

THE REAL AWAKENER



THE LIGHT OF LIGHTS WORDS OF SRI AUROBINDO – 8

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** All the selections here have been taken from “Bengali Writings” published in 1991 by Madanlal Himatsingka on behalf of All India Books, Pondicherry - 605002. Page numbers in the source of the selections taken here are given in the parentheses.*

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“Dharma is whatever is not tainted by self-interest, be that work great or small. It is we who reckon a thing great or small, there is nothing great or small before the Divine; He looks only at the attitude in which a person does the works befitting his nature or brought by unforeseen circumstances. The highest and greatest dharma is this: whatever work we do, to consecrate that to the feet of the Divine, to perform it as yajña or holy sacrifice and to accept it with an equal heart as something done by His own Nature... That is to say, the greatest way is to see in Him all that we see or do or think and to cover all that with his thought as if with a piece of raiment; neither sin nor irreligion can ever penetrate this covering.”

– Sri Aurobindo

(202-203)

BENGALI WRITINGS

Note

“Sri Aurobindo started learning Bengali, his mother tongue, in England, as a probationer for the Indian Civil Service. After his return to India he began a serious study of the language with a view to acquiring proficiency in reading, writing and speaking. During his stay at Baroda he wrote some poetry in Bengali, attempting even a long poem called “Usha-Haran Kabya”. ...

He wrote several articles for the earlier issues of *Yugantar*, a Bengali revolutionary weekly started by his brother Barin and others under his guidance in March 1906. But not a single copy of this journal has so far been traced.

The earliest available Bengali writings of Sri Aurobindo besides “Usha-Haran Kabya” are the three letters to his wife Mrinalini Devi written between 1905 and 1907. These were produced as exhibits in the Alipore Conspiracy Case in 1908, and having attracted public notice were reproduced in various journals and in book-form soon afterwards.

After his acquittal in 1909 Sri Aurobindo started a Bengali weekly called *Dharma*, and wrote most of the editorial comments and leading articles for it until his withdrawal to Chandernagore in February 1910. Most of these leading articles were published in book-form in 1920 under the title DHARMA O JATIYATA by Prabartak Publishing House, Chandernagore. In the present volume these articles are arranged under two sections, “Dharma” and “Jatiyata” (Religion and Nationalism)....

The *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual* is published by the Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir, Calcutta. The *Hymn to Durga* is Sri Aurobindo's own translation. The translations of other writings were done by Nolini Kanta Gupta, Niranjan, Somnath Maitra, Sanat K. Banerjee, Sisir Kumar Ghose, Jugal Kishore Mukherji, Arindam Basu, Prithvindra and others." (i & iii)

I. Hymns*

1. Hymn to Durga*

“MOTHER DURGA! Rider on the lion, giver of all strength, Mother, beloved of Siva! We born from thy parts of Power, we the youth of India, are seated here in thy temple. Listen, O Mother, descend upon earth, make thyself manifest in this land of India.

MOTHER DURGA! From age to age, in life after life, we come down into the human body, do thy work and return to the Home of Delight. Now too we are born, dedicated to thy work. Listen, O Mother, descend upon earth, come to our help.

MOTHER DURGA! Rider on the lion, trident in hand, thy body of beauty armour-clad, Mother, giver of victory, India awaits thee, eager to see the gracious form of thine. Listen, O Mother, descend upon earth, make thyself manifest in this land of India.

MOTHER DURGA! Giver of force and love and knowledge, terrible art thou in thy own self of might, Mother beautiful and fierce. In the battle of life, in India's battle, we are warriors commissioned by thee; Mother, give to our heart and mind a titan's strength, a titan's energy, to our soul and intelligence a god's character and knowledge.

MOTHER DURGA! India, world's noblest race, lay whelmed in darkness. Mother, thou risest on the eastern horizon, the dawn comes with the glow of thy divine limbs scattering the

* The titles marked with an * are from the original. All the unmarked titles in the text are from the editor.

darkness. Spread thy light, Mother, destroy the darkness.

MOTHER DURGA! We are thy children, through thy grace, by thy influence may we become fit for the great work, for the great Ideal. Mother, destroy our smallness, our selfishness, our fear.

MOTHER DURGA! Thou art Kali, naked, garlanded with human heads, sword in hand, thou slayest the Asura. Goddess, do thou slay with thy pitiless cry the enemies who dwell within us, may none remain alive there, not one. May we become pure and spotless, this is our prayer, O Mother, make thyself manifest.

MOTHER DURGA! India lies low in selfishness and fearfulness and littleness. Make us great, make our efforts great, our hearts vast, make us true to our resolve. May we no longer desire the small, void of energy, given to laziness, stricken with fear.

MOTHER DURGA! Extend wide the power of Yoga. We are thy Aryan children, develop in us again the lost teaching, character, strength of intelligence, faith and devotion, force of austerity, power of chastity and true knowledge, bestow all that upon the world. To help mankind, appear, O Mother of the world, dispel all ills.

MOTHER DURGA! Slay the enemy within, then root out all obstacles outside. May the noble heroic mighty Indian race, supreme in love and unity, truth and strength, arts and letters, force and knowledge ever dwell in its holy woodlands, its fertile fields, under its sky-scraping hills, along the banks of its pure-streaming rivers. This is our prayer at the feet of the Mother. Make thyself manifest.

MOTHER DURGA! Enter our bodies in thy Yogic strength. We shall become thy instruments, thy sword slaying all evil, thy lamp dispelling all ignorance. Fulfil this yearning of thy young children, O Mother. Be the master and drive thy instrument, wield thy sword and slay the evil, hold up the lamp and spread the light of knowledge. Make thyself manifest.

MOTHER DURGA! When we possess thee, we shall no longer cast thee away; we shall bind thee to us with the tie of love and devotion. Come, Mother, manifest thyself in our mind and life and body.

Come, Revealer of the hero-path. We shall no longer cast thee away. May our entire life become a ceaseless worship of the Mother, all our acts a continuous service to the Mother, full of love, full of energy. This is our prayer, O Mother, descend upon earth, make thyself manifest in this land of India.” (3-5)

2. Hymn to Dawn

“Lo, dawn, the Beloved, appears in her gleaming young body. She impels all Life on the path towards the goal. Fire, the Divine Force, is born to be kindled in man. Dawn drives away all Darkness and fulfils herself in creating Light.

She, the Goddess, rises lifting her forward gaze towards the Vast, the Universal. She has put on the robe of Light and displays the white brilliance of her subtle norms of Truth. Heaven-gold is her hue, her vision is all-round seeing: verily, she is the mother of the herd of brilliances of knowledge, a leader of our bright days; her luminous body is disclosed.

The Goddess, All-Enjoyment she is: she comes carrying the Sun, the Eye of the Gods, bringing here the white Life-steeds that have the perfect vision, she comes, the Goddess wholly revealing herself in the rays of the Sun. Behold her in her multiple divine riches, behold her manifest everywhere, in all things, behold her the Mother of Radiance.

All delight is within, all that is hostile to man is afar: so let it be in thy dawning. Build our pasture of infinity, illumined with truth, build our home of delight freed from fear. Drive away all that divides and antagonises, bring to us all the wealth of the human soul, O Mother of Plenty, send forth into life all the plenitude of delight.

Goddess Dawn, manifest thyself in our hearts in the play of thy supreme Effulgence, widen the life of this embodied being. O Mother of Delight, give us stable impulsion. Give us that plenty whose wealth is the luminous herd of Truth, where range the chariots and horses of Life moving towards Infinity.

We are rich in those riches, we the steadfast aspirants, O Goddess, born in perfection, Daughter of Heaven! We foster Thee with our thought-streams and Thou too holdest in our bosom the knowledge won and the Vast and the Seas of Delight.” (6-7)

II. Stories*

1. A Dream*

“A poor man was sitting in a dark hut thinking of his miseries and of the injustice and wrongs that could be found in this world of God’s making. Out of *abhimāna* he began to mutter to himself, “As men do not want to cast a slur on God’s name, they put the blame on Karma. If my misfortunes are really due to the sins committed in my previous birth and if I was so great a sinner, then currents of evil thoughts should still be passing through my mind. Can the mind of such a wicked person get cleansed so soon? And what about that Tinkari Sheel who has such colossal wealth and commands so many people! If there is anything like the fruits of Karma, then surely he must have been a famous saint and sadhu in his previous life; but I see no trace of that at all in his present birth. I don’t think a bigger rogue exists – one so cruel and crooked. All these tales about Karma are just clever inventions of God to console man’s mind. Shyamsundar* is very tricky; luckily he does not reveal himself to me, otherwise I would teach him such a lesson that he would stop playing these tricks.”

As soon as he finished muttering, the man saw that his dark room was flooded with a dazzling light. After a while the luminous waves faded and he found in front of him a charming boy of a dusky complexion standing with a lamp in his hand, and smiling sweetly without saying a word. Noticing the musical anklets round his feet and the peacock plume, the man understood that Shyamsundar had revealed himself. At

*One of Sri Krishna’s names.

first he was at a loss what to do; for a moment he thought of bowing at his feet, but looking at the boy's smiling face no longer felt like making his obeisance. At last he burst out with the words, "Hullo, Keshta,* what makes you come here?" The boy replied with a smile, "Well, didn't you call me? Just now you had the desire to whip me! That is why I am surrendering myself to you. Come along, whip me." The man was now even more confounded than before, but not with any repentance for the desire to whip the Divine: the idea of punishing instead of patting such a sweet youngster did not appeal to him. The boy spoke again, "You see, Harimohon, those who, instead of fearing me, treat me as a friend, scold me out of affection and want to play with me, I love very much. I have created this world for my play only; I am always on the lookout for a suitable playmate. But, brother, I find no one. All are angry with me, make demands on me, want boons from me; they want honour, liberation, devotion – nobody wants me. I give whatever they ask for. What am I to do? I have to please them; otherwise they will tear me to pieces. You too, I find, want something from me. You are vexed and want to whip some one. In order to satisfy that desire you have called me. Here I am, ready to be whipped. *ye yathā māmi prapadyante***, I accept whatever people offer me. But before you beat me, if you wish to know my ways, I shall explain them to you. Are you willing?" Harimohon replied, "Are you capable of that? I see that you can talk a good deal, but how am I to believe that a mere child like you can teach me something?" The boy smiled again and said, "Come, see whether I can or not."

**One of Sri Krishna's names.*

***The Gita 4. 11.*

Then Sri Krishna placed his palm on Harimohon's head. Instantly electric currents started flowing all through his body; from the *mūlādhāra* the slumbering *kuṇḍalinī* power went up running to the head-centre (*brahmarandhra*), hissing like a serpent of flame; the head became filled with the vibration of life-energy. The next moment it seemed to Harimohon that the walls around were moving away from him, as if the world of forms and names was fading into Infinity leaving him alone. Then he became unconscious. When he came back to his senses, he found himself with the boy in an unknown house, standing before an old man who was sitting on a cushion, plunged in deep thought, his cheek resting on his palm. Looking at that heart-rending despondent face distorted by tormenting thoughts and anxiety, Harimohon could not believe that this was Tinkari Sheel, the all-in-all in their village. Then, extremely frightened, he asked the boy, "Keshta, what have you done? You have entered someone's dwelling in the dead of night like a thief! The police will come and thrash the life out of us. Don't you know Tinkari Sheel's power?" The boy laughed and said, "I know it pretty well. But stealing is an old practice of mine, and, besides, I am on good terms with the police. Don't you fear. Now I am giving you the inner sight, look inside the old man. You know Tinkari's power, now witness how mighty I am."

At once Harimohon could see into the man's mind. He saw, as in an opulent city ravaged by a victorious enemy, innumerable terrible-looking demons and ogres who had entered into that brilliant intelligence, disturbing its peace and composure, plundering its happiness. The old man had quarrelled with his young son and turned him out; the sorrow of losing his beloved child had cowed down his spirit, but

anger, pride and vanity had shut the door of his heart and were guarding it. Forgiveness had no entry there. Hearing calumnies against his own daughter he had driven her away and was lamenting over the cherished one he had lost. He knew that she was chaste but the fear of social censure and a feeling of shame coupled with his own arrogance and selfishness had put a curb on his affection. Frightened by the memory of a thousand sins the old man was trembling, but he did not have the courage or the strength to mend his evil ways. Now and then thoughts of death and of the other world came to him and filled him with terror. Harimohon saw also that from behind these morbid thoughts the hideous messenger of death was constantly peeping out and knocking at the door. Whenever this happened, the old man's heart sank and he frantically screamed with fear.

Horrified by this sight Harimohon looked at the boy and exclaimed, "Why, Keshta! I used to think this man the happiest of all!" The boy replied, "Just there lies my power. Tell me now which of the two is mightier – this Tinkari Sheel or Sri Krishna, the master of Vaikuntha? Look, Harimohon, I too have the police, sentinels, government, law, justice, I too can play the game of being a king; do you like this game?" "No, my child," answered Harimohon, "it is a very cruel game. Why, do you like it?" The boy laughed and declared, "I like all sorts of games; I like to whip as well as to be whipped." Then he continued. "You see, Harimohon, people like you look at the outward appearance of things and have not yet cultivated the subtle power of looking inside. Therefore you grumble that you are miserable and Tinkari is happy. This man has no material want; still, compared to you, how much more this millionaire is suffering! Can you guess why?"

