THE GREATNESS OF INDIA AND ITS CULTURE

10. THE GREATNESS OF INDIAN LITERATURE – 8

The Bhagavad Gita – 1

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The Spirit of Approach

"The World abounds with scriptures sacred and profane, with revelations and half-revelations, with religions and philosophies, sects and schools and systems. To these the many minds of a half-ripe knowledge or no knowledge at all attach themselves with exclusiveness and passion and will have it that this or the other book is alone the eternal Word of God and all others are either impostures or at best imperfectly inspired, that this or that philosophy is the last word of the reasoning intellect and other systems are either errors or saved only by such partial truth in them as links them to the one true philosophical cult. Even the discoveries of physical Science have been elevated into a creed and in its name religion and spirituality banned as ignorance and superstition, philosophy as frippery and moonshine. And to these bigoted exclusions and vain wranglings even the wise have often lent themselves, misled by some spirit of darkness that has mingled with their light and overshadowed it with some cloud of intellectual egoism or spiritual pride.…we are .. apt to declare that our truth gives us *the* supreme knowledge which other religions or philosophies have missed or only imperfectly grasped so that they deal either with subsidiary and inferior aspects of the truth of things or can merely prepare less evolved minds for the heights to which we have arrived. And we are still prone to force upon ourselves or others the whole sacred mass of the book or gospel we admire, insisting that all shall be accepted as eternally valid truth….

It may therefore be useful in approaching an ancient Scripture, such as the Veda, Upanishads or Gita, to indicate

precisely the spirit in which we approach it and what exactly we think we may derive from it that is of value to humanity and its future. First of all, there is undoubtedly a Truth one and eternal which we are seeking, from which all other truth derives, by the light of which all other truth finds its right place, explanation and relation to the scheme of knowledge. But precisely for that reason it cannot be shut up in a single trenchant formula, it is not likely to be found in its entirety or in all its bearings in any single philosophy or scripture or uttered altogether and for ever by any one teacher, thinker, prophet or Avatar….

I hold it therefore of small importance to extract from the Gita its exact metaphysical connotation as it was understood by the men of the time, – even if that were accurately possible. That it is not possible, is shown by the divergence of the original commentaries which have been and are still being written upon it; for they all agree in each disagreeing with all the others, each finds in the Gita its own system of metaphysics and trend of religious thought. Nor will even the most painstaking and disinterested scholarship and the most luminous theories of the historical development of Indian philosophy save us from inevitable error. But what we can do with profit is to seek in the Gita for the actual living truths it contains, apart from their metaphysical form, to extract from it what can help us or the world at large and to put it in the most natural and vital form and expression we can find that will be suitable to the mentality and helpful to the spiritual needs of our present-day humanity."[1]

"In the Gita there is very little that is merely local or temporal and its spirit is so large, profound and universal that even this little can easily be universalised without the sense

of the teaching suffering any diminution or violation; rather by giving an ampler scope to it than belonged to the country and epoch, the teaching gains in depth, truth and power. Often indeed the Gita itself suggests the wider scope that can in this way be given to an idea in itself local or limited. Thus it dwells on the ancient Indian system and idea of sacrifice as an interchange between gods and men, – a system and idea which have long been practically obsolete in India itself and are no longer real to the general human mind; but we find here a sense so entirely subtle, figurative and symbolic given to the word "sacrifice" and the conception of the gods is so little local or mythological, so entirely cosmic and philosophical that we can easily accept both as expressive of a practical fact of psychology and general law of Nature and so apply them to the modern conceptions of interchange between life and life and of ethical sacrifice and self-giving as to widen and deepen these and cast over them a more spiritual aspect and the light of a profounder and more far-reaching Truth. Equally the idea of action according to the Shastra, the fourfold order of society, the allusion to the relative position of the four orders or the comparative spiritual disabilities of Shudras and women seem at first sight local and temporal, and, if they are too much pressed in their literal sense, narrow so much at least of the teaching, deprive it of its universality and spiritual depth and limit its validity for mankind at large. But if we look behind to the spirit and sense and not at the local name and temporal institution, we see that here too the sense is deep and true and the spirit philosophical, spiritual and universal. By Shastra we perceive that the Gita means the law imposed on itself by humanity as a substitute for the purely egoistic action of the natural unregenerate man and a control

