

BHAGAVADGITA

English translation of Sri Ramanuja's Sanskrit Commentary - Swami Adidevananda

Chapter 16

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16.1 The Lord said -- 'Fear' is the pain arising from the awareness of the cause which brings about pain in the form of either dissociation from the objects of attainment or association with the objects of aversion. The absence of this is 'fearlessness'. 'Purity of mind' is the condition of Sattva, viz., the state of the internal organ being untouched by Rajas and Tamas. 'Devotion to meditation on the knowledge (of the self)' is firm adherence to the discrimination between the pure nature of the self and Prakrti. 'Alms-giving' is the giving away of one's wealth earned through right means to the deserving. 'Self-control' is the practice of withdrawal of the mind from sense-objects. 'Worship' is the performance of the fivefold duties (sacrifices) etc., of life in the spirit of worship of the Lord without attachment to the fruits. The 'study of the Vedas' is devotion to the Vedic study with the conviction that all the teachings of the Vedas deal with the Lord, with His glorious nature and with the mode of worshipping Him. 'Austerity' is the practice of penances like Krchra, Candrayana, vow on the twelfth day of the lunar fortnight, etc., which foster capability for performing acts pleasing to the Lord. 'Uprightness' consists of the oneness of thought, word and deed in one's dealings with others.

16.2 'Non-injury' is abstaining from injury to others. 'Truth' is communication by words of what one knows for certain and what is conducive to the good of others. 'Freedom from anger' is the absence in oneself of the mental state, which, if permitted, leads to injury to others. 'Renunciation' is the abandonment of everything that is contrary to the good of the self. 'Tranquillity' is practice of controlling the senses from their propensity towards sense-objects. 'Not-slandering others' means refraining oneself from speech that may cause evil to others. 'Compassion to all beings' means one's incapacity to stand the suffering of others. 'Aloluptvam' means freedom from desire for sense-objects. 'Gentleness' means absence of harshness, and being worthy of associating with the good. 'Sense of shame' is shrinking from doing what should not be done. 'Acapalam' means being unattracted by objects enjoyable by the senses even when they are at hand.

16.3 'Grandeur' is the quality by virtue of which one cannot be overpowered by the wicked. 'Forgiveness' is freedom from the feelings of antagonism towards others even when they cause injury to oneself. 'Fortitude' is the sense of determination to do one's own duty even under conditions of great danger. 'Purity' is fitness of the body and the mind as prescribed in the scriptures for the performance of sacred deeds. 'Freedom from hatred' is non-interference with others, viz., absence of interference in the actions of others according to their wish. 'Over-pride' (Atimanita) is having unbridled self-esteem; freedom from misplaced pride is meant here. These are the virtues that are found in one who is

born for the 'divine destiny.' The destiny associated with the divinities is divine. The divinities are those who are devoted to carry out the commandments of the Lord. It is their destiny. It is obedience to the commandments of the Lord. The meaning is that these are endowments in those who are born with a tendency or disposition towards them and seek to attain their fulfilment.

16.4 'Dambha or pomposity' is the practice of Dharma for earning a reputation for righteousness. 'Arrogance' is the elation caused by the pleasures of sense-objects and the consequent inability to discriminate between what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. 'Self-conceit' is the estimation of oneself in a measure not warranted by one's education and birth. 'Wrath' is the sense of antagonism causing injury to others. 'Rudeness' is the nature of causing grief to Sadhus. 'Ignorance' is incapacity to discriminate between high and low forms of conduct and principles, and also between what ought to be done and what ought not to be. These are the qualities that are found in one born for a demoniac destiny. Asuras are those who rebel against the commandments of the Lord.

16.5 'The divine destiny,' viz., which is of the nature of submission to My commandments aids liberation, viz., leads to release from bondage. The meaning is that it leads to the eventual attainment of Myself. 'The demoniac destiny' viz, which is of the nature of transgression of My commandments, is for bondage, i.e., takes one to degradation. To

Arjuna who, on hearing this, became alarmed and anxious about the classification of his own nature, Sri Krsna said: 'Do not be grief-ridden. Surely, you are born for a divine destiny, O son of Pandu. The purport is that you have a divine destiny, since you are a son of Pandu who was most eminent among the righteous.