Happiness is a state of mind, misery also is a state of mind. Both are only mind-created. He Who possesses nothing, whose only possessions are difficulties, even he, if he wills, can be greatly happy. But just as you cannot find happiness after spending your days in dry piety, and as you are always dwelling upon your miseries so too this man who spends his days in sins which give him no real pleasure is now thinking only of his miseries. All this is the fleeting happiness of virtue and the fleeting misery of vice, or the fleeting misery of virtue and the fleeting happiness of vice. There is no joy in this conflict. The image of the abode of bliss is with me: he who comes to me, falls in love with me, wants me, lays his demands on me, torments me – he alone can succeed in getting my image of bliss.” Harimohon went on eagerly listening to these words of Sri Krishna. The boy continued, “And look here, Harimohon, dry piety has lost its charm for you, but in spite of that you cannot give it up, habit* binds you to it; you cannot even conquer this petty vanity of being pious. This old man, on the other hand, gets no joy from his sins, yet he too cannot abandon them because he is habituated to them, and is suffering hell’s own agonies in this life. These are the bonds of virtue and vice; fixed and rigid notions, born of ignorance, are the ropes of these bonds. But the sufferings of that old man are indeed a happy sign. They will do him good and soon liberate him.”

So far Harimohon had been listening silently to Sri Krishna’s words. Now he spoke out, “Keshta, your words are undoubtedly sweet, but I don’t trust them. Happiness and misery may be states of mind, but outer circumstances are

*Sanskara

their cause. Tell me, when the mind is restless because of starvation, can anyone be happy? Or when the body is suffering from a disease or enduring pain, can any one think of you?" "Come, Harimohon, that too I shall show you," replied the boy.

Again he placed his palm on Harimohon's head. As soon as he felt the touch, Harimohon saw no longer the dwelling of Tinkari Sheel. On the beautiful, solitary and breezy summit of a hill an ascetic was seated, absorbed in meditation, with a huge tiger lying prone at his feet like a sentinel. Seeing the tiger Harimohon's own feet would not proceed any further. But the boy forcibly dragged him near to the ascetic. Incapable of resisting the boy's pull Harimohon had to go. The boy said, "Look, Harimohon." Harimohon saw, stretched out in front of his eyes, the ascetic's mind like a diary on every page of which the name of Sri Krishna was inscribed a thousand times. Beyond the gates of the Formless Samadhi the ascetic was playing with Sri Krishna in the sunlight.

Harimohon saw again that the ascetic had been starving for many days, and for the last two his body had experienced extreme suffering because of hunger and thirst. Reproachingly Harimohon asked, "What's this, Keshta? Babaji loves you so much and still he has to suffer from hunger and thirst? Have you no common sense? Who shall feed him in this lonely forest home of tigers?" The boy answered, "I will feed him. But look here for another bit of fun." Harimohon saw the tiger go straight to an ant-hill which was close by and break it with a single stroke of the paw. Hundreds of ants scurried out and began stinging the ascetic angrily. The ascetic remained plunged in meditation, undisturbed, unmoved. Then the boy sweetly breathed in his ears, "Beloved!" The ascetic opened

his eyes. At first he felt no pain from the stings; the all-enchanting flute-call which the whole world longs for, was still ringing in his ears – as it had once rung in Radha’s ears at Vrindavan. At last, the innumerable repeated stings made him conscious of his body. But he did not stir. Astonished, he began muttering to himself, “How strange! I have never known such things! Obviously it is Sri Krishna who is playing with me. In the guise of these insignificant ants he is stinging me.” Harimohon saw that the burning sensation no longer reached the ascetic’s mind. Rather every sting produced in him an intense ecstasy all over his body, and, drunk with that ecstasy, he began to dance, clapping his hands and singing the praise of Sri Krishna. The ants dropped down from his body and fled.

Stupefied, Harimohon exclaimed, “Keshta, what is this spell?” The boy clapped now his hands, swung round twice on his foot and laughed aloud, “I am the only magician on earth. None shall understand this spell. This is my supreme riddle. Did you see it? Amid this agony also he could think only of me. Look again.” The ascetic sat down once more, self-composed; his body went on suffering hunger and thirst, but his mind merely perceived the suffering and did not get involved in it or affected by it. At this moment, a voice, sweeter than a flute, called out from the hill, “Beloved!” Harimohon was startled. It was the very voice of Shyamsunder, sweeter than a flute. Then he saw a beautiful dusky-complexioned boy come out from behind the rocks, carrying in a dish excellent food and some fruits. Harimohon was dumb-founded and looked towards Sri Krishna. The boy was standing beside him, yet the boy who was coming resembled Sri Krishna in every detail! This boy came and throwing a light on the ascetic,

said, "See what I have brought for you." The ascetic smiled and asked, "Oh, you have come? Why did you keep me starving so long? Well, take your seat and dine with me." The ascetic and the boy started eating the food from the dish, feeding each other, snatching away each other's share. After the meal was over, the boy took the dish and disappeared into the darkness.

Harimohon was about to ask something when, all of a sudden, he saw that there was neither Sri Krishna nor the ascetic, neither the tiger nor any hill. He found himself living in a well-to-do quarter of a town; he possessed much wealth, a family and children. Every day he was giving alms in charity to the Brahmins and to the beggars; he was regularly repeating the Divine Name three times a day; observing all the rites and rituals prescribed in the Shastras, he was following the path shown by Raghunandan, and was leading the life of an ideal father, an ideal husband and an ideal son.

But the next moment he saw to his dismay that the residents of the locality he was living in had neither mutual good-will nor any happiness; they considered the mechanical observance of social conventions the highest virtue. Instead of the ecstatic feeling that had been his in the beginning, he now had a feeling of suffering. It seemed to him as if he had been very thirsty but, lacking water, had been eating dust, – only dust, infinite dust. He ran away from that place and went to another locality. There, in front of a grand mansion, a huge crowd had gathered; words of blessing were on every one's lips. Advancing he saw Tinkari Sheel seated on a verandah, distributing large amounts of money to the crowd; no one was going away empty-handed. Harimohon chuckled and thought, "What is this dream? Tinkari Sheel is giving alms!"

Then he looked into Tinkari's mind. He saw that thousands of dissatisfactions and evil impulses such as greed, jealousy, passion, selfishness were all astir there. For the sake of virtuous appearance and fame, out of vanity, Tinkari had kept them suppressed, kept them starving, instead of driving them away from within.

In the meantime someone took Harimohon on a swift visit to the other world. He saw the hells and heavens of the Hindus, those of the Christians, the Muslims and the Greeks, and also many other hells and heavens. Then he found himself sitting once more in his own hut, on the same old torn and dirty mattress with Shyamsundar in front of him. The boy remarked, "It is quite late in the night; now if I don't return home I shall get a scolding, everybody will start beating me. Let me therefore be brief. The hells and the heavens you have visited are nothing but a dream-world, a creation of your mind. After death man goes to hell or heaven and somewhere works out the tendencies that existed in him during his last birth. In your previous birth you were only virtuous, love found no way into your heart; you loved neither God nor man. After leaving your body you had to work out your old trend of nature, and so lived in imagination among middle-class people in a world of dreams; and as you went on leading that life you ceased to like it any more. You became restless and came away from there only to live in a hell made of dust; finally you enjoyed the fruits of your virtues and, having exhausted them, took birth again. In that life, except for your formal almsgiving and your soulless superficial dealings, you never cared to relieve anyone's wants – therefore you have so many wants in this life. And the reason why you are still going on with this soulless virtue is that you cannot exhaust the karma of virtues

and vices in the world of dream, it has to be worked out in this world. On the other hand, Tinkari was charity itself in his past life and so, blessed by thousands of people, he has in this life become a millionaire and knows no poverty; but as he was not completely purified in his nature, his unsatisfied desires have to feed on vice. Do you follow now the system of Karma? There is no reward or punishment, but evil creates evil, and good creates good. This is Nature's law. Vice is evil, it produces misery; virtue is good, it leads to happiness. This procedure is meant for purification of nature, for the removal of evil. You see, Harimohon, this earth is only a minute part of my world of infinite variety, but even then you take birth here in order to get rid of evil by the help of Karma. When you are liberated from the hold of virtue and vice and enter the realm of Love, then only you are freed of this activity. In your next birth you too will get free. I shall send you my dear sister, Power, along with Knowledge, her companion; but on one condition, – you should be my playmate, and must not ask for liberation. Are you ready to accept it?" Harimohon replied, "Well, Keshta, you have hypnotised me! I intensely feel like taking you on my lap and caressing you, as if I had no other desire in this life!"

The boy laughed and asked, "Did you follow what I said, Harimohon?" "Yes, I did," he replied, then thought for a while and said, "O Keshta, again you are deceiving me. You never gave the reason why you created evil!" So saying, he caught hold of the boy's hand. But the boy, setting himself free, rebuked Harimohon, "Be off! Do you want to get out of me all my secrets in an hour's time?" Suddenly the boy blew out the lamp and said with a chuckle, "Well, Harimohon, you have forgotten all about lashing me! Out of that fear I did not even

sit on your lap, lest, angry with your outward miseries, you should teach me a lesson! I do not trust you any more.” Harimohon stretched his arms forward, but the boy moved farther and said, “No Harimohon, I reserve that bliss for your next birth. Good-bye.” So saying, the boy disappeared into the dark night. Listening to the chime of Sri Krishna’s musical anklets, Harimohon woke up gently. Then he began thinking, “What sort of dream is this! I saw hell, I saw heaven, I called the Divine rude names, taking him to be a mere stripling, I even scolded him. How awful! But now I am feeling very peaceful.” Then Harimohon began recollecting the charming image of the dusky-complexioned boy, and went on murmuring from time to time, “How beautiful! How beautiful!” (11-20)

2. The Ideal of Forgiveness*

“In the sky, the moon drifted slowly through the clouds. Far below, the river mingled its murmur with the winds, as it danced along on its course; and the earth looked bathed in beauty in the half-light of the moon. All around were the forest retreats of the Rishis, each charming enough to put the Elysian fields to shame: every hermitage was a perfect picture of sylvan loveliness with its trees and flowers and foliage.

On this moon-enraptured night, said Brahmarsi (the seer who has known the Supreme) Vashishtha to his spouse Arundhati Devi, “Devi (*literally*, goddess), go and beg some salt of the Rishi Vishvamitra, and bring it here soon.”

Taken aback, she replied, “My lord, what is this you are asking me to do? I cannot understand you! He who has robbed me of my hundred sons...” She could say no more, for her

voice was choked with sobs as memories of the past rose up to disturb that sweet home of serenity, her heart, and to fill it with pain to its depths. After a time she recovered her composure to continue: "All my hundred sons were learned in the Vedas and dedicated to the Divine. They would go about in moonlight such as this singing His praises, but he... he has destroyed them all. And you bid me go and beg at his door for a little salt! My lord, you bewilder me!"

Slowly the sage's face filled with light; slowly from the ocean-depths of his heart came the words, "But, Devi, I love him!"

Arundhati's bewilderment increased, and she said, "If you love him you might just as well have addressed him as Brahmarshi! The whole trouble would have ended there, and I should have had my hundred sons left to me."

The Rishi's face took on a singular beauty as he said, "It was because I love him that I did not call him Brahmarshi. It was because I did not call him that, that he still has a chance of becoming a Brahmarshi."

Vishvamitra was beside himself with rage. He could not concentrate on his *tapasyā*. He had vowed that if Vashishtha did not acknowledge him as a Brahmarshi that day, he would kill him. To carry out this resolve, he armed himself with a sword as he left his hermitage. Slowly he came to Vashishthadeva's cottage and stood outside, listening. He heard what the great sage was saying to Devi Arundhati about him. The grip on his sword-hilt relaxed as he thought, "Heavens, what was I about to do in my ignorance! To think of trying to hurt one whose soul is so far above all pettiness!" He felt the sting of a hundred bees in his conscience, and ran

forward and fell at Vashishtha's feet. For a time he could not speak, but in a little while he recovered his speech and said, "Pardon me, O pardon me! But I am unworthy even of your mercy!" He could say no more, for his pride still held him fast. But Vashishtha stretched out both arms to raise him. "Rise, Brahmarshi!" he gently said. But Vishwamitra, in his shame and mortification, could not believe that Vashishtha meant what he said.

"Do not deride me, my lord," he cried.

"I never say what is false," replied Vashishtha. "You have become a Brahmarshi today. You have earned that status because you have shed your haughty self-conceit."

"Teach me divine lore, then," implored Vishvamitra.

"Go to Anantadeva, he will give you what you desire," said Vashishtha.

Vishvamitra came to where Anantadeva stood with the Earth resting on his head. "Yes, I will teach you what you want to learn. But, first, you must hold up the Earth."

Proud of his *tapasyā*-won powers, Vishvamitra said, "Very well, relinquish your burden and let me bear it."

"Hold it then," said Anantadeva, moving away. And the Earth began to spin down and down in space.

"Here and now I give up all the fruits of my *tapasyā*" shouted Vishvamitra, "only let the Earth not sink downwards."

"You have not done *tapasyā* enough to hold up the Earth, O Vishvamitra." Anantadeva shouted back. "Have you ever associated with holy men? If you have, offer up the merit you have so acquired."

“For a moment only, I was with Vashishtha,” answered Vishvamitra.

“Offer up the fruits of that contact then,” commanded Anantadeva.

“I do here offer them up,” said Vishvamitra. Slowly the Earth stopped sinking downwards.

“Give me divine knowledge, now”, importuned Vishvamitra.

“Fool!” exclaimed Anantadeva, “you come to *me* for divine knowledge turning away from him whose momentary touch has given you virtue enough to hold up the Earth!”

Vishvamitra grew angry at the thought that Vashishthadeva had played him a trick. So he hurried back to him and demanded why he had deceived him.

Unruffled, Vashishtha answered him in slow and solemn tones: “If I had given you the knowledge you asked for then, you would not have accepted it as true. Now you will have faith in me.”