on his tendency to seek in the satisfaction of his desire the standard and aim of his life. We see too that the fourfold order of society is merely the concrete form of a spiritual truth which is itself independent of the form; it rests on the conception of right works as a rightly ordered expression of the nature of the individual being through whom the work is done, that nature assigning him his line and scope in life according to his inborn quality and his self-expressive function. Since this is the spirit in which the Gita advances its most local and particular instances, we are justified in pursuing always the same principle and looking always for the deeper general truth which is sure to underlie whatever seems at first sight merely local and of the time. For we shall find always that the deeper truth and principle is implied in the grain of the thought even when it is not expressly stated in its language."[2]

"The philosophical system of the Gita, its arrangement of truth, is not that part of its teaching which is the most vital, profound, eternally durable; but most of the material of which the system is composed, the principal ideas suggestive and penetrating which are woven into its complex harmony, are eternally valuable and valid; for they are not merely the luminous ideas or striking speculations of a philosophic intellect, but rather enduring truths of spiritual experience, verifiable facts of our highest psychological possibilities which no attempt to read deeply the mystery of existence can afford to neglect. Whatever the system may be, it is not, as the commentators strive to make it, framed or intended to support any exclusive school of philosophical thought or to put forward predominantly the claims of any one form of Yoga. The language of the Gita, the structure of thought, the combination and balancing of ideas belong

neither to the temper of a sectarian teacher nor to the spirit of a rigorous analytical dialectics cutting off one angle of the truth to exclude all the others; but rather there is a wide, undulating, encircling movement of ideas which is the manifestation of a vast synthetic mind and a rich synthetic experience. This is one of those great syntheses in which Indian spirituality has been as rich as in its creation of the more intensive, exclusive movements of knowledge and religious realisation that follow out with an absolute concentration one clue, one path to its extreme issues. It does not cleave asunder, but reconciles and unifies.

The thought of the Gita is not pure Monism although it sees in one unchanging, pure, eternal Self the foundation of all cosmic existence, nor Mayavada although it speaks of the Maya of the three modes of Prakriti omnipresent in the created world; nor is it qualified Monism although it places in the One his eternal supreme Prakriti manifested in the form of the Jiva and lays most stress on dwelling in God rather than dissolution as the supreme state of spiritual consciousness; nor is it Sankhya although it explains the created world by the double principle of Purusha and Prakriti; nor is it Vaishnava Theism although it presents to us Krishna, who is the Avatara of Vishnu according to the Puranas, as the supreme Deity and allows no essential difference nor any actual superiority of the status of the indefinable relationless Brahman over that of this Lord of beings who is the Master of the universe and the Friend of all creatures. Like the earlier spiritual synthesis of the Upanishads this later synthesis at once spiritual and intellectual avoids naturally every such rigid determination as would injure its universal comprehensiveness. Its aim is precisely the opposite to that of the polemist

commentators who found this Scripture established as one of the three highest Vedantic authorities and attempted to turn it into a weapon of offence and defence against other schools and systems. The Gita is not a weapon for dialectical warfare; it is a gate opening on the whole world of spiritual truth and experience and the view it gives us embraces all the provinces of that supreme region. It maps out, but it does not cut up or build walls or hedges to confine our vision."[3]

"We of the coming day stand at the head of a new age of development which must lead to such a new and larger synthesis. We are not called upon to be orthodox Vedantins of any of the three schools or Tantrics or to adhere to one of the theistic religions of the past or to entrench ourselves within the four corners of the teaching of the Gita. That would be to limit ourselves and to attempt to create our spiritual life out of the being, knowledge and nature of others, of the men of the past, instead of building it out of our own being and potentialities. We do not belong to the past dawns, but to the noons of the future."[4]

