

The Art of Sword-Fighting

PASSION



a young man in Japan wanted to learn the art of sword fighting. He went to the greatest instructor in the land and said, "Please give me admission and teach me sword fighting." The instructor gladly accepted him as a student and said, "Young man, you can stay with me and learn this art."

In the following days, the instructor gave him many odd jobs to perform, like sweeping the floors, cutting vegetables, cooking and the like. But the young man could not find any connection between the jobs given to him and the art of sword fighting. One day the young man got desperate and approached the instructor. He said, "Great teacher, kindly begin my lessons." The instructor agreed.

The next day when the young man was cooking, the instructor came from behind and hit him with a wooden sword and vanished. The young man was taken by surprise. The next day too the same thing happened. The young man now started preparing himself mentally to counter any such surprise attack.

Next time when the instructor came to attack him, the young man was able to sustain the blow of the sword. He was very happy with his performance. He asked the

instructor, "Now have I learnt the art of defending myself?" The instructor did not respond to his question and walked away. Such surprise attacks became common and the young man got more and more skillful in countering the attacks well.

One day the young man saw the instructor seriously engaged in a task and he thought, "Now let me catch the instructor unaware and attack him." He took the wooden sword and attacked the instructor without a sound from behind. The instructor was fully prepared for it. He took a shield lying near, turned around and defended himself most skillfully.

The young man thought, "How great is this instructor! Today I have learnt the real secret of sword fighting. He has taught me that swinging the sword and learning the opponent's moves are not the essentials of sword fighting. What is important is to read what goes on in the opponent's mind and to counter his movements as well as his thoughts." The young man continued to take instructions and became a great sword fighter of his country.

Skill in work is Yoga.
– The Bhagavadgita