And so Vishvamitra came to acquire knowledge of the Divine from Vashishtha.

Such were the saints and sages of India in the olden days, and such was their ideal of forgiveness. So great was the power they had acquired by their *tapasyā* that they could even carry the Earth on their shoulders. Such sages are being born in India again, today. They will dim the lustre of the Rishis of old by their radiance, and confer on India a glory greater than any she has ever known.” (21-24)

III. The Veda*

1. The Secret of the Veda*

“The Veda Samhita is the eternal source of the dharma, culture and spiritual knowledge of India. But the fountain-head of this source is lost in the cave of an inaccessible mountain and even its initial course is hidden under the strange vines, bushes and flowering trees of a thorny forest, deep and very ancient. The Veda is mysterious. The language, the manner of expression and the form of thinking have been created by another age; they are the product of a different type of mentality. On one hand, it is extremely simple like the flow of a pure and swift mountain stream; yet, on the other, this process of thinking appears so complex to us, the meaning of its language so uncertain that from very ancient times disagreements and discussions have continued regarding its essential thought and even regarding the simple words used in every line. ...

Sayana was in a quandary when he undertook to find the significance of the Veda. It was like some one who, wearied of pursuing a false light through darkness, stumbled often and fell into holes full of mire and filthy water, yet was unable to abandon the pursuit.” (27)

“...Sayana has put in the mouths of the Rishis such ungrammatical language, such complicated, jumbled and halting sentences, and attributed to them such disorderly and incoherent thought that upon reading his commentary, instead of calling this language and thought the Aryan language, the Aryan thought, one is tempted to treat them as the ravings of a barbarian or a lunatic. Sayana is not to be blamed. The

ancient lexicographer Yaska also committed the same blunder, and long before him the authors of the Brahmanas, unable to discover the plain meaning of the Veda, made an unsuccessful attempt to interpret the difficult Riks with the help of their “mythopoetic faculty.” The historians, imitating this method, invested the Veda with a numerous pageantry of purely imaginary events twisting and obscuring its sacred and simple meaning.” (28)

“Yet thoughtful men were not rare who had faith in the intrinsic value of the Veda, in the Rishihood of the Rishi, and who diligently sought after the spiritual significance of the Rik-Samhita, who looked for the fundamental truth of the Upanishads in the Veda. They held the opinion that the boon of light for which the Rishis prayed to God was not the light of the material sun but the light of the Sun of Knowledge, the Sun which is mentioned in the mantra of ‘Gayatri’, the Sun which Vishwamitra had seen. This light is *tatsaviturvarenyam devasya bhargah*, that power and light of the Divine Sun, this god is *yo no dhiyah pracodayāt*, he who impels all our thoughts towards the principles of the Truth. The Rishis feared *tamah*, darkness, but not the darkness of night; they feared the dense obscurity of ignorance. Indra is *jīvāt mā*, the soul or the life; Vritra is neither cloud nor the demon imagined by the poets but the one who impedes the growth of our manhood by covering it up with the thick night of ignorance, in whom the gods, at first, remain concealed and lost, then rise delivered by the bright light of knowledge emanating from the Divine Word. Sayanacharya has given to these Rishis the name of ‘atmavids’ or knowers of the Self and he often cites their explanation of the Veda.” (30-31)

“In the nineteenth century, the Western Pundits girded up their loins and came into the arena producing a more intense foreign imbroglio. Even to this day, only to keep afloat, we are struggling hard against the huge waves of that flood. The European Pundits have erected their new and brilliant temple of phantasy on the old foundations laid by the ancient lexicographers and historians. ... By giving a novel and bizarre form to the Solar myth of the ancient historians of India, by putting new paint on the old colours, they have dazzled the eyes of the educated community of this country. The Europeans also hold the view that the gods mentioned in the Veda are only symbols representing various activities of physical Nature. The Aryans used to worship the Sun, Moon, Stars, Planets, the Dawn, the Night, the Wind and the Storm, Rivers, Streams, Sea, Mountains, Trees and such visible objects. Filled with awe at the sight of their fascinating movement, the barbarians adored these objects in their chants as poetical personalities.”
(32-33)

“The disorder which these Occidentals have created in their attempt to coordinate mutually contradictory symbols of physical Nature with historical metaphors is beyond all description. It seems in order to justify it, they say, “What can we do? The mentality of those ancient barbarian poets was very confused, that is why we have been obliged to use such contrivances; but as far as our explanation is concerned, it is perfect, genuine and faultless.” Anyway the long and short of it is that, in spite of the interpretation offered by the European scholars, the meaning of the Veda remains just as incoherent, confused, incomprehensible and complicated as it had become at one time by the explanation given by the Eastern

scholars. Everything has altered and yet remains the same. It is true that hundreds of thunderers hailing from the banks of the Thames, the Seine, and the Neva have poured on our heads the seven celestial rivers of new learning, but none of them have been able to remove the obscurity produced by Vritra.

We are enveloped in the same darkness as before.” (34)

2. Agni – The Divine Energy*

“In this sacrifice the conscious being, the lord of the house, is the worshipper, the nature of the being is the consort who shares the dharma of the lord of the house. But who is to be the priest? If it is the being that performs the work of the priest then there is hardly any hope of the sacrifice being well conducted because the being is led by the ego and bound with the triple cord of mind, life and body. Under these conditions if the being becomes the self-appointed vicar, it is the ego which assumes the role of the sacrificer, the Ritwik, and even that of the deity of the sacrifice, and in that case, there is great danger of some untoward happening due to the unlawful performance of the ritual. At first the being wants liberation from its extremely circumscribed condition, and if it wishes to be free from bondage then it has to rely on a power other than its own. Even after the triple cord which binds it to the sacrificial post has been loosened, the knowledge and the power capable of directing the ritual does not appear suddenly nor can they be perfectly acquired so soon. Divine knowledge and divine power are necessary, and it is by the sacrifice alone that they can come and grow perfectly. Even when the being is liberated, full of divine knowledge and divine power, it is the Ishwara and not the

worshipper who remains the master, giver of the sanction and enjoyer of the sacrifice. We have to welcome the Divine and install Him on the altar of the sacrifice. Unless the Divine enters the heart of man, manifests and establishes himself there, it is impossible for a human being to attain divinity and immortality. It is also true that before the awakening of the godhead, in order to invoke him the Seers of the Mantra, the Rishis, accept the priesthood on behalf of the sacrificer; Vashishtha and Vishvamitra become vicars of Sudas, Trasadasyu and the son of Bharat. But it is to invite the Divine to accept the place of the priest and the summoner on the altar of the sacrifice that mantras are chanted and offerings made. Unless the Divine awakes in the heart, no one can liberate the being. God is the deliverer: God is the sole priest who can grant the realisation.

When the Divine becomes the vicar, he is then known as Agni, the mystic Fire, and he has the form of fire. The priesthood of Agni is the most auspicious beginning and the best means of performing a successful sacrifice perfect in every detail. That is why the priesthood of Agni was established in the first Rik of the first Sukta of the Rigveda.

Who is this Agni? The root *ag* means power; one who is powerful is Agni. Again the root *ag* signifies light or burning, the power which is flooded with the burning light of knowledge, the effective force of knowledge; the possessor of that power is like Agni. The root *ag* has also the sense of priority and predominance, the force which is the primordial element of the universe, the basic and pre-eminent force among all the manifested universal forces; the possessor of that force is Agni. The root *ag* also has the meaning ‘nayana’,

to lead, to direct; one who is the possessor of the primal, eternal, ancient and sovereign force in the universe and leads it by the appointed path towards the appointed destination, the youth who is the general of the army of God, the guide on the path who by his knowledge and power props various forces of Nature in their different activities and keeps them on the right path, that puissance is Agni. All these virtues of Agni have been mentioned and hymned in hundreds of Suktas of the Veda. The original cause of this universe, hidden in all its development, the most fundamental of all forces and paramount among them, stay of all gods, regulator of all dharmas, guardian of the most profound aim and truth of the universe, this Agni is no one else but the omniscient energising power of the Divine, manifest as force, heat and brilliance. The principle of true Existence in the Truth-Consciousness-Bliss contains in itself the Consciousness. That which is the Consciousness of the Existence is also the Force of the Existence. The Consciousness-Force is the sustaining power of the universe, it is the primary cause and creator, the life and the controller of the universe. When the Consciousness hides her face in the bosom of the Being of pure Existence and with her eyes closed contemplates the form of the pure Existence, the infinite Force becomes hushed; this is the state of dissolution in the tranquil ocean of Ananda. Again when the Consciousness lifts her head, opens her eyes and looks lovingly at the face and the body of the Being of pure Existence, meditates on his infinite names and forms, and dwells on the ravishing Lila created by feigned separation and union, the numberless currents of that Ananda give rise to infinite waves of violent pain and universal delight.” (35-37)

“We find that the Consciousness-Force has two aspects:

Consciousness and Energy, the All-Knowledge and the All-Power; but in reality the two are one. The Knowledge of the Divine is omnipotent and His Power is omniscient. When He conceives light, the birth of light is inevitable because His Knowledge is only the conscious form of His Power. Again in all vibrations of matter, for example, in the dance of an atom or a flash of lightning His Knowledge is involved because His Power is only the dynamism of His Knowledge. Because of our dividing intellect in the Ignorance and the dividing movement of the lower Nature, Knowledge and Power have become separated, unequal, as if fond of quarrelling with each other, exhausted and diminished by discord; or else this simulacrum of dispute is enacted only for the sake of the play. In fact, the All-Knowledge and the All-Power of the Divine are hidden in the minutest act or impulse in the universe; no one has the power to effectuate this act or impulse without the help of that Knowledge and Power or with anything less than them. This All-Knowledge or All-Power works in the same manner in the chanting of the Vedic hymns by the Rishis, in the inauguration of a new cycle by a mighty figure, as in the ravings of an idiot or the agony of a tiny worm which is being assailed. When you and I waste power for want of knowledge, or from a lack of power unsuccessfully apply knowledge, then because the Omniscient and Omnipotent sitting behind the veil rectifies and directs the application of force by His Knowledge and the enjoyment of Knowledge by His Power, that something can still be achieved in this world by such a puny effort. The appointed work is accomplished and the just result obtained. Though it foils the ignorant design and expectation of you and me, by our very failure His secret intention is carried out and that

failure brings us a blessing in disguise and produces a little, partial, yet indispensable good in the smallest detail of a noble universal purpose. The evil, the ignorance and the failure are only masks. He realises the good by the evil, the knowledge by the ignorance, the success by the failure and the unforeseen action by the force which remains concealed. The Presence of Agni in the form of Tapas, Energy, makes such an action possible. This inevitable good, indivisible Knowledge and infallible Power reveal the Agni-aspect of the Divine.” (37-39)

“The external appearance of the world is different; there falsehood, ignorance, evil and failure are predominant. However, behind the mask which frightens the child, the Mother’s face is hidden. Inconscience, inertia and suffering are only sorcery. That is why in the Veda our normal consciousness is called night. Even the highest development of our intellect is only a moon-lit and star-bedecked play of the divine night. But within the bosom of this night hides her sister Usha carrying the infinity-born light of future Divine Knowledge. Even in the night of earth-consciousness, the force of Agni blazes again and again and with the glow of Usha radiates the light. It is the force of Agni which prepares the hour of the birth of Truth-conscious Usha in this blind world. The Supreme has sent the force of Agni into this world and established it there; remaining concealed in the heart of objects and living beings, Agni regulates all the movements of the universe. In the midst of momentary falsehood, this Agni is the keeper of the eternal Truth; in the inconscient and the inert, Agni is the secret consciousness of the inconscient, the formidable dynamic force of matter. Shrouded in ignorance, Agni is the covert knowledge of the Divine; in the ugliness of sin, Agni is the

pristine immaculate purity of the Divine; in the gloomy fog of misery and suffering, Agni is His burning delight of universal enjoyment; clad in soiled rags of weakness and torpor, Agni is his all-bearing, all-accomplishing efficient power of action. If we can once pierce this dark envelope, uncover and kindle this Agni in our hearts, release and direct him upwards, he will bring down Divine Usha into the human consciousness, awaken the inner gods, remove the black sheath of falsehood, ignorance, sorrow and failure and make us immortal and divine in nature. Agni is the first and the supreme living form of the Divine within us. Let us kindle him on the altar of the heart, welcome him as the priest of the sacrifice and in his burning flame of power and knowledge, in his golden and revealing blaze of knowledge, into his all-consuming and purifying blaze of power, offer all our trivial pleasure and pain, all our limited and petty effort and failure, all falsehood and death. Let the old and the untrue be reduced to ashes; then from the heaven-kissing force of Agni will rise as living Savitri the new and the true.