"What then is the message of the Gita and what its working value, its spiritual utility to the human mind of the present day after the long ages that have elapsed since it was written and the great subsequent transformations of thought and experience? The human mind moves always forward, alters its viewpoint and enlarges its thought substance, and the effect of these changes is to render past systems of thinking obsolete or, when they are preserved, to extend, to modify and subtly or visibly to alter their value. The vitality of an ancient doctrine consists in the extent to which it naturally lends itself to such a treatment; for that means that whatever may have been the limitations or the obsolescences of the form of its thought,

the truth of substance, the truth of living vision and experience on which its system was built is still sound and retains a permanent validity and significance. The Gita is a book that has worn extraordinarily well and it is almost as fresh and still in its real substance quite as new, because always renewable in experience, as when it first appeared in or was written into the frame of the Mahabharata. It is still received in India as one of the great bodies of doctrine that most authoritatively govern religious thinking and its teaching acknowledged as of the highest value if not wholly accepted by almost all shades of religious belief and opinion. Its influence is not merely philosophic or academic but immediate and living, an influence both for thought and action, and its ideas are actually at work as a powerful shaping factor in the revival and renewal of a nation and a culture. It has even been said recently by a great voice that all we need of spiritual truth for the spiritual life is to be found in the Gita. It would be to encourage the superstition of the book to take too literally that utterance. The truth of the spirit is infinite and cannot be circumscribed in that manner. Still it may be said that most of the main clues are there and that after all the later developments of spiritual experience and discovery we can still return to it for a large inspiration and guidance."[5]

"Our object, then, in studying the Gita will not be a scholastic or academical scrutiny of its thought, nor to place its philosophy in the history of metaphysical speculation, nor shall we deal with it in the manner of the analytical dialectician. We approach it for help and light and our aim must be to distinguish its essential and living message, that in it on which humanity has to seize for its perfection and its highest spiritual welfare."[6]

The Core of the Teaching

"A clear conception fastening upon the essential idea, the central heart of the teaching is especially necessary here because the Gita with its rich and many-sided thought, its synthetical grasp of different aspects of the spiritual life and the fluent winding motion of its argument lends itself, even more than other scriptures, to one-sided misrepresentations born of a partisan intellectuality….

Thus, there are those who make the Gita teach, not works at all, but a discipline of preparation for renouncing life and works: the indifferent performance of prescribed actions or of whatever task may lie ready to the hands, becomes the means, the discipline; the final renunciation of life and works is the sole real object. It is quite easy to justify this view by citations from the book and by a certain arrangement of stress in following out its argument, especially if we shut our eyes to the peculiar way in which it uses such a word as *sannyasa*, renunciation; but it is quite impossible to persist in this view on an impartial reading in face of the continual assertion to the very end that action should be preferred to inaction and that superiority lies with the true, the inner renunciation of desire by equality and the giving up of works to the supreme Purusha.

Others again speak of the Gita as if the doctrine of devotion were its whole teaching and put in the background its monistic elements and the high place it gives to quietistic immergence in the one self of all. And undoubtedly its emphasis on devotion, its insistence on the aspect of the Divine as Lord and Purusha and its doctrine of the Purushottama,

the Supreme Being who is superior both to the mutable Being and to the Immutable and who is what in His relation to the world we know as God, are the most striking and among the most vital elements of the Gita. Still, this Lord is the Self in whom all knowledge culminates and the Master of sacrifice to whom all works lead as well as the Lord of Love into whose being the heart of devotion enters, and the Gita preserves a perfectly equal balance, emphasising now knowledge, now works, now devotion, but for the purposes of the immediate trend of the thought, not with any absolute separate preference of one over the others. He in whom all three meet and become one, He is the Supreme Being, the Purushottama.

