

Vast Steadiness, Immeasurable Calm

In Chapter Two of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krishna tells Arjuna about the quality of a being who is steady in wisdom. Jnaneshwar Maharaj in his magnificent thirteenth-century verse commentary, *Jnaneshwari*, elaborates further upon these qualities.

Recently, a number of people were asked to contemplate the qualities of steady wisdom in their own lives. Following is a special collage: verses from the *Bhagavad Gita*, followed by Jnaneshwar's poetic commentary and the experiences of these devotees.

Arjuna spoke: How does one describe him who is of steady wisdom, who is steadfast in deep meditation, Krishna? How does he who is steady in wisdom speak? How does he sit? How does he move? (II.54)

Arjuna said, O Lord, please explain to me the meaning of all this.

Krishna replied, O Arjuna, ask me with an open heart whatever you wish.

Then Arjuna said to Lord Krishna, Tell me who is a person with a stable mind and how he can be recognized?

Who is called even-minded? What does he look like? O Krishna, tell me all this.



Samadhi shrine of Jnaneshwar Maharaj, Alandi, India

In what state does he live? What does he look like? O Krishna, tell me all this.

When I asked inside, "What is steady wisdom?" the word *vigilance* arose. As I went deeper it became *constantly witnessing*.

I then asked the question "What does it mean to be vigilant?" The inner response was, "Being constantly aware of whether my thoughts, feelings, and actions are leading me toward the truth or away!" Then I asked, "How do I know?" The answer: "When I'm

honest with myself I always know the truth.” So I asked the question “What will make me be honest?” The answer was “Longing.” Finally I asked the question “How do I keep that longing strong?” The answer was “Through the practices.”

— Peter Burge

The Blessed Lord spoke: When he leaves behind all desires emerging from the mind, Arjuna, and is contented in the Self by the Self, then he is said to be one whose wisdom is steady. (II.55)

Then what did Lord Krishna, the incarnation of the highest Self and the abode of the six qualities, say?

He said, Listen, O Arjuna! All the strong desires of the heart are obstacles to the experience of the highest bliss.

He whose heart is always satisfied in the Self, who has renounced all desire,

And whose mind rests in the joy of the Self, know that such a person is even-minded.

When I first contemplated steady wisdom I saw two images. One was of a boat holding a steady course despite heavy seas, and the other was of an arrow quickly finding the perfect mark. As the awareness went deeper, a thread of light came from the very depths of my inner being; this thread reached out and touched everything. As this light came forth, it released joy and resounded with the sound *Om*.

— Gillian Hume

He whose mind is not agitated in misfortune, whose desire for pleasures has disappeared, whose passion, fear, and anger have departed, and whose meditation is steady, is said to be a sage. (II.56)

A person whose mind is not disturbed though he may suffer pain, who is not troubled by the desire for pleasure,

Into whose mind desire and anger do not enter, and who knows no fear, is perfect, O Arjuna.

The sage who is beyond limitation and without earthly bondage or a sense of difference should be known as one of steady wisdom.

Several months ago, a confusing and frightening situation arose very suddenly in my family. I realized that it was definitely a time that called for steady wisdom, so I sat quietly to get in touch with that wisdom. As I looked within, I began to feel a vastly solid presence, like an enormous rock grounded in the universe itself. From the core of my being it extended in all directions, carrying with it an immovable strength, calm, and protection.

As I sat immersed in the feeling of that rock, I gradually became aware that it was being beaten by ocean waves. It stood facing a vast sea in a dark night, and wave after wave was crashing against its face. From within came the words, “Each wave is different; some are gentle, some incredibly strong. But the rock remains firm. And remember, beneath their outer appearances the waves are all made of one thing.”

As the situation constantly changes, there have been times when I have not remembered the rock, when I have become immersed in fear and sadness. But each time I shift the focus from the specific wave to the Guru’s grace, a place of peaceful strength arises in the midst of a stormy ocean. And that steadiness is vast, that calm and protection immeasurable.

— Karen Harris

He who is without attachment on all sides, encountering this or that, pleasant or unpleasant, neither rejoicing nor disliking; his wisdom stands firm. (II.57)

He is always the same everywhere, just as when the moon sheds her light she does not say, "This is good," or "That is bad."

Similarly, his even-mindedness is unbroken, he has compassion for all creatures, and his mind is never subject to change.

A person who is not overjoyed when he receives something good and is not distressed when evil comes to him,

Know that he is even-minded, free from joy and sorrow, and filled with the enlightenment of the Self, O Arjuna.

Participating in the Month-Long Course in South Fallsburg gave me a taste of how it feels to live totally in the present.