Do not forget that everything is in our heart; Agni is within man; the altar, the offering and the offerer are within and within also the seer, the Word and the deity; the Vedic chant to the Brahman, the anti-divine demons and titans are within; Vritra and the destroyer of Vritra are also within; the battle between the gods and the titans takes place within; Vashishtha, Vishvamitra, Angira, Atri, Bhrigu, Atharva, Sudas, Trasadasyu – these five types of the Aryan seekers of the Brahman and the Dasyus – are also within. The self of man and the universe are one. The near and the far, the ten cardinal points, the two oceans, the seven rivers and the seven worlds

are also within him. Our earthly existence is manifested between these two secret oceans. The lower ocean is the concealed infinite consciousness from which, day and night, at each moment, surge up all these emotions and impulses, names and forms, just as the stars and galaxies shine out on the bosom of the goddess Night. In modern language, this is called the Inconscient or the Subconscient, *apraketam salilam* of the Veda, the subconscious ocean. Though it is subconscious, it is not devoid of consciousness; the transcendent universal is in it, capable of all knowledge, proficient in all action, it diffuses itself in a trance as it were and creates the universe and its movements. Above pervades the secret free infinite consciousness called the Superconscient of which this 'consciousness-unconsciousness' is the shadow. There in that world the Existence-Consciousness-Bliss is fully manifested – in *sat-loka*, the world of true Existence, as infinite Existence; in *tapoloka*, the world of energy of self-conscience, as infinite Consciousness; in *janaloka*, the world of creative Delight, as infinite Felicity; and in *maharloka*, the world of large consciousness, as the vast Truth of the cosmic Self. The intermediate terrestrial consciousness is the Earth mentioned in the Veda. From this earth rises to the skies the climbing mountain of which each plateau is a step in the ascent, one of the seven inner kingdoms. The gods are helpers in our ascent, the titans are enemies who obstruct the path. This mountain climbing is the sacrificial march of the Vedic seeker of the Truth; with the sacrifice, we have to rise to the ocean of light in the supreme ether. Agni is the instrument of this ascent, the leader of the path, the fighter in the battle and the priest of this sacrifice. The Vedic Seer-Poets have established the spiritual knowledge on this fundamental image in the same

manner as the Vaishnavas who use the symbol of the enamoured cowherd boys and girls of Vrindavan in their songs on Radha and Krishna. If we remember the significance of this image, the understanding of the truth in the Vedas will then become easy.” (39-41)

3. The Rigveda*

(i) *The Truth of Veda*

“A new view of the Rigveda is being published in the ‘Arya’ under the caption of ‘The Secret of the Veda’. The translations here have been done according to that view which maintains that the real meaning of the Veda is spiritual and, being extremely profound and secret, is wrapped in symbolic words, various images, and expressions used in the performance of sacrifice. Though impenetrable to the ordinary person, this covering was, to the initiate in the Veda, only a transparent object which revealed all the limbs of the Truth. We have to look for the spiritual significance behind the images. ... Of course, the true and subtle comprehension of its meaning comes only by a special knowledge and as the result of sadhana, and not by mere study of the Veda without any sadhana.”(42)

“The world exists in the Brahman but the truth of the Brahman cannot be seized by the intellect. The Rishi Agastya speaks of It as *tat adbhutam*, above all, beyond all time. Has any one ever known It, now or in the past? It vibrates in the consciousness of every one, yet, the moment the intellect tries to examine It from near, That disappears. The image of the Kena Upanishad has also the same significance: Indra rushes

towards the Brahman but when he is quite close, the Brahman vanishes. Yet That is knowable, as a divine Being.

The Divine is also *adbhuta*, mysterious, but he manifests himself in three fundamentals, that is to say, God is pure Existence, Consciousness-Force and Bliss. It is possible to realise God in the principle of Bliss. Under various different names and forms, God pervades and upholds the universe. These names and forms are the Vedic gods.

The Veda speaks about two seas, one above and the other below the manifested world; below, it is the apraketa *hr̥dyā* or *hr̥tsamudra*, the concealed sea which is known in English as the Subconscient and, above, it is the sea of pure Existence which is called in English the Superconscient. These two are known as caves or hidden truths. Brahmanaspati brings out the manifestation from the Subconscient by the World. Rudra enters the life-principle and illumines it with his mighty power, pulls it upward by Force and drives it violently along the path towards its destination; Vishnu by his pervading power upholds the constantly flowing sea of pure Existence or the seven rivers of life and guides them towards the goal. All the other gods are co-workers in the movement, helpers and agents.

Surya, the Sun, is the god of the Truth-Light, he is 'Savita' when he creates or manifests, 'Pushan' when he nourishes, 'Surya' when he destroys the night of falsehood and gives birth to the light of truth and knowledge. Agni is the *tapas*, the energising power of the Consciousness-Force; he builds the universe and dwells in all its objects: He is fire in the material principle; desire and impulses to enjoy in the life-principle, he devours everything he gets; in the mind-principle,

he is the mental inspiration and the will-power; in the principle beyond mind, he is the lord of the conscious force of action.” (42-43)

(ii) *Mandala 1, sukta 1 – The Spiritual Significance*

The Universal Sacrifice

“The universal life is like an immense sacrifice.

God himself is the lord of the sacrifice. God is Shiva, and Nature is Uma. Though she carries the image of Shiva in her heart, still she misses his visible form; she yearns for his tangible body. This yearning is the deep significance of the universal life.

But by what means can her intention be fulfilled? By which appointed path can Nature attain the Supreme? How can she recover her own true form and that of the Supreme? Her eyes are tied with the bandage of ignorance and her feet are bound with a thousand chains of matter; as if the physical Nature has imprisoned the infinite existence within the finite and herself become the prisoner, no longer able to find the lost key of the self-made prison; as if the inert vibrations of the life-energy in matter have overpowered the free and unlimited Consciousness-Force and made her dumb, self-oblivious and unconscious; as if the infinite Bliss wandering about in the disguise of an inferior consciousness subject to trivial happiness and sorrow, has forgotten its real nature and unable to remember sinks lower and lower in the bottomless mire of suffering; as if the truth has been drowned under the uncertain waves of falsehood. The supramental principle beyond intellect is the foundation of the infinite Truth. The action of the Supermind is either forbidden in the earth-

consciousness or very rare like the momentary glimmer of the lightning from behind the veil. ... Can the terrestrial Nature, ensnared in the noose of the finite and untrue ever hope to obtain that limitless Existence, that boundless Consciousness-Force, and that immeasurable Bliss-Consciousness, and if so, by what means?

The sacrifice is the means. The sacrifice implies surrender, and self-immolation. What you are, what you have, what you become in future by your own effort or by the divine grace, what you can earn or save in the course of your action, pour all like clarified butter, into the fire of divine energy, as offering to the all-Blissful. By giving a tiny whole you will receive the infinite whole. The Yoga is implicit in the sacrifice. The infinity, the immortality and the divine felicity are legitimate results of the practice of yoga. To follow this path is the means of Nature's salvation.

The Universal Nature knows the secret. So with this immense hope, night and day, year in and year out, age after age, sleepless and restless, she performs the sacrifice. All her actions, all her endeavours are part of this cosmic ritual. She immolates everything she produces. She knows that the divine Player who is present in all, tastes the delight without reserve and accepts all effort and askesis as sacrifice. He is the one who is ever slowly leading the cosmic sacrifice on the ordained path towards the ordained goals by detours and zigzags, through rise and fall, across knowledge, ignorance and death. His assurance has made her fearless, unwavering and indiscriminate. Moved by the unceasing and ubiquitous divine impulsion, she consciously throws all that she can lay hands on, creation and killing, production and destruction,

knowledge and ignorance, happiness and suffering, the ripe and the unripe, the beautiful and the ugly, the pure and the impure, into that huge eternal conflagration of sacrifice. The subtle arid material objects constitute the clarified butter used in the sacrifice, the Jiva, the being, is the bound animal. The Nature is constantly immolating the Jiva, fastened to the slaying-post with the triple bond of mind, life and body. The bond of mind is ignorance; the bond of life is suffering, desire and conflict; the bond of body is death.

Nature is shown the path of her salvation; by what means can the Jiva in fetters be delivered? By means of sacrifice, self-surrender and self-immolation. Instead of being under the domination of Nature and being offered by her, the Jiva has to rise, become the sacrificer and offer all that it possesses. This indeed is the profound secret of the universe that the Purusha is not only the god of the sacrifice but the object sacrificed as well. The Purusha has surrendered into the hands of Prakriti his own mind, life and body as offering, as principal means of performing the sacrifice. There is this hidden motive behind his self-surrender that one day, becoming conscious, he will take the Prakriti by the hand, make her his consort and companion in the sacrifice and himself perform the ritual. Man has been created to fulfil this secret longing of the Purusha who wants to play the Lila in a human body. Selfhood, immortality, the multiple infinite bliss, unlimited knowledge, boundless force and immeasurable love must be enjoyed in a human body, in a human consciousness. All these forms of delight exist within the Purusha himself and as the Eternal he enjoys them eternally. But creating man, he is actively engaged in relishing the opposite taste of oneness in

the multiplicity, the infinite in the finite, the inward in the outward, the supra-sensible in the senses and the immortal existence in the terrestrial life. Seated at the same time above our mind, beyond our intellect in the hidden Supramental principle of the Truth and in the secret plane of consciousness behind the heart within us, in the cavern of the heart, in the concealed ocean of submerged consciousness where heart, mind, life, body and intellect are only little ripples, the Purusha experiences the delightful taste of the blind effort and search of the Prakriti and her endeavour to establish unity by the shock of duality. Above, he enjoys in knowledge; below, he enjoys in ignorance; he carries on these two actions simultaneously. But if he is for ever immersed in this condition, then the deep intention, his supreme purpose cannot be fulfilled. That is why the day of awakening is fixed for each human being. The inner godhead will one day give up this mechanical, merit-less, lower self-immolation and begin in knowledge, by chanting his own mantra, the performance of the sacrifice. To perform the sacrifice consciously and with the right mantra is the 'Karma', the work, mentioned in the Veda. ... The gods mentioned in the Veda under the names Indra, Agni, Varuna are not the inferior small godheads of later days disdained by the common people; they are different forms of the Divine, powerful and luminous." (45-49)

(iii) Mandala 1, sukta 17 – Commentary

“Whenever the ancient Rishis prayed for the help of the gods in the spiritual battle against the formidable attack of the inner enemies, for the establishment of fulness, the durable and compact state of force in the mind as they

became aware of their own incompleteness after going a little way on the path of sadhana, or else when they invoked the gods to found, increase and protect the plenitude of inner illumination and delight, we find that, to express their feelings, they often addressed the gods in pairs, in the same hymn and in identical words. The two Ashwins, Indra and Vayu, Mitra and Varuna are typical examples of this combination. In this hymn by combining, not Indra and Vayu, or Mitra and Varuna, but Indra and Varuna, Medhatithi of the line of Kanva is praying for delight, high accomplishment and peace.” (50)

“Indra and Varuna are worthy gods who can help to realise this sublime aspiration. Indra is the king and Varuna is the emperor. The mental ardour and energy from which proceed all the functions of mind, its existence and effectiveness are given by Indra who also protects them from the attacks of the Vritras, the demons. All the noble and generous moods of mind and character, for want of which, arrogance, narrowness, weakness or indolence inevitably result in thought and action, are established and guarded by Varuna. That is why right in the beginning of this Sukta, Rishi Medhatithi welcomes their help and friendship; *indrā-varuṇayorahamava āvṛṇe*, “O Indra, O Varuna, we welcome you as our protectors”, as our *samrājoh*, emperors, because they indeed are emperors.” (51)

“When all the faculties and efforts of body, life, mind and the supramental part are poised in equality and self-contained in their respective places; when no one has domination over the being, and there is no revolt or anarchy; when each one accepts the sovereignty of its respective godhead of the Higher

Nature and is accustomed to execute its special work with joy at the time and in the measure fixed by the Divine; when the Being is Lord of its own dominion, real emperor over the inner kingdom of its instrument; when there is deep peace along with a mighty luminous and boundless power of action, when all its faculties listen to its order and accomplish the work perfectly with mutual cooperation for the joy of the being, or when it tastes fathomless peace and ineffable delight by plunging into a deep, shadowless inaction at will: such a state of being was called by the Vedantists of the earliest times the kingdom (dominion over self) or the empire (dominion over others). Indra and Varuna particularly are masters of this state; they are emperors. Indra when he becomes emperor sets in motion all the faculties, and Varuna when he becomes emperor governs the faculties and exalts them.

But all are not qualified to receive the help of these two sublime immortals. Only when one has knowledge and is established in tranquillity, can he claim their help. One has to be *vipra*, a *māvān*. The word *vipra* does not mean a brahmin; the root *vi* signifies to manifest, to illumine and the root *vip* means the play or vibration or full flooding of manifestation, illumination; one in whose mind the knowledge has dawned, the door of whose mind is open for the mighty play of knowledge, he is verily the *vipra*. The root *mā* signifies ‘to hold’. The mother holds the child in her womb, that is why she is known as *mātā*. The founder and life of all action, the god Vayu, is known as Matarisvan, “he who extends himself in the Mother or the container, the sky” – the sky which holds in its womb the birth, the play and the death of all creatures and beings and yet remains for ever serene and unperturbed. One who is patient like the sky that has the power to contain

and endure the wild play and remain silently plunged in its happiness even when the violent cyclone cleaves the horizon with lightnings and roaring madly smites down trees, animals and houses in a furious and destructive dance of divine rapture, one who can turn his own body into an open space for the play of unbearable physical and vital pain and yet remain impassive, full of self-delight, capable of withstanding it like a witness, he, indeed, is a *māvān*. When such a *māvān* is *vipra*, (illumined), when such a serene knower offers his body as the altar of sacrifice and calls on the gods, then Indra and Varuna move freely in it, sometimes they come even of their own accord, protect the oblation, become the support and foundation, *dhartārā carṣaṇīṅṣm* (“You are indeed the upholders of all action”), of all his desired actions and bestow upon him great felicity, power and illumination of knowledge.” (51-53)

4. The Upanishads

(i) An Overview

“Our dharma is like a giant tree adorned with innumerable branches and twigs. Its roots plunge down into the deepest knowledge; its branches spread out far into the field of action. Like the Ashwattha tree mentioned in the Gita, which has its roots above and its branches below, this dharma is based on knowledge and exhorts one to action. Freedom from attachment is the foundation of this vast tree-mansion, dynamism is its walls and roof, and liberation its tower and summit. The whole life of humanity is sheltered by this immense tree-mansion of the Hindu dharma.

