

## CHAPTER XIX

**S**peakers who are out to spread the Geetha have multiplied nowadays and as a consequence, a variety of interpretations, most of them far removed from the genuine one, have emanated, clouding the true significance. Interpretations follow the nature and character of the exponent. Once an opinion is formed, he tries to buttress it with appropriate arguments and prove all others wrong. It is then repeated parrot-like on every occasion. No attempt is made to practise the Geetha and make it part of one's actual life. Such persons pretend to be great Geetha Pracharaks (Exponents or speakers of Geetha) and go about, heavy with the burden of credentials and titles. They ruin themselves by this deception and undermine the trust placed on the Geetha.

The words of God are, each one, for translation into actual life; not for scattering into the ears of men to reap

fame. But the times have gone so awry, that they are today, misused for acquiring publicity and praise! Those who listen to the expositions of these Pracharaks are also neglecting to question the bona fides. They do not care to examine whether the persons who extol the Geetha to the skies have tasted the sweetness of its teachings. Words and deeds are far apart. They exhort others but those who are exhorted find that the teachers do not themselves follow the lesson! No, not even one in a million.

There are some who boast that they have the entire Geetha on the tip of the tongue, that they can roll out, on the spot, any sloka from the Geetha which you want to hear, if only the chapter and number are given. Or, they can quote chapter and number for any phrase or word you give. I am inclined to laugh when such scholarship is exhibited. Poor tongue, that it should carry so much on its tip, without any of it being absorbed in actual life! A gramophone record can repeat as well as they, and with equal benefit to itself. Practising one verse certainly yields more benefit than learning all the verses by rote and retaining them in memory. Arjuna proved every word of Krishna true, by practising it. His sincerity won him the Grace of Krishna.

It is a pity that even extremely learned Pundits at the present time are unaware of the thrill of putting into practice a single word of the Geetha. What then are we to say of the unlearned, the ignorant? In short, even some very reputed exponents of the Geetha are playing false to its teaching, acting contrary to the message. To the Song of the Lord,

each one adds a fancy note of his own to demonstrate his special twist in scholarship, or his favourite predilection. Let us consider one example of this type: The 10th verse of the 6th chapter of the Geetha declares that “*Parigraha*” (accepting help from others) is a great sin.

Now those who accept the Geetha as authority should act accordingly, avoiding *Parigraha*, isn't it so? *Parigraha* means “accepting” even for the upkeep of the body and the maintenance of Dharma! These Pracharaks however, *do* accept, 99% of them! The condemnation of *Parigraha* applies to all forms. There are no modifying circumstances or exceptions. Yet, collections and contributions are asked for Geethayajnas (Geetha expositions for sharing knowledge), as “offering” during *Harathi*, as expenses for the Geetha Pracharaka Sanghas (community), as Nazar or Kanuka (remuneration) for the Guru. Lectures are “sold” for tickets, as entertainment (like the drama and cinema) is sold. People who do this have no faith in the words of Krishna; for, had they the faith, they would not have behaved in such contrary ways. If they were convinced that it is wrong, they would not be tempted to act so. They explain the sloka and feel that their duty is done. They do not feel the need to follow the advice. That is the spirit of the times, for this is the age of hypocrisy. People who watch this type of Geetha Prachar lose faith first in the Pracharak and later, in the Geetha itself. The publicity dissolves into mere pomp and vanity.

The teachings of the Geetha do not get the respect that the book gets. Thousands of people, when they see the sacred books, Geetha, *Ramayana*, *Bhagavatha*,

*Mahabharatha*, etc., bow their heads, press them to their eyes, place them on their heads, keep them on a special seat in the shrine and reverentially placing a few flowers on them, they sit with closed eyes and, with teardrops rolling down their cheeks, fall prostrate before the books and rise very much satisfied with themselves! All that reverence is for the stack of paper, really, not for the contents of the books, the subjects they deal with.