16.6 In this world of works, there are 'two types' of created beings who perform actions, viz., the divine and demoniac. Creation is production. By the force of old Karma of the nature of good and evil deeds, beings are born, divided into two kinds at their very birth for working out the commandments of the Lord or act contrary to them. Such is the meaning. Of these, the divine destiny has been told at length. For the purpose of working out their destiny in accordance with the mode of conduct, the creation of the godly, viz., of those devoted to My commandments, occurs; that mode of conduct, composed of Karma-jnana-and-Bhakti-Yogas has been described at length. To follow what conducts leads to the creation of demons --- listen about that conduct.

16.7 The demoniac men do not know the 'path of action and renunciation,' viz., the Vedic Dharma that leads to prosperity and final release. 'Cleanliness' is the competence for performing Vedic rites as established in the Sastras. That 'cleanliness,' be it external or internal, is alien to the demoniac. Nor 'right conduct,' viz., that right conduct such as twilight prayers (Sandhya-vandana) etc., by means of which this

internal and external cleanliness arises --- even that right conduct is alien to them. For it is declared in: 'He who does not perform twilight prayers, is always unholy and is unfit for any rites' (Daksha Sm., 2.23). Likewise, 'truth' is not found among them, viz., that truthful speech, which is conducive to the welfare of beings and which is in accordance with one's actual knowledge, does not characterise them. Moreover:

16.8 They maintain that the universe is 'without truth,' viz., they do not accept that this universe, which is the effect of Brahman denoted by the term Satya, has Brahman for its Self. They contend that it is bereft of any 'foundation,' viz., they do not accept that it has Brahman for its foundation. Brahman as Ananta supports the earth and bears all the worlds, as declared in 'This earth, sustained upon the head of this great serpent, supports in its turn, this garland of worlds, along with their men, demons and gods' (V.P., 2.5.27). They say that it is 'without a Lord,' viz. they don't accept that this universe is controlled by Me, the Lord of all, the Supreme Brahman, whose will is always true. It has been already averred: 'I am the origin of all; from Me proceed everything' (10.8). And they also contend thus: 'What else can exist without mutual causation?' i.e., except by the union of the male and the female among men, beasts etc. What else exists apart from this nature? The meaning is that nothing else is seen. Therefore the entire world is rooted in sexual lust.

16.9 Holding this view, viz., supporting this view, these men of lost souls do not realise that the self is different from the body. They are of 'feeble understanding,' they lack the discernment that the self is to be known as different from the body, because of its being the knower in the body which is an object of knowledge such as jars etc. These are of 'cruel deeds' viz., they do much harm to everybody; they are born to bring ruin to the world.

16.10 Turning to 'insatiable desires,' viz., which concern objects impossible to get; seizing through 'delusion,' viz., through ignorance that such desires can be fulfilled only with 'unjustly acquired wealth,' viz., with wealth unlawfully hoarded, and following impious vows, viz., associated with the vows prohibited in the Sastras; they do actions 'that are full of ostentation, pride and arrogance.'

16.11 Those who are sure to die today or tomorrow 'obsess themselves with cares' in regard to objects the attainment of which is not possible even by the time of death. Likewise, they look upon 'enjoyment of desires' as their highest aim, viz., they regard the satisfaction of sensual enjoyments as the highest aim of human life. They are convinced that this is all, viz., they are assured that there is no value in human life greater than this.

16.12 They are 'bound by hundreds of fetters of hope,' viz., bound by hundreds of fetters in the form of hope. They are given over to 'desire

and anger,' viz., they are intent solely on desire and anger. To satisfy their sensual desires, they endeavour for wealth through immortal means.

16.13 This land, sons etc., have I gained solely by my ability and not by the help of any higher force. I shall attain this desire also myself and not by good fortune or any other means. This wealth, gained solely by my ability, is with me. And this also shall be mine through my own ability.

16.14 This enemy has been slain by me, powerful as I am. I shall slay other enemies also --- I who am heroic and valiant. What is the use of the conception of destiny, which is only an imagination of weak people of little understanding? Similarly: I am 'the lord,' viz., I am independent, and I am also the ruler of others. I am the 'enjoyer,' viz., I am the enjoyer through my own powers, and not through good fortune etc. I am 'successful,' viz., I am successful by myself and not through any destiny etc. Likewise, I am strong and happy by myself.

16.15 'I am rich by myself. Who else is there in this world like me gaining all glory with his own ability? I myself shall sacrifice, I shall give alms and I shall rejoice' --- thus they think deluded by ignorance, viz., deluded by ignorance that they are themselves capable of offering sacrifices, gifts etc., unaided by the grace of God.