Every one says that the Veda is the basis of the Hindu dharma, but very few know the real form and the fundamental

truth of that basis. Often, seated among the topmost branches, we remain lost in ecstasy over the taste of one or more of the savoury and transient fruits, never caring to find out anything about the roots.” (57)

“We make no effort to find out what is truly there in the authentic Veda or why the sages and great souls like Shankaracharya and others revered these eternal invocations and hymns as the complete and infallible Knowledge.

Few people are acquainted with even the Upanishads. When we speak of the Upanishads, we are reminded of the Monism of Shankaracharya, the Qualified Dualism of Ramanuja, the Dualism of Madhwa and similar philosophical expositions. We do not even dream of studying the Upanishads in the original, or finding out their true significance, or asking ourselves how six schools of contradictory philosophies could have grown from the same root, or whether any hidden meaning surpassing those six philosophies could be obtained from this treasure-house of knowledge. For a thousand years we have accepted the meaning given by Shankara; the commentary of Shankara has become our Veda, our Upanishad. Why should we take the trouble of studying the Upanishads in the original? Even when we do so, if ever we come across any commentary which contradicts Shankara, we immediately reject it as false.” (57-58)

“What are the Upanishads? They are the treasure-house of the deepest eternal Knowledge without beginning or end which is the root and foundation of the eternal dharma. We find the same knowledge in the Suktas of the four Vedas but covered over with metaphors which give an exoteric meaning

to the hymns like that of the descriptive image of the ideal man. The Upanishads unveil for us the supreme Knowledge, the naked limbs of the real man. The poets of the Rigveda, the Rishis, expressed spiritual knowledge in divinely inspired words and rhythms; the Rishis of the Upanishads had direct vision of the true form of that Knowledge and expressed it in a few profound words. Not only Monism, but all the philosophical thoughts and doctrines that have come into being in Europe and Asia – Rationalism, Realism, Nihilism, the Darwinian theory of evolution, the Positivism of Comte, the philosophy of Hegel, Kant, Spinoza and Schopenhauer, Utilitarianism, Hedonism, all were seen and expressed by the Rishis endowed with the *direct vision*.” (58-59)

“The word ‘Upanishad’ means to enter into a secret place. The Rishis did not obtain the knowledge mentioned in the Upanishads by force of argument, extensive learning or from the flow of inspiration, but earned by Yoga the right of entry into the secrecy of the mind where hangs the key to the integral Knowledge, penetrated into the hidden chamber, took down the key and became sovereigns of vast realms of that infallible Knowledge. Unless the key can be secured, it is not possible to have access to the true significance of the Upanishads. Any attempt to discover the meaning of the Upanishads by argument alone is equivalent to investigating a dense forest with a lighted candle from high tree-tops. Direct vision is the sun-light which illumines the entire forest making it visible to the seeker. Direct vision can be attained only by Yoga.” (59)

(ii) *The Integral Yoga in the Upanishads*

“The Integral Yoga, the divine life founded on the Self, in a human body, and the integral Lila conducted by the Divine

Power, these we preach to be the supreme goal of our human birth; the fundamental basis of this conclusion does not rest upon a mentally constructed new thought, nor does it derive its authority from the letters of any ancient manuscript, the proof of any written scripture or the formula of any philosophy. It is based upon a spiritual knowledge more integral; it is based upon the burning experience of the Divine Reality in the soul, life, mind, heart and body. This knowledge is not a new discovery but old and indeed eternal. This experience is the experience of the ancient Vedic Rishis, of the supreme Truth-Seers of the Upanishads. It is the experience of those Truth-Hearing Poets. It sounds new in the low-aspiring, fruitlessly busy and despondent life of a fallen India of the Kali-yuga. Where most people are content to lead a semi-human existence, and so few ever make an effort to develop even their full manhood, there cannot be any question about the new godhood. But it was with this ideal that our strong Aryan forefathers shaped the first life of the nation. At the rapturous dawn of the Sun-knowledge, the fervent call of the Vedic chants sung by the bird of felicity, self-lost with Soma wine in its voice, rose to the feet of the Universal Being. The high aspiration of enshrining the glorious image of the immortal Universal being in the soul of man, in the life of man, by shaping an all-round divinity, was the primary mantra of the Indian civilization. Gradual enfeeblement, deformation and forgetting of that mantra are the causes of the decline and the misfortune of this country and the nation. To utter that mantra again, to strive for that realisation again, are the only perfect path, the only irreproachable means for their revival and progress because this mantra is the eternal truth where both the individual and the collectivity find their fulfilment.

This is the profound significance of the effort of man, the building up of nations, the birth and the gradual development of civilisation.” (60-61)

“We see the first form and stage of this knowledge and this sadhana in the Rigveda, the earliest characters inscribed on the Stupa near the entrance to the temple of the Aryan dharma at the beginning of history. We cannot say with certainty that it finds expression for the first time in the Rigveda, because even the Rishis of the Rigveda admit that those who were before them, the early ancestors of the Aryan race, ‘the primeval fathers of the human race’, had discovered this path of truth and immortality for the later man. They also say that the new Rishis were only following the path which had been shown to them by the ancient Rishis. We find that the mantra of the Rigveda is the echo of the words of the ‘fathers’, of the Divine speech they uttered; consequently, the form of the dharma that we see in the Rigveda can be said to be its earliest form. The knowledge of the Upanishads, the sadhana of the Vedanta are only a very noble and generous transformation of this dharma. The knowledge of the supreme Divine and the sadhana for attaining the Divine life of the Vedas, the Self-knowledge and the sadhana for realising the Brahman of the Upanishads, both of them are based on a synthetic dharma; various aspects of the cosmic Purusha and the cosmic Shakti, the supreme Divine unifying all the truths of the Brahman, the experience and the pursuit of the All-Brahman are its intimate subject-matter. Then started the age of analysis. The Purva Mimansa, the Uttara Mimansa, the Sankhya, the Yoga, the Nyaya, and the Vaisheshika of the Vedantas, each of them took up a partial philosophy of the truth and developed different ways of the

sadhana. Finally, the parts of the partial philosophies gave rise to Monism, Dualism, Qualified Monism, the Vaishnava and the Shaiva schools, the Puranas and the Tantras. The attempt at synthesis also never stopped. We find that effort in the Gita, the Tantras and the Puranas; each of them has been successful to a certain extent; many new experiences have been gained but no longer do we find in them the comprehensiveness of the Vedas and the Upanishads. It looks as if the ancient spiritual message of India took its birth in some all-pervading brilliant light of knowledge where even to reach, let alone the question of crossing beyond it, became impossible or difficult for the predominantly intellectual later ages.” (61-62)

(iii) The Isha Upanishad

“The main obstacle that stands in the way of accepting the straightforward meaning of the Isha Upanishad and rightly understanding its inner truth about the Brahman, the Self and the Divine, is Mayavada, Illusionism, preached by Shankaracharya and the commentary he wrote on this Upanishad. The one-pointed drive towards withdrawal that is Illusionism and the much-praised inaction of the Sannyasi are completely at variance with the Isha Upanishad. If the meaning of the slokas is strained and tortured to give an opposite sense, the solution of this quarrel becomes impossible. The Upanishad in which it is written: ‘Doing verily works in this world one should wish to live a hundred years’, and again: ‘Action cleaves not to a man’ – the Upanishad which proclaims with courage: ‘Into a blind darkness they enter who follow after the Ignorance, they as if into a greater darkness who devote themselves to the Knowledge alone’; and again

says: ‘By the Birth one enjoys Immortality’, how can that Upanishad be reconciled with Mayavada, Illusionism and the path of withdrawal? A highly erudite person, who was possibly the chief sponsor of Monism in South India after Shankara, expunged it from the list of the twelve Upanishads and installed the Nrisimhatapini in its place. Shankaracharya was not so daring as to alter the prevailing canon. The Upanishad was a ‘Sruti’ (heard scripture), and Illusionism was a subject for inquiry in the ‘Sruti’ and as such, he assumed, the meaning of the ‘Sruti’ could not but be favourable to real Illusionism.

If *jagat* (in *īśa vāsyamidam sarvam yat kiñca jagatyām jagat*) meant the earth, then the meaning would be: ‘all that is moving on the earth in motion’, that is to say, all men, animals, insects, birds, torrents, and rivers, etc. This meaning is absurd. In the language of the Upanishads, the word *sarvamidam* signifies all the visible objects of the universe, not of the earth. Therefore we must understand by the word *jagati* the Shakti in movement manifested as the universe and by the word *jagat* all that is a movement of motion of the Prakriti whether present as a living being or as matter. The contradiction lies between these two: the Ishwara and all that is in the universe. Unlike the Ishwara who is immobile, the Prakriti, the Shakti, is in movement always engaged in work and world-wide motion; all that exists in the universe is also a small universe in movement which is always, at each instant, the meeting-place of creation, preservation and destruction, the restless and perishable, the opposite of the immutable. The eternal contradiction does not become evident if we place on one side the Ishwara and on the other, the earth and all that is in movement on the earth. This Upanishad opens with the eternal contradiction observed by everybody which puts the

immutable Ishwara on one side and on the other the restless Prakriti and all that she possesses in the universe created by her, all ephemeral objects.

The whole Upanishad is constructed upon this contradiction and its resolution.” (63-64)

“The author of the Upanishad right in the beginning compares the truth of the Ishwara with the Truth of the universe and indicates their fundamental relation.

Īśa vāsyamidam sarvam yat kiñca jagatyām jagat, ‘All this is for habitation by the Lord, whatsoever is jagat within jagati or individual universe in movement’ – the still all-pervading controller Purusha and the Prakriti in motion – the Ishwara and the Shakti. As the name of Ishwara has been given to the Immutable, we have to understand that the true relation between the Purusha and Prakriti is this: *‘jagat’* depends on the Ishwara, is governed by Him and accomplishes all work by His will. This Purusha is not only a witness and giver of sanction but Ishwara, the knower, the director of action; the Prakriti is not the controller of action but she works out the destiny, the mistress but dependent on the master, the obedient active Shakti of the Purusha.

Then we observe that *‘jagati’* is not simply the Shakti in movement, not simply the principle which is the cause of the universe; she is also present as the universe itself. The ordinary meaning of the word *‘jagati’* is ‘the earth’, but it cannot apply here. By combining these two words *jagatyām jagat* the author of the Upanishad has hinted that the root-meaning of these two words must not be neglected. To emphasise it has been his aim.” (65-66)

“The Isha Upanishad introduces to us the integral spiritual realisation and the principle of the integral yoga; within a short space it resolves many difficult problems. It is a *śruti* replete with sublime, profound and fathomless significances. This Upanishad, concluded in eighteen slokas, explains in these small mantras many major truths of the world. Such ‘infinite riches in a little room’ can be found only in this *śruti*.

Synthesis of knowledge, synthesis of dharma, reconciliation and harmony of the opposites form the very soul of this Upanishad. In Western philosophy there is a law called the law of contradiction, according to which opposites mutually exclude each other. Two opposite propositions cannot hold good at the same time, they cannot integrate; two opposite qualities cannot be simultaneously true at the same place and in the same instrument. According to this law, opposites cannot be reconciled or harmonised. If the Divine is one, then however omnipotent He might be, He cannot be many. The infinite cannot be finite. It is impossible for the formless to assume form; if it assumes form, then it abrogates its formlessness.” (66)

“The Seer-Rishi of the Upanishad at each step tramples on that law and in each sloka announces its invalidity; he finds in the secret heart of the opposites the place for the reconciliation and harmony of their contradiction. The oneness of the universe in motion and the immobile Purusha, enjoyment of all by renunciation of all, eternal liberation by full action, perpetual stability of the Brahman in movement, unbound and inconceivable motion in the eternal immobility, the oneness of the Brahman without attributes and the Lord of the universe with attributes, the inadequacy of Knowledge

alone or of Ignorance alone for attaining Immortality, Immortality obtained by simultaneous worship of Knowledge and Ignorance, the supreme liberation and realisation gained not by the constant cycle of birth, not by the dissolution of birth but by simultaneous accomplishment of Birth and Non-Birth, – these are the sublime principles loudly proclaimed by the Upanishad.

Unfortunately there has been a great deal of unnecessary confusion regarding the meaning of this Upanishad. Shankara is generally recognised as the most important commentator of the Isha Upanishad, but if all these conclusions are accepted, then Mayavada, the Illusionism of Shankara, sinks in the bottomless ocean. The founder of Mayavada is incomparable and immensely powerful among the philosophers. Just as thirsty Balaram brought to his feet the Yamuna unwilling to alter her course, by dragging and pulling her with a plough, so also Shankara, finding this Upanishad destroyer of Mayavada and standing across the path toward his destination, dragged and pulled the meaning till it agreed with his own opinion.” (67)

“A prominent teacher of the Mayavada who came after Shankara adopted a different means; he satisfied himself by expelling the Isha Upanishad from the list of the principal authoritative Upanishads and promoting the Nrisimhottaratapini in its place. In fact it is quite unnecessary to impose one’s opinions by such physical force. The Upanishad illustrates infinite aspects of the infinite Brahman and, because it does not uphold any particular philosophic view, a thousand philosophic views have sprouted from this single seed. Each philosophy takes up a side of the infinite

truth and presents it to the intellect in a systematic way. The infinite Brahman manifests itself in infinite ways; paths leading to the infinite Brahman are also numberless.” (68)

5. The Puranas

“In the previous article I have written about the Upanishads and shown the method of seizing on their true and complete meaning. Like the Upanishads, the Puranas are authoritative scriptures of the Hindu dharma. Like the ‘Sruti’ (the audible word), the ‘Smriti’ (the divine word remembered) is an authoritative scripture though not of the same order. If there is any conflict between the ‘Sruti’, the direct evidence, on the one hand, and the ‘Smriti’ on the other, then the authority of the latter is inadmissible. The revelations of the Rishis who were accomplished in Yoga and endowed with spiritual insight, and the Word which the Master of the Universe spoke to their purified intelligence, constitute the ‘Sruti’. Ancient knowledge and learning, preserved through countless generations, is known as the ‘Smriti’. This kind of knowledge in transmission might have suffered change, even deformation through different tongues, various minds and, under altered conditions, might have been modified by new ideas or assumed new forms suitable to the needs of the times. Therefore, a ‘Smriti’ cannot be considered to be as infallible as a ‘Sruti’. The ‘Smriti’ is not a superhuman creation but the product of the limited and variable ideas and intelligence of man.

