvajña*. And when we say *sarvaśaktimān*, we mean that he is all-powerful and has all skills, being the creator of everything. Another defining word we have seen is *karma-phala-dātā*, the giver of the fruits of action. These definitions eliminate the problems that arise when it is said that God created all beings. I may naturally ask why God created one person blind and another lame. If I am told that, being God, he is justified to do whatever he likes and that I should not question him, I will definitely ask why God's creation is even talked about since it is obviously nothing to boast about — especially when I am also told that he is all-compassion! I am asked to worship and love

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him, but when I look at this creation with so much human suffering, God's compassion falls apart for me. Then I am told that he is justified in whatever he does and I am supposed to love him. How can I?

THE EXPLANATION FOR HUMAN SUFFERING

The answer to all of this is that not only is he the creator, he is also the creation. The individual, *jīva*, is non-separate from and, therefore, not different from *Parameśvara*. The individual self, *ātmā*, is *Brahman* and, therefore, all that is there is the *ātmā* that is *Brahman*. The *ātmā*, the *jīva*, is not created. When you say a person is created, it is only with reference to a given physical body at a given time. The *jīva* is due to ignorance alone and, ignorance being beginningless, the *jīva* is beginningless, *anādi*. The subtle and gross bodies, *sūkṣma* and *sthūla śarīras* are born in the sense that the subtle body, *sūkṣma-śarīra* always adapts itself to the gross body, *sthūla-śarīra*. We also find that the *sūkṣma-śarīra* is always in keeping with the *sthūla-śarīra* it adapts itself to. Thus, only a cat's *sūkṣma-śarīra* is present in a cat's body, and not a human *sūkṣma-śarīra*. Otherwise, the cat will not mew at you; it will talk to you, saying 'Come on, it's morning. Get up!'

We find that in this world of living beings, in each unit of creation, there is a *sthūla-śarīra*, which is in keeping with one's *karma-phala*. *Īśvara*, defined as the *karma-phala-dātā* is not to blame. Nor do you need to justify *Īśvara's* action either. To do so would only be justifying your own! You did it; you got it. You asked for it; you have had it — and you have it also. You will continue to have it because you keep asking for it. Therefore, no one else is responsible for what comes to you. Every *jīva* is responsible for what that person is. This is the kind of responsibility that is assumed by the *jīva* here. You have a capacity, a free will, to perform action. You can do whatever you want to do, but the result is always something that is taken care of by the law that is *Īśvara*.

Why at all is this understanding necessary? To answer this question, we have to go a little more into the human psyche, defined here in the *Gītā* as a psyche that operates on the basis of its own likes and dislikes, *rāga* and *dveṣa*. The entire *Gītā* psychology is dealt with in terms of *rāga* and *dveṣa* alone. No other norms are used. *Rāga* and *dveṣa* can be in an unspelt form or a spelled-out form. You may not know that you have a liking for something until you happen to see it closely. Otherwise, how is it that even though you meet so many people every day, one day you suddenly meet someone you like a lot. Of all the people you have met and known, why this particular one? In fact, it is a wonder to your family and friends that you chose this person as a life-partner when someone else, whom they thought more suitable, was already after you!

There are a lot of likes and dislikes embedded in us which are not shaped properly. We may call them unconscious, subconscious, or whatever, but still, they are unshaped

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likes and dislikes, meaning that they are not very clear to you. But they are evoked when situations appear before you. All these are included in the term *rāga-dveṣas*. *Rāga* is that which is pleasing or desirable to you and *dveṣa* is that which is undesirable in your view. Both *rāga* and *dveṣa* are purely according to you alone, they are totally limited to the individual. Wherever psychology is involved, you must always know that it is according to you alone. When you say some man did something wrong to you, it is only according to you. In fact, if you ask the man, he will say that he gave you what you deserved. Thus, it is always a matter of perception – yours and the other person's.

AVOIDANCE OF THE UNDESIRABLE IS ALSO A FULFILMENT

What should you do when your whole life is dedicated to the altar of *rāga-dveṣas*? To fulfil *dveṣa*, you must stall what you do not want to happen, and when you succeed, you are very happy that you avoided it. Some people have become great devotees simply by avoiding what could have been a very serious accident. They say that God saved them. When you avoid something unpleasant, it is a great relief. People talk as though it is a great accomplishment when, really, you did not accomplish anything. The incident that could have created a problem for you simply did not happen. Still you are so relieved that you become a devotee! Why? Because something was avoided. Thus, avoidance is a fulfilment, too.