I had a dream not long after the course. This dream took me back to two very significant stages in my life. In the first part of the dream, I was back at Oxford University, walking across a beautiful meadow with an old friend of mine. Our conversation covered the main interests we had had in common: theater, cricket, a great social life, and our classical studies. As we walked and talked, I was very content and calm. University life had been hectic, full of great highs and also very real lows. But I was experiencing it all as just what happened, neither good nor bad. What I had seen as my successes I knew now were no more important in my life than what I had seen as my failures. It was all perfect for my development.

In the second part of the dream, I found myself on a sheep station where I had gone after university to work as a jackaroo, a sort of apprentice stockman. Again I was with an old friend from this different episode in my life, and some of the ups and downs of our

time together flashed before me as we talked. I had been a raw recruit but also full of zest and enthusiasm. Consequently I had experienced many hugely exhilarating moments and just as many crashes and falls. In the dream I could see that the day I had spent nursing some lambs who were perishing from pneumonia was as important for my development as the day I rode my motorbike into a gate. It was all experience. It was all for the best.

It was a wonderful gift to be taken back to these two periods of my life and to be able to view them with such an even mind. It has been my inspiration to try to live consciously now with that same attitude.

— Toby Pease

When your intellect stands fixed in deep meditation, unmoving . . . then you shall attain Self-realization. (II.53)

Your mind, which was previously distracted by the activity of the senses, will stand as it was before, firmly established in the Self. When the mind has become steady in the joy of contemplation, then you will attain the state of complete union.

As I focus I become aware of four shafts of blue light that move towards a focal point deep within me, as if they are pointing towards the bottom of a deep well.

I seem to be moving deeper, sinking deeper into the well. The shafts of light disappear. As I go deeper I'm aware of my mind becoming empty and quiet. I have the feeling and image of being an empty vessel.

I understand that my experience of steady wisdom rests on my ability to approach my life tasks, marriage, work, and *sadhana* with this state of mind, with this kind of emptiness.

— Peter Pinney

With the elimination of desire and hatred, even though moving among the objects of the senses, he who is controlled by the Self, by self-restraint, attains tranquility. (II.64)

If all sense objects are entirely driven from the mind, attachment and aversion will automatically perish.

O Arjuna, there is one more thing. If attachment and aversion die out, no harm can follow even when the senses are interested in sense objects.

Just as the sun in the sky is not contaminated by the earth which it touches with its rays,

So is one who is indifferent to sense pleasures, free from desire and anger, and filled with the bliss of the Self.

When he sees only himself in the universe, how can sense pleasures disturb him?

If water could be drowned in water, or fire burned by fire, then the perfect man might be affected by contact with sense objects.

He steadily becomes one with everything, so his understanding is well balanced. Believe that this is true.

A presence rose up inside me and spoke to my mind. It said, "Relax. You've worked so hard. I'll take care of things now." And my mind did. It was as if a big easy chair rose up around me and I sank back into it. It was as if the chair I was sitting in suddenly lifted three inches off the ground and floated there. There was a sense of mysterious support. It was such a relief. I'd never realized how hard my mind strained at the world until it stopped.

My body became the center of my intelligence. It entered a lifted and relaxed state. Its basic state was so tension-free that by noticing where tension would emerge in any situation I always knew what to do. If tension emerged, I could tell that action was contrary

to the experience of the Self and I would discontinue it immediately. In this way I was guided from moment to moment throughout the day.

The one thought that the voice said most often to me was, "Stay with me. Stay, stay with me." And it was by keeping my awareness close to my Self and my body that I was able to experience this inner wisdom.

— Stacey Smith

In tranquility the cessation of all sorrows is born for him. Indeed, for the tranquil-minded the intellect at once becomes steady. (II.65)

When the heart is always at peace, the miseries of worldly existence cannot enter it.

If a person contains within himself a fountain of nectar, he is not troubled by hunger or thirst.

Similarly, if the heart is peaceful, where can a place be found for pain? The mind naturally dwells in the highest Self.

Just as a flame in a windless place will not flicker, similarly, the even-minded person remains united with the Self.



Steady wisdom arises in me as a deep serenity, contentment in knowing what is right. It comes as an unwavering belief and commitment, a pure heart, a focused direction. When I am in the state of steady wisdom, I am taller, with a strong core that keeps me erect and forward-moving. Of course, the goal is to be able to maintain that state at all times, to go to that center when doubt creeps in or confusion arises. It is such a magical, healing place, such a wonderful source of wisdom to bring out into the practicalities of life. I am reminded of the *Bhagavad Gita's* words: "Action in inaction."

— Lyndal Kennedy

STEADY WISDOM

Guest Editor: Stephen Fredman

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