The Puranas are the most important among the ‘Smritis’. The spiritual knowledge contained in the Upanishads has, in the Puranas, been transformed into fiction and metaphors;

we find in them much useful information on Indian history, the gradual growth and expression of the Hindu dharma, the condition of the society in ancient times, social customs, religious ceremonies, Yogic methods of discipline and ways of thinking. Apart from this, the composers of the Puranas are either accomplished yogis or seekers of Truth. The Knowledge and spiritual realisations obtained by their sadhana remain recorded in the respective Puranas. The Vedas and the Upanishads are the fundamental scriptures of the Hindu religion, the Puranas are commentaries on these scriptures. A commentary can never be equal to the original. My commentary may be different from yours but none of us have the right to alter or ignore the fundamental scripture. That which is at variance with the Vedas and the Upanishads cannot be accepted as a limb of the Hindu dharma; but a new idea even if it differs from the Puranas is welcome. The value of a commentary depends on the intellectual capacity, knowledge and erudition of the commentator. For example, if the Purana written by Vyasa were still existing, then it would be honoured as a 'Sruti'. In the absence of this Purana and the one written by Lomaharshana, the eighteen Puranas that still exist cannot all be given the same place of honour; among them, the Vishnu and the Bhagwata Purana composed by accomplished yogis are definitely more precious and we must recognise that the Markandeya Purana written by a sage devoted to spiritual pursuits is more profound in Knowledge than either the Shiva or the Agni Purana.

The Purana of Vyasa being the source-book of the later Puranas, there must be, even in the poorest of them, much information unfolding the principles of the Hindu dharma and since even the poorest of the Puranas is written by a seeker

of Knowledge or a devotee practising Yoga, the thought and knowledge obtained by his personal effort is worthy of respect. The division created by the English educated scholars who separate the Vedas and the Upanishads from the Puranas and thus make a distinction between the Vedic dharma and the Puranic dharma is a mistake born of ignorance. The Puranas are accepted as an authority on the Hindu dharma because they explain the knowledge contained in the Veda and the Upanishads to the average man, comment upon it, discuss it at great length and endeavour to apply it to the commonplace details of life. They too are mistaken who neglect the Vedas and the Upanishads and consider the Puranas as a distinct and self-sufficient authority in itself. By doing this, they commit the error of omitting the infallible and supernatural origin and of encouraging false knowledge, with the result that the meaning of the Vedas disappears and the true significance of the Puranas is also lost. The Vedas must ever remain the basis for any true understanding of the Puranas.” (71-73)

6. The Gita

(i) The Dharma of the Gita

“This question may arise in the minds of those who have carefully studied the Gita, that though Sri Krishna has repeatedly used the word ‘Yoga’ and described the state of being in yoga, union, yet this is quite unlike what ordinary people understand as ‘Yoga’. Sri Krishna has at places praised asceticism and indicated too that the highest liberation can come through the adoration of the Impersonal Divine. But dismissing the subject in a few words, He has explained to

Arjuna in the finest portions of the Gita the majesty of the inner renunciation and the various ways of attaining to the supreme state through faith and self-surrender to Vasudeva. There is a brief description of Rajayoga in the sixth chapter but the Gita cannot properly be called a treatise on Raja-yoga. Equality, detachment, renunciation of the fruits of work, complete self-surrender to Krishna, desireless work, freedom from the bondage of the three essential modes of Nature and pursuit of one's own law of works: these are the fundamental truths of the Gita. The Lord has glorified these precepts as the highest knowledge and the most secret mystery.

It is our belief that the Gita will become the universally acknowledged Scripture of the future religion. But the real meaning of the Gita has not been understood by all. Even the great scholars and the most intelligent writers with the keenest minds are unable to seize its profound significance. On the one hand, the commentators with a leaning towards liberation have shown the grandeur of the Monism and asceticism in the Gita; on the other hand, Bankimchandra, well-versed in Western philosophy, finding in the Gita the counsel to carry out heroically one's duty, tried to inculcate this meaning into the minds of youth. Asceticism is, no doubt, the best dharma but very few people can practise it. A religion to be universally acknowledged must have an ideal and precepts which every one can realise in his own particular life and field of work, yet which if practised fully must lead him to the highest goal otherwise available only to a few. To carry out one's duty heroically is, of course, the highest dharma, but what is duty? There is such a controversy between religion and ethics regarding this complex problem. The Lord has said, *gabana karmano gatih*, 'thick and

tangled is the way of works'. 'Even the wise are perplexed to decide what is duty, what is not duty, what is work, what is not work and what is wrong work, but I shall give you such a knowledge that you will have no difficulty in finding the path to follow,' in a word, the knowledge which will amply explain the aim of life and the law which has to be always observed. What is this knowledge? Where can we find this word of words? We believe that, if we look for this rare and invaluable treasure, we shall find it in the last chapter of the Gita where the Lord promises to reveal to Arjuna His most secret and supreme Word. What is that most secret and supreme Word?

*manmanā bhava madbhakto madyājī māmi namaskuru
māmevaisyasi satyam te pratijāne priyo'si me (18. 65)
sarvadharmānparityajya māmekam śaraṇam vraja
aham tvām sarvaṇṇapebhyo mokṣayisyāmi mā śucah (18. 66)*

(Become My-minded, My lover and adorer, a sacrificer to Me, bow thyself to Me, to Me thou shalt come, this is My pledge and promise to thee, for dear art thou to Me. Abandon all dharmas and take refuge in Me alone. I will deliver thee from all sin and evil, do not grieve).

In brief, the meaning of these two slokas is self-surrender. To the extent that one can make his surrender to Krishna, the Divine Force comes down into his body by the grace of the All-Merciful, delivering him from sin and conferring on him a divine nature. This self-surrender has been described in the first half of the sloka. One has to be *tanmanā*, *tadbhakta*, and *tadyājī*. *Tanmanā* means to see Him in every being, to remember Him at all times, to remain in perfect felicity, being aware of the play of His power, knowledge and love in all

works and events. *Tadbhakta* signifies union with Him founded on an entire faith and love. *Tadyājī* means offering of all works big and small as a sacrifice to Krishna and being engaged in doing rightly regulated action to that end, by giving up egoistic interests and the fruits of work.

It is difficult for a human being to make a complete self-surrender, but if he makes even a little effort then God Himself gives him assurance, becomes his guru, protector and friend and leads him forward on the path of Yoga. *Svalpamapyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt*. Even a little of this dharma delivers one from the great fear. He has said that it is easy and delightful to practise this dharma. And in fact it is so, yet the result of the total consecration is an inexpressible joy, purity and acquisition of power. *Māmevaisyasi* (to Me thou shalt come) means the human being will find Me, will live with Me, will acquire My nature. In these words the realisations of *sādrśya*, God-nature, *sālokyā*, living with God, and *sāyujya*, identification with God are mentioned.” (77-79)

“However, even a little practice of this dharma gives great power, unalloyed joy, complete happiness and purity. This dharma has not been created only for people with special qualities. The Lord has said that the Brahmin, the Kshatriya, the Vaishya, the Sudra, man, woman and all beings of inferior birth can come to Him by adhering to this dharma. Even the greatest sinner, if he takes refuge in Him, is quickly purified. Therefore, every one ought to follow this dharma. In the temple of Jagannath no distinction is made on account of caste. Yet the crowning glory attained through this dharma is in no way less than the supreme state indicated in other religions.” (80)

(ii) Asceticism and Renunciation*

“In the preceding essay it has been said that the Discipline (Dharma) spoken of in the Gita can be followed by everyone; it is open to all. And yet the supreme status in this Discipline is not a whit less than that of any other. The Discipline of the Gita is the Discipline of desireless works. In this country with the resurgence of Aryan Discipline a flood of asceticism has spread everywhere. A man seeking Raja-yoga cannot rest content with the life or the work of a householder. For the practice of his yoga he needs to make tremendously laborious efforts to be able to meditate and concentrate. A slight mental disturbance or contact with the outside upsets the poise of meditation or completely destroys it. Difficulties of this kind one meets abundantly in home-life. Therefore it is quite natural for those who are born with an urge for yoga, derived from past lives, to turn towards asceticism. When such souls with an inborn yogic urge begin to increase in number and by contagion to spread among the youthful generation a strong movement to asceticism, the doors are opened indeed for the good of the country, in one sense; but also along with the good there arise causes for apprehension. It is said that the ascetic discipline is the very best, but very few are competent to follow it. The incompetent who enter the path go a certain distance and then in the midway stop short through a kind of satisfaction arising from lethargy and inertia. One can in this way pass one’s life upon earth in ease, but then one does no good to the world and also it becomes very difficult for such a one to rise to the higher reaches of the world. The time and the circumstances in which we are at present demand that we awaken the qualities of dynamic energy (Rajas) and luminous poise (Sattwa), that is to say,

activity and knowledge, discarding the qualities of inertia and devote ourselves to the service of the country and the world so that we may rejuvenate the moral and spiritual strength of our land. This is our foremost duty today. We have to recreate an Aryan people rich with knowledge and power and wide catholicity, from out of the womb of this people weak and worn out, weighed down with inertia, narrowed into selfish bounds. It is for this reason that so many souls, full of strength and yogic power, are being born in Bengal. If such people attracted by the charm of asceticism abandon their true law of life and their God-given work, then with the destruction of their true law the nation too will perish. The younger generation seems to imagine that the stage of the student (Brahmacharya) is the time fixed for the acquisition of education and character. The next stage as fixed is that of the householder. And when one has assured the preservation of the family and the future building of the Aryan race and thus freed oneself from the debts to the ancestors and also when one has paid off one's debts to society by the acquisition of wealth and by useful service and when one has paid off one's debts to the world by spreading knowledge and beneficence and love and strength and finally when one has been able to satisfy the Mother of the worlds by one's unstinted labour and high service for the good of Mother India, then it will not be amiss to retire from the world into the forest (Vanaprastha), and take to the ascetic life. Otherwise there arises confusion of social values and growing dominance of the wrong law. I do not speak of young ascetics who have been freed from all debts in a previous life; but it would be wrong for one who has not made himself ready for asceticism to take to it. Great and magnanimous Buddhism has done no doubt immense good to

the country, yet no less harm, because of asceticism spreading everywhere and the warrior class (Kshatriya) renouncing their appointed function; and in the end, itself was banished from the country. In the new age the new dispensation must not admit this error.

In the Gita Sri Krishna has time and again directed Arjuna not to follow asceticism. Why? He admits the virtue of Sannyasa and yet, in spite of the repeated questionings of Arjuna overwhelmed as he was with the spirit of asceticism, abnegation and altruism, Sri Krishna never withdrew his injunctions with regard to the path of action. Arjuna asked, “If desireless Intelligence, founded in Yoga, is greater than karma, then why do you engage me in this terrible work of slaying my elders?” Many have repeated the question of Arjuna, some even have not hesitated to call him the worst Teacher, one who shows the wrong way. In answer, Sri Krishna has explained that renunciation is greater than asceticism, to remember God and do one’s appointed work without desire is far greater than freedom to do as one likes. Renunciation means renunciation of desire, renunciation of selfishness. And to learn that renunciation one need not take refuge in solitude. That lesson has to be learnt through work in the field of work; work is the means to climb upon the path of yoga. This world of varied play has been created for the purpose of bringing delight to its creatures. It is not God’s purpose that this game of delight should cease. He wants the creatures to become his comrades and playmates, to flood the world with delight. We are in the darkness of ignorance; that is because, for the sake of the play the Lord has kept himself aloof and thus surrounded himself with obscurity. Many are the ways fixed by him which, if followed would take one out of the darkness,

bring him into God's company. If any one is not interested in the play and desires rest, God will fulfil his desire. But if one follows His way for His sake, then God chooses him, in this world or elsewhere as His fit playmate. Arjuna was Krishna's dearest comrade and playmate, therefore he received the teaching of the Gita's supreme secret. What that supreme secret is I tried to explain in a previous context. The Divine said to Arjuna, "It is harmful to the world to give up work, to give up work is the spirit of asceticism. And an asceticism without renunciation is meaningless. What one gains by asceticism one gains also by renunciation, that is to say, the freedom from ignorance, equanimity, power, delight, union with Sri Krishna. Whatever the man worshipped by all does, people take that as the ideal and follow it. Therefore, if you give up work through asceticism, all will follow that path and bring about the confusion of social values, and the reign of the wrong law. If you give up the desire for the fruit of action and pursue man's normal law of life, inspire men to follow each his own line of activity, then you will unite with my Law of life and become my intimate friend". Sri Krishna explains furthermore that the rule is to follow the right path through works and finally at the end of the path attain quietude, that is to say, renounce all sense of being the doer. But this is not renunciation of work through asceticism, this is to give up all vital urge to action involving immense labour and effort through the rejection of egoism and through union with the Divine – and transcending all gunas, to do works as an instrument impelled by His force. In that state it is the permanent consciousness of the soul that he is not the doer, he is the witness, part of the Divine; it is the Divine Power that works through his body created for action by his own

inner law of being. The soul is the witness and enjoyer, Nature is the doer, the Divine is the giver of sanction. The being so illumined does not seek to help or hinder any work that the Divine Power undertakes. Submitted to the Shakti, the body and mind and intellect engage themselves in the work appointed by God. Even a terrible massacre like that of Kurukshetra cannot stain a soul with sin if it is sanctioned by God, if it occurs in the course of the fulfilment of one's own dharma (Inner Law), but only a few can attain to this knowledge and this goal. It cannot be the law of life for the common man. What then is the duty for the common wayfarers? Even for them the knowledge that 'He is the Lord, I am the instrument' is to a certain extent within their reach. Through this knowledge to remember always the Divine and follow one's inner law of life is the direction that has been given.

