

## Two main enemies in Life<sup>1</sup>

B Mahadevan<sup>2</sup>

When two people begin an argument it is a matter of time before the limits are crossed. Despite being friends for some time they trade accusations, suspect each other's intentions and lose faith in each other. Similar situations develop between a husband and a wife. Such things happen even in office meetings and social gatherings. Two students also fight with each other on some flimsy grounds and elevate the situation to the level described above. Many of us have been going through such experiences in our daily life.

Think about another situation. There has been an unpleasant happening in the office similar to the one described above. At other occasions the boss was unhappy with one's performance that he/she severely reprimanded the person. When this person returns home his 4 year old child will come and play some tantrums on him which is a great expression of the uniqueness and simplicity of the child. Alternatively, the wife or the mother would have asked some question which might have been genuine, important and urgent. In all these cases this person chooses the occasion to vent all his feelings and pass on his anger on the child, the wife or the mother. The wife or the mother will be shouted at and the child will be scolded and even beaten.

### Victim of the situation

All the situations described so far share a few common things. Firstly in all the above cases the individuals have lost control of themselves and that is why they behave in a manner which is beyond acceptable norms of behavior. In Sanskrit we use the term मद्ः (*madah*), meaning "an inebriated state" to describe this. Secondly, what happens to these persons much after this ugly turn of events will also be very similar. A little later (either that night or in the next few days) the persons involved in this situation will begin to think about the event that unfolded leading to unpleasant exchanges. In chapter 3 of the *Gītā* Arjuna brings this very same issue to Lord Krishna's attention by asking a question.

अर्जुन उवाच ।

अथ केन प्रयुक्तोऽयं पापं चरति पूरुषः ।  
अनिच्छन्नपि वार्ष्णेय बलादिव नियोजितः ॥ 3.36

*Arjuna uvāca*

*atha kena prayuktoyam pāpam carati pūruṣaḥ  
anicchannapi vārṣṇeya balādiva niyojitaḥ*

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<sup>1</sup> Mahadevan, B. (2014). "Two main enemies in life", *Sadguru's Blessings*, Vol. 11 (9), May, 2014, pp 15 - 17.

<sup>2</sup> B Mahadevan is a Professor at the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore.

Arjuna asks Krishna as to who is committing (*kena prayuktaḥ*) this person into wrong acts (*pāpam carati*). He further clarifies to Krishna that this person in fact did not want to commit this (*anicchannapi*) and it appears as though someone is forcibly pushing him (*balādiva niyojitaḥ*) into this action. What Arjuna asked Lord Krishna aptly describes the mindset of all the people described above. The father thinks that night, “why did I shout at the four year old child?” The two people involved in a heated argument also think a little later that perhaps they need not have reacted in that particular fashion.

The repentance is a good beginning in the journey of avoiding such situations in the future. It is like stating the problem correctly. But it does not by itself solve the problem for us. What is of enduring value for us to know is the root cause of the problem and act on it. Therefore in reply to the question Lord Krishna devoted the remaining part of chapter 3. We shall look at the first *śloka* in this series of reply that Lord Krishna gave to Arjuna.

### Know the two enemies

Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that desire कामः (*kamaḥ*) and anger क्रोधः (*krodhaḥ*) are the two causes for this. These two have great propensity to create sinful acts (*mahā-pāpmā*) and to walk a person through a great number of unpleasant situations in one’s life consuming everything (good values, relationships etc.) that comes in its way (*mahāśanaḥ*). In this process they can play a significant role in destroying the character, peace and tranquility of a person in the long run. Therefore Krishna says that one must know these to be the greatest enemies (*viddhi enam iha vairiṇam*) of a person striving to develop a good character in life.

श्री भगवानुवाच ।

काम एष क्रोध एष रजोगुणसमुद्भवः ।  
महाशनो महापाप्मा विद्ध्येनमिह वैरिणम् ॥ 3.37

*śri Bhagavān uvāca*

*kāma eṣa krodha eṣaḥ rajo-guṇa-samudbhavaḥ  
mahāśano mahā-pāpmā viddhi enam iha vairiṇam*

From this *śloka* we can infer that desire and anger are occurrences related to one another. An unrealized desire will invariably turn into anger. Therefore desire and anger are the two sides of the same coin. What we may also infer is that it is not good to desire for things in life. This goes against the grain of our current understanding, where we are told to dream for big things in life and desire for newer things in life. How do we reconcile this apparent conflict between this *śloka* and our own modern thinking? We need to understand correctly what we mean by “desire”.

## The Anatomy of Desire

The crux of understanding the teachings of *Gitā* lies in our ability to correctly understand what we mean by desire. Desire is not about a plain statement such as “I want to achieve something big in my life”. Similarly making statement that “I want to serve the poor and underprivileged” does not qualify itself to be classified into the domain of no desire. Whether an action qualifies to be desire or not depends on our approach to the stated goal, the intention and mental make-up that we bring to the job on hand. The table clarifies these using six examples.

Examples	Desire	No Desire
1. I want to remove the illiteracy in the country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a strong undercurrent of “what is in it for me” in this goal.</li> <li>• I am doing this so that my Ego blossoms fully.</li> <li>• This will make me a very powerful, famous and an important person in the society.</li> <li>• I need to achieve these goals “at any cost”. I cannot accept anything other than what I aim for.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I see this goal as part of a larger scheme of things of God.</li> <li>• I will put the best foot forward and commit my time and resource wholeheartedly for this.</li> <li>• I have the wisdom and grace to take the outcomes as they unfold.</li> <li>• My actions will be in tune with the larger good.</li> </ul>
2. I want to serve the poor and the downtrodden		
3. I want to build the largest hospital for coronary care in the country		
4. I want to get an MBA degree from the best business school in the country		
5. I want to become the CEO of a company		
6. I will start a new company and grow it to great heights.		

If we look at the table it becomes obvious that desire can put enormous stress on an individual and lead the individual to a situation of losing his/her self-control when things do not go the way he/she wants it to. This is exactly what Lord Krishna meant by saying that when you engage in life activities with a dimension of deep desire it will destroy you as a person. You can tend to get into fists of anger, unethical means of achieving things in life and letting go things, people, relationships and manners that comes your way. This way of behavior is largely dictated by *Rajo Guṇa*. If one organizes his/her life with this perspective of desire then he/she can by hook or crook claim as winner in these chosen goals. However, to assume that it is the same as winning in the life game is too gross an assumption that each one of us has to personally verify in our own lives.

Great things can be achieved very peacefully from a perspective of “no desire” in the manner illustrated above. It breeds fine character in individuals, makes them at peace with themselves. It allows them to do things to the heart’s contentment and make them winners in life. That is the crux of the teaching that Lord Krishna brings through this *śloka*.