16.16 As do not accept the need for the help of past Karma and the Lord for their achievements and believe them to be only due to their own efforts, they are 'bewildered' by many thoughts, 'Thus I shall do, this I shall accomplish, and still another I shall achieve.' In this way they are ensnared by the net of delusion. Highly addicted to sensual enjoyments, they die in the middle of such enjoyments and fall into foul Naraka [Naraka is sometimes translated as hell. This is the Christian conception. In the Hindu view it is purgatory where through intense sufferings the Jiva is purged of sins].

16.17 They are held in 'high esteem by themselves'; the meaning is they are full of the sense of self-esteem. They feel self-sufficient, viz., regarding themselves as perfect, they do nothing. How? They are 'possessed of the intoxication of wealth and pride,' viz., they are intoxicated by wealth and pride of wealth, learning and descent. They perform sacrifices in name only,' viz., they perform sacrifices for the fame of it, the purpose being gaining fame as the performers of sacrifice. These are performed for ostentation acutated with the motive of becoming famous as the performers of sacrifices and not in accordance with the proper rules of the Sastras, viz., without regard to any commandment. Sri Krsna says that they perform sacrifices in the following manner:

16.18 They depend on their egoism in the form of 'I can do everything without the help of anyone'; likewise, in performing everything they

depend on their power, 'My power is sufficient'; hence pride takes the following form, 'There is nobody like myself. Desire takes the form of, 'Because I am so, everything is fulfilled by my mere desire.' 'Wrath consists in conceiving, 'I shall slay those who cause evil to me.' Thus, depending on themselves, they evince malice towards Me, the Supreme Person abiding in their own bodies as well as in the bodies of others; and they hate Me. They endeavour to invent fallacious arguments against My existence, and being unable to tolerate Me, they perform all acts like sacrifices etc., depending only on their egoism.

16.19 Those who hate Me in this manner, I hurl them, the cruel, inauspicious and the vilest of mankind into the cycle of births and deaths for ever, viz., old age, death etc., revolving again and again, and even there into demoniac wombs. I hurl them into births, antagonistic to any friendliness towards Me. The meaning is that I shall connect them to cruel minds as would impel them to actions which lead them to the attainment of cursed births.

16.20 'These deluded men,' viz., those entertaining perverse knowledge about Me, attain repeatedly births that tend them to be antagonistic to Me. Never 'attaining Me,' viz., never arriving at the knowledge that Vasudeva, the Lord and the ruler of all, truly exists, they go farther and farther down, from that birth, to the lowest level. Sri Krsna proceeds to explain the root-cause of the ruin to the self of demoniac nature:

16.21 Those three which constitute the 'gateway of this hell' in the shape of demoniac nature, and are destructive of the self (Atman) --- are known as desire, wrath and greed. The nature of these has already been explained. 'Gateway' (Dvara) means the path, the cause. Therefore, one should renounce these three. Therefore, since they constitute the cause of the extremely dreadful Naraka, one should wholly renounce this triad -- desire, wrath and greed.

16.22 One who has been 'released from these three' --- from desire, wrath and greed which constitute the gates of darkness causing erroneous knowledge of Myself ---, he works for the good of the self. Gaining knowledge of Myself, he endeavours to be inclined towards Me. From there, he attains the supreme goal, which is Myself. Sri Krsna now teaches that the main cause of this Kind of degeneration is lack of reverence for the Sastras:

16.23 Here Sastra means Vedas. Vidhi stands for injunction. He who abandons My injunction called Vedas and acts under the influence of desire, viz., takes the path according to his own wishes, does not attain perfection, He does not reach any Siddhi in the next world, nor does he find the slightest happiness in this world, let alone the attainment of the supreme state. It is not possible for him to do so. Such is the meaning.

16.24 Hence, the Sastra is to be the only authority for you in determining what should be done and what should not be done, viz., in deciding what ought to be accepted and what ought not be accepted. You should know, i.e., understand, neither more nor less than what constitutes the truth and the work enjoined in the injunctions of the Sastras which the Highest Reality called the Supreme Person revealed in the Vedas. The Vedic injunctions are supplemented by the Dharma-sastras, the Itihasas and the Puranas. The acts enjoined by them are the means for reaching Him and for pleasing Him. You should perform them; you should accept them alone.