We see, then, that what I do not want and I have, I have to get rid of; what I want to have, I should have; and what I already have that is desirable to me has got to be retained. This is *rāga-dveṣa*. Therefore, all your activities are nothing but *rāga-dveṣas*. And all your psychological problems are also nothing but *rāga-dveṣa*. What else are they? If you had no *rāga-dveṣas*, you would have no problems, just like in deep sleep. Until you sleep, you may have *rāga-dveṣas* – the pillow may not be comfortable, the room may be too chilly or you may have a hundred other complaints. But, once you have gone to sleep there are no likes and dislikes.

This *rāga-dveṣa* argument is simple and complete. Certain things should be kept simple because the more you complicate them, the more problems there are. This applies especially to psychological problems which are based on one's anxiety to fulfil likes and dislikes and, also, on the judgements one makes with reference to their non-fulfilment.

The necessity for *karma-yoga* is because people are in the hands of *rāga-dveṣas*. Their behaviour, their activities, their responses and prejudices – cultural, racial, and otherwise – are all controlled by their likes and dislikes. All prejudices and preferences come under *rāga-dveṣas*, whether they are binding or non-binding. It is said that even gods have preferences. When we worship Lord *Ganeśa*, for example, we offer him a sweet *modaka* that we say he likes. This is based, of course, on our own likes. Thus, we impute our own *rāga-dveṣa* to *Bhagavān* also. We say *Ganeśa* likes this, *Śiva* likes

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that, and so on, so that we can deal with the deity as a person. You cannot deal with someone without preferences, but the idea is that our preferences should be non-binding.

PREFERENCES SHOULD BE NON-BINDING

In everyone's life there are preferences that are non-binding in nature and others that are binding. Preferences that are binding in nature are the ones we have to deal with. About those that are non-binding, we need not do anything. In fact, the *gītā-śāstra* does not deal with them at all because they are not a problem. Whenever the *Gītā* talks about *rāga-dveṣas*, it does so in terms of one's binding likes and dislikes only. Even the one teaching the *Gītā*, *Kṛṣṇa*, the Lord, had preferences. For instance, he always chose the flute; he did not come with a guitar or a *viṇā*. We know that he knew what he was talking about, as evidenced by his life. Whether we take him as a wise man or as *Īśvara*, the Lord, we cannot say that he had *rāga-dveṣas*, even though he had his preferences.

All of this is to point out that there are non-binding and binding *rāga-dveṣas* and we must deal with the binding ones. The binding *rāga-dveṣas* are those whose fulfilment is a must for you and in whose non-fulfilment you feel like a loser, a struggler, a seeker, all empty inside. You are a seeker because you have hope; you want to fulfil your likes and dislikes. These *rāga-dveṣas* are binding in nature and they make you act. Action does not take place without reason. When you undertake a course of action, there is definitely a like or dislike involved. *Rāga-dveṣa* is commonly called want or desire, *kāma*. These likes or dislikes are behind every kind of action.

We are talking here about the person who has just entered into a life of *yoga*, for which the cause is *karma*. Therefore, the *yoga* should definitely include one's own likes and dislikes. When you say, 'I am a *karma-yogī*,' you have to accept that you have likes and dislikes to fulfil. To do this, you have to undertake activities which produce results and these results are not always what you want because you have control only over your actions, but not over the results. The results come from *Īśvara*. First you accept *Īśvara* and then you accept *Īśvara* as the *karma-phala-dātā*, the giver of the fruits of action. When you do this, you have a purely religious attitude, the attitude of a devotee, a *bhakta*.

The recognition of *Īśvara* as the *karma-phala-dātā*, is what makes you appreciate *Īśvara* in your daily life. Even when you fall down and incur an injury, *Īśvara's* grace is at work. That you fell down and hurt yourself does not mean that his grace is absent. Under the law of *karma*, you escaped greater injury; you did not break altogether. One can fall down and receive a small injury, not be injured at all, or end up in the hospital, never to return! All these are possibilities. Therefore, as a devotee, we see *Īśvara* working constantly.

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THE ATTITUDE OF A BHAKTA

No matter what the *karma-phala* is, I confront *Īśvara*. When I open my mouth to talk, when my tongue is able to produce the words that tumble out one after the other, it is all because *Īśvara* is at work. *Karma* I can do, but *karma-phala* is something that takes place because of the laws that are the Lord. Therefore, every action producing a result, even a small action like opening and closing the eyelids, is the work of the Lord. In every action, there is an intended result that sometimes happens and sometimes does not. It is all according to the laws. Therefore, as a *bhakta*, a devotee, I continuously confront *Īśvara* as I receive my *karma-phala*.

Since every result comes from *Īśvara*, I take it as *prasāda*, a Sanskrit word that does not have an exact English equivalent. The word 'grace' has a somewhat intangible connotation, whereas *prasāda* covers both the tangible results and the intangible, the grace. When I offer a fruit to the Lord, it comes back to me, given to me from the altar. The fruit that comes back is called *prasāda*. For an English word for *prasāda*, to exist, the concept must be there — and it is not there. A dieting person may refuse a laddu, but not when he comes to know that it is from *Tirupati Venkateśvara*. What converted the laddu into *prasāda*? The tangible laddu becomes *prasāda*, because the person now knows that it comes from the Lord.