“Better is one's own law of works, swadharma though in itself faulty, than an alien law well wrought out; death in one's own law of being is better, perilous is it to follow an alien law.”*

One's own law of life (swadharma) means the work governed by one's own nature (swabhava); one's own nature evolves and develops in the course of time. In the process of Time man develops a general nature of his own; the works determined by this formulation of nature is the law of that age. In the process of a nation's life-movement the nation's own nature is built up and the works determined by that nature are the nation's law of life. And in the course of the life-movement of an individual, the special nature he develops, determines the work that becomes the individual's law of life. These various

*Gita: III. 35.

laws of life are united together, organised in a common ideal which is that of the Eternal Law. This law is one's own law for all who seek to follow the true law. As a spiritual student (brahmachari) one follows this law to gather knowledge and strength. As a householder also one follows this law. And when one has completely fulfilled this law, then one becomes eligible for the final stages, Vanaprastha or Sannyasa. Such is the eternal movement of the eternal law." (81-85)

(iii) The Vision of the World Spirit

"The vision of the World Spirit is a very necessary element of the Gita. Sri Krishna dispersed the doubt and the hesitation that rose in the mind of Arjuna with logic and words pregnant with knowledge. But the foundation of the knowledge derived from logic and good counsel is not solid. It is only when the knowledge is realised that it becomes firmly established. For this reason, invisibly impelled by the Divine within, Arjuna expressed his desire to see the World Spirit. Once he had this vision of the World Spirit, his doubt vanished for ever. His mind then became cleansed and purified, worthy to receive the supreme secret of the Gita. The knowledge described in the Gita prior to the vision of the World Spirit is the external form of knowledge useful to any spiritual seeker. But the knowledge unfolded after the vision is the most hidden Truth, the supreme secret, the eternal precept. If we characterise the description of the vision as a poetical metaphor, then the truth, the depth and solemnity of the Gita are destroyed and the most profound instructions obtained by Yoga are reduced to a few philosophical views and a collection of poetical fancies. The vision of the World Spirit is neither a fiction nor a poetical metaphor but truth; it

is not even a supernatural truth. The universe being included in Nature, the World Form cannot be a supernatural phenomenon. The World Spirit is a truth of the causal world, and the forms of the causal world are visible to the eye of Yoga. Arjuna endowed with the eye of Yoga saw the form of the Universal Spirit in the causal world.” (86-87)

(a) The Form and the Formless

“The worshippers of the formless Brahman without qualities dismiss any statement about its qualities and form as being only metaphors and similes. The worshippers of the formless Brahman with qualities deny its lack of attributes by explaining the Shastras in a different way and dismiss any statement about its form as being only metaphors and similes. The worshippers of the Brahman with form and attributes are up in arms against both of them. We hold all the three views to be narrow, incomplete and born of ignorance. For, those who have realised the formless Brahman and the Brahman with form, how can they hold one view to be true and discard the other as being false and imaginary, and thus abrogate the ultimate evidence of knowledge and confine the infinite. Brahman within the finite? It is true that if we deny the formlessness and the lack of attributes of the Brahman we belittle God. But it is equally true that if we deny the qualities and the form of the Brahman we belittle Him again. God is the Master, the Creator and the Lord. He cannot be tied down to any form; as He is not limited by His form, so also He is not limited by His formlessness. God is all-powerful. If we feign to catch Him in the net of the laws of the physical Nature or of Time and Space and then tell Him, “Though you are infinite, we shall not allow you to be

finite, try as you may, you will not succeed, you are bound with our irrefutable logic and arguments like Ferdinand with Prospero's magic." What could be more ludicrous, impertinent or ignorant? God is bound neither by His form nor by His formlessness; He reveals Himself in a form to the seeker. God is there in His fullness in that form, yet at the same time pervades the whole universe. For God is beyond time and space, unattainable by any argument; time and space are His toys. He is playing with all beings caught in his net of time and space. But we shall never be able to catch Him in that net. Every time we try to achieve this impossibility with logic and philosophical argument, the Jester eludes the net and stands smiling in front of us, behind us, near us and far from us, spreads out his World Form, and the Form beyond the universe, defeating the intellect. He who says, "I know Him," knows nothing. He who says, "I know Him yet I do not know Him," has true knowledge." (87-88)

(b) The World Form

"The vision of the World Form is very necessary for an adorer of Shakti, a Karmayogi or one who is missioned to do a specific work as an instrument of the Mover of instruments. He might receive the divine mandate even before he has the vision of the World Spirit but as long as he does not have the vision the mandate is not fully endorsed; it has been registered but not yet authorised. Until that moment, it is a period of training and preparation for his work. Only when he has the vision of the World Spirit, does the real work begin. This vision comes to the sadhaks in different ways according to their nature and their sadhana. In the vision of Kali as the World Spirit, the

sadhak perceives a feminine form of incomparable beauty pervading the universe, one yet in multitudinous bodies; her jet black hair spreads out like a compact darkness over the entire sky; the lustre of her scimitar dripping with blood dances everywhere dazzling the eyes; the continuous peal of her dreadful laughter resounds, smashing and crushing world after world in the universe. These words are not simply poetical imagination or a futile attempt to describe a supernatural experience in inadequate human terms. This is self-revelation of Kali; it is the true form of our Mother, the true and simple description without any exaggeration of what has been seen by the eye of Yoga. Arjuna did not have the vision of the World Form of Kali; he had the vision of the World Spirit as Time the Destroyer. It amounts to the same thing. He saw it with his eye of Yoga and not in a trance insensible to the outer consciousness. Rishi Vyasa has described, without any exaggeration, exactly what Arjuna has seen. It is not a dream or imagination but the truth, the living truth.” (88-89)

(c) The Form of the Causal World

“Three different states of the Self are mentioned in the Scriptures: Prajna, the spirit of the secret superconscious omnipotence whose place is in perfect slumber; Tajjasa, the Inhabitant in Luminous Mind, the spirit of the subtle and internal whose place is in dream; Virat, the spirit of the gross and external whose place is in wakefulness. Each status of the spirit is a world in itself: the causal world is in perfect slumber; the subtle and internal world in dream state and the physical world in wakefulness. Whatever is decided in the causal world is reflected in the subtle world beyond our time and space

and partially enacted in the physical world according to the laws of the physical world. Sri Krishna told Arjuna, “The sons of Dhritarashtra are already slain by me,” yet there they were on the battlefield, standing in front of him, alive and engaged in fighting. The words of the Godhead are neither a false statement nor a metaphor. He has already slain them in the causal world, otherwise it is impossible to slay them in this world. Our real life is in the causal world; only a shadow of it falls on the physical world. But the laws, time and space, name and form are different on the causal plane. The World Spirit is a form of the causal world which became visible in the physical world to the eye of Yoga.” (89-90)

(d) The Eye of Yoga

“What is the eye of Yoga? It is not imagination or poetical symbolism. Three different powers of perception are obtained by Yoga: the subtle vision, the direct spiritual awareness and the eye of Yoga. With the subtle vision we see mental images in dream or in wakefulness. By the direct spiritual awareness we see in trance the images and symbolical figures of the names and forms belonging to the subtle and the causal worlds reflected in our inner mental sky. With the eye of Yoga we perceive the names and forms of the causal worlds in trance as well as with our physical eyes. If anything invisible to the physical eye becomes visible to it then it must be understood as an effect of the eye of Yoga. Arjuna saw the World Spirit in the causal world in waking state with the eye of Yoga and was delivered from doubt. The vision of the World Spirit, though not a truth perceptible to the senses of the physical world, is greater than any physical truth – it is not a fiction or an illusion, neither is it a poetical symbol.” (90)

IV. The Gita: An Introduction

“(These essays, originally written in Bengali, were published first in serial form in the Weekly Review, *Dharma*, and later in a book entitled *Gitar Bhumika*. The book is divided into three sections. The first of these sections has been translated here. The *Dharma* articles were published in 1909-10 and were not revised since).

Foreword

The Gita ranks first among the world’s scriptures. The knowledge that has been briefly explained in the Gita is the highest and most secret knowledge. The law of right living, *dharmā*, propounded in the Gita includes within its scope and is the basis of all other law of right living. The way of works shown in the Gita is the eternal path for the world’s march to the heights.

The Gita is as if the bottomless sea, the source of a myriad gems. One may spend a whole life-time fathoming its depths and still not touch the bottom or gauge how deep it is. One may search for a hundred years and still find it difficult to gather even a hundredth part of the riches contained in this endless store of gems. And yet, if one can recover one or two of these gems, the poor man may become rich, the deep thinker acquire wisdom, the hater of God become a devotee, the mighty and powerful hero of action come back to his field of work fully equipped and ready for achieving his life’s purpose.

The Gita is an inexhaustible mine of jewels. Even if the jewels are gathered from this mine for ages, the coming generations will always be delighted and astonished by their acquisitions of new and priceless ones.

Such is this Book, replete with deep and occult lore. And yet the language is perfectly clear, the style is simple, the surface meaning easily grasped. By simply gliding along the surf of this bottomless sea without taking a deep plunge, there is a certain gain in strength and joy. By taking a walk around the peripheries without entering the deep recesses of this mine illumined with jewels, there can be found strewn among the grass bright jewels which will keep us rich throughout life.

The Gita may well have a thousand commentaries, but a time will never come when a new one will not be needed. There can be no such world-renowned scholar or man of deep knowledge as can write a commentary on the Gita on reading which we can say, this is enough, it will not now be necessary to add another commentary on the Gita, everything has been grasped. After expending all our intellectual powers, we can hope to understand and explain only a few facets of this knowledge. On being engrossed in Yoga or by rising from height to greater height on the way of desireless works, all we shall be able to say is that we have had experience of some of its truths, or have applied in the course of this life one or two of the Gita's teachings in actual practice." (91-92)

1. The Speaker

"In order to understand the meaning and object of the Gita, it is at first necessary to consider the Speaker, the listener and the time and circumstance. The Speaker is Lord Sri Krishna; the listener is His friend Arjuna, the most heroic of men; the circumstance is the prelude to the terrible slaughter of Kurukshetra.

There are many who say that the Mahabharata is only a

symbol; Sri Krishna is God, Arjuna the human soul, the sons of Dhritarashtra the inner enemies of the soul's progress, the Pandava army represents the forces that help towards liberation. This is to relegate the Mahabharata to a low position in the world of letters and at the same time to minimise and bring to nought the deep seriousness of the Gita, its utility for the life of the man of action and its high teaching that makes for the progress of mankind. The war of Kurukshetra is not simply a frame for the Gita picture; it is the prime motive and the best occasion for carrying out the law given in the Gita. To accept a symbolic meaning for the great war of Kurukshetra is to reduce the law of the Gita to a law of ascetic quietism inapplicable to life in this world, not a law of the heroic man, a law to be followed in life.

Sri Krishna is the Speaker. The scriptures say that Sri Krishna is God Himself. In the Gita too, Sri Krishna has proclaimed Himself as God. It has there been declared, on the basis of the Avatara doctrine in the fourth chapter and the theory of the Vibhuti in the tenth, that God dwells hidden in the bodies of all creatures, shows Himself to a certain extent through the manifestations of power in some particular beings, and is fully incarnated in the person of Sri Krishna. According to many, Sri Krishna, Arjuna and Kurukshetra are mere metaphors, and in order to recover the true meaning of the Gita these metaphors are to be ignored. But we cannot reject this part of the teaching. If the Avatara doctrine is there, why should Sri Krishna be ignored? Therefore, God Himself is the propounder of this knowledge and the teaching.

Sri Krishna is an Avatara. He has accepted in human form the law of man's body and mind and spirit and has played his

game, *līlā*, accordingly. If we can grasp the obvious and the occult meaning of that play, we shall be able to grasp the meaning, the aim and the method of this world-game. The main feature of this great game was action impelled by total knowledge. What was the knowledge underlying that action and that play has been revealed in the Gita.

Sri Krishna of the Mahabharata is a hero of action, a great yogin, a great man of the world, a founder of empire, statesman and warrior, a knower of *brahman* in the body of a Kshatriya. In his life we see an incomparable manifestation and mysterious play of the Supreme Power, *mahāśakti*. Of that mystery, the Gita is an explanation.

Sri Krishna is Lord of the worlds, universal Vasudeva; and yet, by shrouding His greatness he has entered into play by establishing with men relations like those of father and son, brother and husband, intimate associate and friend and enemy. In His life is implied the supreme secret of the Aryan knowledge and the highest meaning of the way of devotion. Their essential principles are also part of the Gita's teaching.