What the head must carry is not the weight of the paper, but the message explained thereon. Attach value not to the book, but to the subject. Revere, not the volume, but the matter expounded therein. Install it not on the altar, but in the heart. For it is only then that the authority of the Geetha will be honoured steadily, at all times. The mind will not be cleansed of egoism or like evils by all this outward reverence: learning by rote, offering worship in the shrine room, holding on the head, pressing on the eyes, etc. Let the message enter the heart. Put it into practice and taste the joy that comes therefrom. That is the way of honouring the Geetha.

The tastiest dish can never quell your hunger if you place it on the head or press it to your eye or fall prostrate before it. The Geetha too is on a par with this. The Geetha is a tasty dish, full of the sweet ingredients of Bhakthi (devotion), Jnana (wisdom), Karma (activity) and Vairagya (detachment). Eat it. Drink it. One mouthful is enough. The hungry man does not need all the grain that is harvested. A handful of rice suffices. The thirsty man need not drink the Godavari dry. A glass of water is enough.

He who has hunger for God need not consume the entire Geetha; it can be quenched by practising even one sloka. A box of matches has many sticks. If you want to light a fire, you need strike only one; you can nurture the little flame into a huge fire, with care and diligence. The entire stock of sticks need not be struck. There are 700 sticks in the Geetha. Each one is a stick from which you can light the flame of Jnana. Strike one on the stone of experience, that is enough.

The Geetha has to be used thus for Self-realisation. That is the holy task for which it is designed. It is a great wrong to misuse it. All attempts to use it for fame and fortune, for titles and display, are but symptoms of egoism, They are acts of sacrilege. The '*gandha*' (fragrance) must be extracted from this '*grantha*' (essence); that is the test of scholarship. The fragrance (*gandha*) is the essence of the book (*grantha*). Do not, on the other hand, transform the *masthaka* into a *pusthaka*, the brain into a book.

See God in the stone. Do not change God into stone. That is the vision which is highly desirable. The stone must be visualised as Divine, suffused with God which it really is. This vision is the precious gift that God has given the people of this land. Pearls do not float on the waves of the ocean. Dive deep into the silent caverns at the bottom if you yearn for them. The people of this land have sought for God in this manner for ages.

The practice of Dharma is the body. The realisation of God is its heart. This is the truth that has urged the people

here to march forward and save themselves. They are not slaves to outward polish, external embroidery, or material comfort. They search for the basic Atma with the inner eye and cultivate detachment. The people of Bharath, who have this grand nature, are however, attracted today by material progress and outward pomp! This is a tragedy much to be regretted.

Those who go about expounding the Geetha with the object of earning money are thereby keeping God afar. They may give various justifications for their behaviour, no doubt. But no one who has real faith in the Geetha or who is a real adherent of its teaching can accept their explanations.

The Geetha is spoken in order to foster Dharma, not *Dhanam* (riches). It serves to promote goodness, not "goodsness." Collecting money in the name of a temple for Krishna or for Rama, or a Mandir for the Geetha is another means of reducing faith in God. Building a house for the Lord who is immanent and all-pervading is absurd. The heart is the proper temple where Krishna or the Geetha is to be installed. To put up an artificial structure that is certain to be ravaged by time, for the eternal Absolute, the indestructible Godhead is very improper. Of course, until a stage is reached, these may be necessary, but in that case, it is wiser to make the best use of the ancient temples that already exist. Building new ones and ruining the old ones is as foolish as killing the cow and donating footwear made out of its hide! The welfare of the world can be promoted by the renovation of old temples, and not by the creation of

new ones. The installation of God in ancient days was done according to strict Sastric ritual and so they are holier. The power radiated from them confers upon this land whatever little welfare it enjoys now.

The Rishis of the past suffered hardships, detached themselves from the world and even disintegrated their physiques in the search for the secrets of individual salvation and social uplift. They have handed down certain codes of conduct and rules of living which are practicable and simple. Even these are now neglected or misunderstood. New codes and rules are imposed so that these precious ones have gone under.

When elders, Gurus and Pundits, accept and honour these newfangled modes of behaviour, how can Bharath continue to be Dharma Kshetra (The field of righteousness), Yoga Kshetra (The field of self-control) and Thyaga Kshetra (The field of sacrifice)? This downfall in ideals explains why the land which verily was *Annapurna* (Goddess of nature), feeding all her children has to wail today for food. The holy experience—*Shivoham*, I am Shiva—was resounding from every mountain valley, every cave, every temple and each sacred river bank. But now the cry is *Savoham*, Savoham, I am dead!

