



January 1994 Contemplation Theme

The Power of Yoga

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The pace of our modern lifestyle challenges everyone. It is called stress. In the Bhagavadgita, Krishna speaks to his student and friend Arjuna. He says what we call stress is due to attachment, and that you must abandon attachment. What is attachment?

Attachment is dependence on certain results in order to feel good. You may or may not be good at getting the results you want. The Bhagavadgita says that your effectiveness is not the point. You will experience pain and suffering whether you're successful or not, as long as your motive is the getting of the results.

For example, at work you want to complete a certain project. You work long hours at it and try to make it perfect. When it is complete you feel great. You are congratulated by your peers. You may earn a promotion or raise. But now you have a back or neck problem or your spouse is unhappy about never seeing you. Pain and suffering will always result from being attached to your actions.

Instead, you may be overwhelmed by the size of the project. So, you never begin. The boss sees that nothing is being done and gives it to someone else to do. Now you are resentful or even want revenge. Pain and suffering result from being attached to inaction.

The first is attachment to action; the second is attachment to inaction. Attachment to action creates an endless cycle of relentless activity, physical and mental. Your mind can exhaust you. Attachment to inaction is dark and heavy. The inertia can paralyze you. Thus, it seems you can neither act nor refrain from action. What can you do?

This is the subject of the Bhagavadgita. It is an extraordinary primer on how to live your life. It describes the human condition and how to lift yourself up out of it. It describes the transcendent state of an exalted human being, as well as how to become one. Krishna is speaking to Arjuna on the battlefield, and tells him to do his duty.

"Perform actions, having abandoned attachment." To act without attachment is incredibly liberating. You have done this, probably many times before. To help an elderly person with their grocery bags, or to take home a lost dog and phone the owner is an act of service. When you do these things without expectation of reward, you feel great. There's no pain or suffering because there was no attachment. Krishna says, "Your right is to action alone; never to its fruits at any time." As a yogi, you learn to perform all your actions in this way, "having become indifferent to success or failure." You can do your work very well, for the pure pleasure of it, regardless of whether others will commend you or not. In this way you have a life that is truly divine.

Krishna further says, "Evenness of mind is yoga." This is not the same as always feeling bland or flat. That is a type of inaction that can deaden your ability to enjoy life. True evenness of mind comes about from being "fixed in yoga." You can finally step off the emotional roller coaster, to become steady in your own center. The word yoga means union, referring to the constant connection with your inner source of inspiration, love and joy. When you are steady in this inner experience, you perform your actions in total freedom. Your life is full, because you are being constantly filled from the inside out.

Namaste,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Rama', with a small heart symbol above the 'a'.