Sri Krishna's incarnation is at the juncture of the Dwapara and the Kali age. In each of the evolutionary cycles, *kalpa*, God incarnates in full at such junctures. The Kali age is the worst as well as the best among the four epochs. This age is the reign period of Kali, the impeller of sin and the principal enemy of man's progress; the utmost degradation and downfall of man occur during Kali's reign. But there is a gain in strength by fighting against obstacles and new creation comes through destruction of the old; this process is seen in the Kali age too. The elements of evil that are going to be destroyed in the course of the world's evolution are precisely

the ones that are eliminated through an inordinate growth; on the other hand, seeds of new creation are sown and sprout, these seeds become trees in the Satya age that follows. Moreover, as in astrology all the planets enjoy their sub-periods in the period of a particular planet, so, in the period of Kali, each of the four ages, Satya, Treta, Dwapara and Kali repeatedly enjoys its sub-period. Through this cyclic movement, there is in the Kali age a great downfall followed by an upward trend, another great downfall and again an upward surge; these serve the purposes of God. At the juncture of Dwapara and Kali, God through His incarnation allows an inordinate growth of evil, destroys the evil, sows the seeds of good and prepares favourable conditions for their sprouting; then begins the period of Kali. Sri Krishna has left in the Gita the secret knowledge and the method of work that would be useful for bringing in the age of Truth, *satyayuga*. When the time comes for the Satya subperiod of Kali, the world-wide propagation of the law of the Gita is inevitable. That time is now come, that is why the recognition of the Gita, instead of being confined to a few men of wisdom and learning, is spreading among the generality of men and in foreign lands.

Therefore it is not possible to distinguish Sri Krishna the Speaker from His Word, the Gita. Sri Krishna is implied in the Gita, the Gita is Sri Krishna in His form of the Word.” (92-95)

2. The Listener

“The recipient of the knowledge given in the Gita is the mighty hero, Arjuna, son of the great god Indra and the best

of the Pandavas. Just as it is difficult to discover the aim of the Gita and its hidden meaning by ignoring the Speaker, similarly that meaning would suffer by ignoring the listener.

Arjuna is Sri Krishna's intimate associate. Those who are Sri Krishna's contemporaries and have come down to the same field of work establish various kinds of relations with the Supreme Purushottama in human form, in accordance with their respective capacity and previous acts. Uddhava is Sri Krishna's devotee, Satyaki is a faithful follower and companion, king Yudhisthira is a relative and friend who is moved by His counsel, but none could establish with Sri Krishna a relation as intimate as Arjuna. All the close and endearing relations possible between two men of the same age were present in the case of Sri Krishna and Arjuna. Arjuna is Sri Krishna's brother, His closest friend, and husband of His sister Subhadra dear to Him as His own heart. In the fourth chapter the Lord has pointed to this intimacy as the reason for choosing Arjuna as the one person fit to hear the supreme secret of the Gita:" (95-96)

"I have revealed this old and forgotten yoga to you this day, because you are my intimate friend and devotee; for this yoga is the best and the ultimate secret of the world." In chapter eighteen too, there has been a repetition of this statement while explaining the keynote of Karmayoga which is as if the pivotal point of the Gita:" (96)

"Once again you listen to my supreme Word, the most secret of all. You are extremely dear to me, therefore I shall speak to you about this, the best of all paths." These two verses are in their substance on the lines of the Vedic scriptures, as for

example, the Katha Upanishad, which says:” (96)

“This Supreme Self is not to be won through the philosopher’s commentary, nor by brain-power, nor again through a wide knowledge of scripture. He alone can win Him who is chosen by God; to him alone this Supreme Self reveals His own body.” Therefore, it is he who is capable of establishing with God sweet relations like those of friendship and the rest that is the fit recipient of the knowledge given in the Gita.

This implies another thing of great importance. God chose Arjuna because he embodied in himself both devotee and friend.” (97)

“Arjuna, the friend of Krishna, is the principal actor in the Mahabharata; in the Gita the teaching about the yoga of works is the primary teaching. Knowledge, devotion and works, these three paths are not mutually contradictory. In the path of works, to do works founded on knowledge and in the power given by devotion, to act for the purpose of God, at His bidding and in union with Him, this is the teaching of the Gita. Those who are frightened by the sorrows of the world, tormented by the distaste for life, *vairāgya*, those who have lost interest in this play of God, are desirous of hiding themselves in the lap of Infinity and leave this play, theirs is a different path. No such feeling or desire was there in Arjuna, the mighty warrior and the bravest of heroic men. Sri Krishna has not revealed this supreme secret to a quiet ascetic or wise philosopher, has not elected any Brahmin vowed to non-violence as the recipient of this teaching; a Kshatriya warrior of tremendous might and prowess was considered to be the

fit receptacle for obtaining this incomparable knowledge. He alone is capable of entry into the deepest secrets of this teaching who can remain undisturbed by victories or defeats in the battle of life. This Self is not to be won by one who lacks in strength: *nāyam-ātmā balabīnena labhyaḥ*. He alone who cherishes an aspiration to find God in preference to a desire for liberation, *mumukṣutva*, can have a taste of the proximity of God, realise himself as eternally free in his true nature, and will be capable of rejecting the desire for liberation as being the last resort of the Ignorance. He alone is capable of passing beyond the modes of Nature, *gunāñīta*, who after rejecting the tamasic and rajasic forms of egoism is unwilling to remain bound even by an egoism of the sattwic type. Arjuna has fulfilled his rajasic propensities by following the law of the Kshatriya, and has, at the same time, given the power of *rajas* a turn towards *sattva*, by accepting the sattwic ideal. Such a person is an excellent receptacle for the Gita's teaching.

Arjuna was not the best among his great contemporaries. In spiritual knowledge, Vyasa was the greatest; in all kinds of worldly knowledge of that epoch, Bhishma was the best; in the thirst for knowledge king Dhritarashtra and Vidura led the rest; in saintliness and sattwic qualities Yudhishtira was the best; in devotion there was none equal to Uddhava and Akrura; his eldest brother Kama, the mighty warrior led in inborn strength and courage. And yet, it was Arjuna whom the Lord of the worlds elected; it was in his hands that He placed divine weapons like the Gandiva bow and gave to him eternal victory; it was through him that thousands upon thousands of India's world-renowned fighters were made to fall; and he founded for Yudhishtira his undisputed empire

as a gift of Arjuna's prowess. Above all, it was Arjuna whom He decided as being the one fit recipient of the supreme knowledge given in the Gita. It was Arjuna alone who is the hero and the principal actor in the Mahabharata, every section of that poem proclaims the fame and the glory of him alone. This is no undue partiality on the part of the Supreme Divine or of the great Vyasa, the author of the Mahabharata. This high position derives from complete faith and self-surrender. He who surrenders to the Supreme with complete faith and dependence and without making any claims, all responsibility for his own good or harm, weal or woe, virtue or sin; he who wants to act according to His behests instead of being attached to works dear to his own heart; who accepts the impulsions received from Him instead of satisfying his own propensities; who puts to use in His work the qualities and inspirations given by Him instead of eagerly hugging at the qualities admired by himself – it is that selfless and faithful Karmayogin who becomes the Supreme's dearest friend and the best vehicle of His Power; through him is accomplished flawlessly a stupendous work for the world. Muhammad, the founder of Islam, was a supreme yogin of this type. Arjuna too was ever on the alert to make an effort at this self-surrender; this effort was the cause of Sri Krishna's love and satisfaction. He alone who makes a serious effort at self-surrender is the best fitted to receive the Gita's teaching. Sri Krishna becomes his Teacher and Friend and takes over all responsibility for him in this world and in the next." (98-101)

3. The Circumstance

“In order to understand fully the motives and causes

of the acts and words of a man, it is necessary to know under what circumstances the acts were done or the words spoken.” (101)

“The time was at the commencement of the war. Those who have not developed or put to a test their heroic qualities or strength in a mighty flood of action can never be fit to receive the knowledge given in the Gita. Moreover those who have embarked on a great and difficult endeavour, an endeavour which automatically gives rise to many obstacles and obstructions, many enmities, fears of many setbacks, when in the course of that great endeavour there is acquired a divine strength, to them at that moment in order to take the endeavour to its final conclusion, for the successful carrying out of the divine’s work is this knowledge revealed. The Gita lays down in the Yoga of works the foundations of the path to God. It is through works done with faith and devotion that knowledge is born. Therefore the traveller on the path indicated by the Gita does not leave the path and have the vision of God in a remote and quiet hermitage or hill or in a secluded spot; that heavenly Light illumines the world for him, that sweet and powerful Word comes within his hearing, all of a sudden in midway, amidst the noise and bustle of works.

The place was a battlefield, between two armies where missiles were flying. To those who travel on this path, take the lead in works of this nature, often the realisation, yoga-siddhi, comes and the supreme knowledge dawns, all of a sudden at a critical and momentous hour which determines the march of destiny in this direction or that, depending on the nature of their acts. That knowledge is no bar to action, it is intimately

connected with action. It is no doubt true that knowledge also dawns in meditation, in loneliness, when one turns back on one's self; that is why the sages love to be alone. But the traveller on the path of the Gita's Yoga can so divide his instruments of mind, life and body that he experiences loneliness in the midst of a crowd, peace amidst noise, supreme repose while engaged in a whirl of activities. He does not regulate the inner being by outward circumstances, he controls the outer by the inner state. The ordinary Yogin is afraid of life, he escapes from it and takes to Yoga in the shelter and protection of an Ashram. Life itself is the Ashram for the Karmayogin. The ordinary Yogin desires an outward peace and silence, a disturbance of the peace impedes his inner askesis. The Karmayogin enjoys a vast peace and silence within; this state becomes deeper in the midst of external noise; any external disturbance does not harm that inner askesis, it remains undisturbed. People say, how was the Sri Krishna-Arjuna dialogue possible in the middle of armies going in for battle? The answer is, it was possible through the power of Yoga. Through that power of Yoga, amidst the din of battle, at one particular spot, with Sri Krishna and Arjuna peace reigned within and without; the noise of war could not affect these two. In this is implied another spiritual teaching applicable to works. Those who practise the Gita's yoga are the most capable workers and yet remain unattached to their work. Right in the midst of their work they may hear the inner call of the Self, desist from the work and plunge themselves in yoga and do the inner askesis. They know that the work is God's, the fruit is His, we are instruments; hence they have no anxiety about the fruit of their work. They also know that the

inner call comes for facilitating the yoga of works, for an improvement in the working, for the increase of knowledge and power. Therefore they do not fear to desist from their work; they know that in the spiritual effort there can never be an unnecessary waste of time.

The attitude of Arjuna comes from a rising of the last doubts of the Karmayogin. There are many who, perplexed by world-problems, the problem of suffering and pleasure, the problem of sin and virtue, declare an escape or flight as the only pathway to the good, and proclaim the virtues of an ascetic withdrawal from life, *vairāgya* and the renunciation of works.” (101-103)

“Why this life? If God exists, then why does He undertake this useless meaningless labour like that of an immature boy? Why did He start this arid joke? If the Self alone exists, if the world is nothing but an illusion, why again does this Self impose this ugly dream on its pure existence? The atheist says, there is neither God nor Self, there is only the blind action of a blind force. But what kind of view is that? Whose is this force, from where is it born, and why again is it blind and insane? No one has been able to give a satisfactory answer to these questions, neither the Christian nor the Buddhist, nor the Advaitin, the atheist or scientist. All are silent on these points and are at the same time eager to shirk the issue by evading the question. Only the Upanishads and the Gita following their line have been unwilling to shirk the issue in this way. That is why the Gita has been chanted during the war of Kurukshetra. Acts terribly worldly – the killing of one’s teachers and brothers and kin – these

were the objects of the war. At the commencement of that war which destroyed thousands of creatures, Arjuna throws away the divine bow from his hands knowing not what to do, says in a pitiable tone:” (103-104)

““Then why do you engage me in this terrible work?” In answer there arises, amidst the din of battle, in tones of thunder, the mighty song uttered by the mouth of God:” (104)

““Therefore you go on doing works; the kind of work your ancestors have been doing, that work you too have to perform.... Do works in a state of union with the Divine, by giving up attachment.... He whose will and intelligence are fixed in yoga passes beyond virtue and sin in the field of work itself. Therefore strive for the yoga, yoga is the best means to work.... If a man works in a spirit of detachment, he will certainly find God.... With a heart filled with knowledge, entrust to Me all your works; get rid of sorrow by giving up desire and by rejecting egoism; enter the fray.... He who has no attachments left and is free, whose mind lives always in knowledge, he who does works for the sake of sacrifice, all the works of such a man instead of being a cause of bondage at once get completely dissolved in Me.... The knowledge that lies hidden within all creatures is covered up by ignorance. That is why they fall into delusion by creating the dualities like joy and sorrow, sin and virtue.... A supreme peace can be obtained by knowing Me as the Lord of all the worlds, the enjoyer of all kinds of works like sacrifice and askesis, and the friend and beloved of all beings.... It is I who have killed your enemies, you destroy them as a mere instrument, do not grieve; get into the fight, you will conquer the adversary in war.... He who has an inner being free

from egoism, whose will and intelligence remain unattached even if he destroys the whole world, still he does not kill, does not undergo any bondage of sin...”

There is no sign here of an evasion of the question, of shirking the issue. The issue has been set forth in clear terms. What is God, what is the world, what is life, what is the way to right living? These questions have been answered by the Gita in brief. And yet the Gita’s aim is not to teach asceticism but to teach the way of works. Herein lies the universal utility of the Gita.” (105-106)

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