Therefore, what converts a *karma-phala* into a *prasāda* is purely your recognition that it comes from the Lord. It is not just a statement; it is seeing, understanding. This is where the word 'experience' can be used, if at all. It is a way of looking at the whole thing. Recognition that *Īśvara* is the *karma-phala-dātā* converts every *karma-phala* into *prasāda*. Therefore, *prasāda* is not an object; it is a way of looking at an object.

Prasāda is purely symbolic. If a person with diabetes eats laddus, his blood sugar levels will definitely rise, not because he is eating *prasāda* but because he is eating laddus. *Prasāda* is an attitude, a way of looking at an object, which itself is born out of understanding that it comes from the Lord. Therefore, *prasāda* can be anything — a fruit, a leaf, a sugar crystal, a laddu, or even a child. Because, in India, a child is looked upon as *prasāda*, there are many people who are named as Prasad. Anything that comes to you as *karma-phala*, as a gift from the altar of *Īśvara* is called *prasāda*, which includes the attitudes with which you receive it. *Prasāda* is not received and then cast away disrespectfully; it is received in a certain manner. It is this *prasāda*, then, that brings about *samatva*, sameness of mind.

Once everything is *prasāda*, I have nothing really to complain about. I have only something to learn. Therefore, when the *karma-phala* comes, I take it as *prasāda*. If it is more than what I wanted, I take it as *prasāda*. If it is less than I wanted, it is still *prasāda*. And if it is exactly what I wanted, opposite to what I wanted, or different from what I wanted, it is all *prasāda*. As every *karma-phala* comes, there is a sameness in

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your reception of it. This is what *Kṛṣṇa* is saying here when he tells *Arjuna* not to be the cause of *karma-phala*. The *karma-phala-hetu* is *Īśvara*, not *Arjuna*. *Arjuna* is the cause of action, but not the cause of its results.

Further, *Kṛṣṇa* said, 'Let there be no attachment to inaction — *akarmaṇi saṅgaḥ mā astu*.' Action itself is not the problem. It is your response to the result of action that is the problem. Thus, inaction here means fear of action — not of action, as such, but fear that the results you want will not come. Even before you begin doing an action, you expect to fail. Therefore, *Kṛṣṇa* told *Arjuna* that *karma* itself is not binding. Nor does the *karma-phala* bind him. It is his response to the *karma-phala* that makes *karma* seem like a bondage. Thus, let there be a love for action, but let the results be received by you as *prasāda*.

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय ।

सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥ ४८ ॥

yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgaṃ tyaktvā dhanañjaya
siddhyasiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvaṃ yoga ucyate

Verse 48

धनञ्जय *dhanañjaya* — Oh! *Dhanañjaya* (*Arjuna*); योगस्थः *yogasthaḥ* — being steadfast in *yoga*; सङ्गम् *saṅgam* — attachment; त्यक्त्वा *tyaktvā* — abandoning; सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योः *siddhyasiddhyoḥ* — with reference to success and failure; समः *samaḥ* — the same; भूत्वा *bhūtvā* — being; कर्माणि *karmāṇi* — actions; कुरु *kuru* — do; समत्वम् *samatvam* — evenness of mind; योगः उच्यते *yogaḥ ucyate* — is called *yoga*

Remaining steadfast in *yoga*, Oh! *Dhanañjaya*, perform actions, abandoning attachment, remaining the same to success and failure alike. This evenness of mind is called *yoga*.

The recognition in your life that *Īśvara* is the *karma-phala-dātā* brings about a certain attitude, called *samatva*. *Rāga* and *dveṣa* are the cause for attachment, *saṅga*, which prompts us to say, 'This should or should not happen to me.' The *rāga-dveṣas* become a *saṅga* with reference to any *karma-phala* that is going to affect you. Then only is it *rāga-dveṣa*. But if you have the attitude of *samatva*, *rāga-dveṣas* are neutralised. They are rendered incapable of creating any kind of reaction in you. The *rāga-dveṣas* manifest themselves through various *karmas* and in time by one's attitude of *samatva*, they become neutralised. This is what is meant by *karma-yoga*.

Staying or abiding in *yoga*, being *yogastha*, means enjoying this attitude of *samatva*. This evenness of mind with reference to both success, *siddhi*, and failure, *asiddhi*, is called *yoga*. It is what makes you a *yogī*. *Samatvaṃ yogaḥ ucyate* — is a separate sentence in this verse that defines *yoga*.