The land has lost its ancient joy; it is infested with anxiety. It is the home of self-aggrandisement. It is pursuing empty pomp. To counteract these tendencies, the spread of spiritual knowledge by persons who have actually

experienced the joy of sadhana (spiritual practice) and success in and through it has become very necessary. Everyone from the simple unlettered man to the Paramahansa (realised sage) must recognise this need. All must cultivate faith in the Geetha and take it as the authentic word of the Lord.

The Lord has given the assurance: “*Yoga kshemam vahaamyaham*,” “I shall bear the burden of your welfare, here and hereafter”; He has undertaken this task voluntarily. But for mortals and aspirants to benefit from this, they have to live as ordained. They have to adhere to the lines laid down. When they feel that they are not so helped, they have only to examine their own lives and discover how far they have kept up the commands of God regarding the regulation of life. They fail to examine this. They do not consider the past and future. They complain only about the grief of the moment, not knowing that it is caused by neglect in the past and ignorance of the future. This is the root of their suffering.

While considering this assurance, the condition precedent contained in the same sloka, “*Ananyaaschinthayantho maam, ye janaah paryupaasathe*” (Remember me without any other thought) has to be remembered. “*Yogakshemam vahaam-yahm*” (Your worldly and spiritual welfare is My responsibility) is the crown of this condition, the final fruit. The assurance is the head, but no head can function independently of limbs. Holding fast to the head only, apart from neck and shoulders and the rest of the body, is like putting faith in the key in

one's hand after the iron safe has been stolen! Of what use is the key, after the treasure is burgled?

The conditions for the fulfilment of that assurance are: *Ananyachintha* and *Upaasana*, Meditation on the Lord unhampered by any other thought and steady worship. If unbroken meditation is absent, when worship is not offered with unconditional surrender, what justification is there to complain that He is not bearing the burden?

You surrender to others. You praise and extol others. You are immersed in other thoughts. How then can He assume the burden? You serve others. You press the Lord for reward! How can this be *Ananya Chintha*, undivided loyalty? If a man is the servant of the King, he must serve him wholeheartedly. If he serves the King and loves his family, it cannot be termed unswerving loyalty. Serve whom you love, love whom you serve. That is the secret of Saranagathi, surrender. Vyasa (Sage who compiled the Geetha, Vedas and Puranas) made a lovely garland using the words of Krishna as flowers; of that garland, this sloka is the crest. It is the central jewel of that garland of gems.

The words "Yoga" and "Kshema" used by the Lord here mean: "Yoga" acquisition of something desirable; and "Kshema," the preservation of what is thus acquired. The discipline by which you can preserve it is: *Ananya chintha*, exclusive meditation on the Lord. That will cleanse the mind. It will make you a Bhaktha. The Bhaktha is recognised by these things. He talks of the Lord. He sings of the Lord. He

sees only the Lord. He works and spends his leisure with the Lord.

Such persons have no need to perform Yajna or Yaga. They need not busy themselves with meritorious acts of charity. They need not go from one holy place to another. Why should they be sad if they miss these things and complain that the Lord did not give them the chance or the wherewithal for these? He does not insist on these or crave for these. Offer whatever arises in the mind, made pure by sadhana; He gladly accepts all. You may engage yourselves in what are termed "good deeds," but if the mind is unclean, if the vessel is not "tinned" with the thought of God, they are all polluted into poison. He is particular that the vessel should be clean.

Note how the handful of parched rice that Kuchela offered the Lord with a pure mind pleased Him. Read the experiences of Vidura and Droupadi in the epics and Puranas. What did they offer the Lord? Vidura gave a cup of gruel. Droupadi had only a wee bit of leaf to offer. On the face of it, they are valueless, unable to fetch even half a paisa as price. But consider how much the Lord gave in return! He does not calculate the value of *things*. He calculates the feeling that prompted the act. So, purify the *feeling* in order to win His Grace.