But at the present day, since in fact the modern mind began to recognise and deal at all with the Gita, the tendency is to subordinate its elements of knowledge and devotion, to take advantage of its continual insistence on action and to find in it a scripture of the Karmayoga, a Light leading us on the path of action, a Gospel of Works. Undoubtedly, the Gita is a Gospel of Works, but of works which culminate in knowledge, that is, in spiritual realisation and quietude, and of works motived by devotion, that is, a conscious surrender of one's whole self first into the hands and then into the being of the Supreme, and not at all of works as they are understood by the modern mind, not at all an action dictated by egoistic and altruistic, by personal, social, humanitarian motives, principles, ideals. Yet this is what present-day interpretations seek to make of the Gita. We are told continually by many authoritative voices that the Gita, opposing in this the ordinary ascetic and quietistic tendency of Indian thought and spirituality, proclaims with no uncertain sound the gospel of

human action, the ideal of disinterested performance of social duties, nay, even, it would seem, the quite modern ideal of social service. To all this I can only reply that very patently and even on the very surface of it the Gita does nothing of the kind and that this is a modern misreading, a reading of the modern mind into an ancient book, of the present-day European or Europeanised intellect into a thoroughly antique, a thoroughly Oriental and Indian teaching. That which the Gita teaches is not a human, but a divine action; not the performance of social duties, but the abandonment of all other standards of duty or conduct for a selfless performance of the divine will working through our nature; not social service, but the action of the Best, the God-possessed, the Master-men done impersonally for the sake of the world and as a sacrifice to Him who stands behind man and Nature. In other words, the Gita is not a book of practical ethics, but of the spiritual life."[7]

"Therefore it is a mistake to interpret the Gita from the standpoint of the mentality of today and force it to teach us the disinterested performance of duty as the highest and all-sufficient law. A little consideration of the situation with which the Gita deals will show us that this could not be its meaning. For the whole point of the teaching, that from which it arises, that which compels the disciple to seek the Teacher, is an inextricable clash of the various related conceptions of duty ending in the collapse of the whole useful intellectual and moral edifice erected by the human mind. In human life some sort of a clash arises fairly often, as for instance between domestic duties and the call of the country or the cause, or between the claim of the country and the good of humanity

or some larger religious or moral principle. An inner situation may even arise, as with the Buddha, in which all duties have to be abandoned, trampled on, flung aside in order to follow the call of the Divine within. I cannot think that the Gita would solve such an inner situation by sending Buddha back to his wife and father and the government of the Sakya State, or would direct a Ramakrishna to become a Pundit in a vernacular school and disinterestedly teach little boys their lessons, or bind down a Vivekananda to support his family and for that to follow dispassionately the law or medicine or journalism. The Gita does not teach the disinterested performance of duties but the following of the divine life, the abandonment of all dharmas, *sarvadharmān*, to take refuge in the Supreme alone, and the divine activity of a Buddha, a Ramakrishna, a Vivekananda is perfectly in consonance with this teaching. Nay, although the Gita prefers action to inaction, it does not rule out the renunciation of works, but accepts it as one of the ways to the Divine. If that can only be attained by renouncing works and life and all duties and the call is strong within us, then into the bonfire they must go, and there is no help for it. The call of God is imperative and cannot be weighed against any other considerations."[8]

"The Gita can only be understood, like any other great work of the kind, by studying it in its entirety and as a developing argument. But the modern interpreters, starting from the great writer Bankim Chandra Chatterji who first gave to the Gita this new sense of a Gospel of Duty, have laid an almost exclusive stress on the first three or four chapters and in those on the idea of equality, on the expression *kartavyam karma*, the work that is to be done, which they render by duty, and on the phrase "Thou hast a right to action, but none to

the fruits of action" which is now popularly quoted as the great word, *mahavakya*, of the Gita. The rest of the eighteen chapters with their high philosophy are given a secondary importance, except indeed the great vision in the eleventh. This is natural enough for the modern mind which is, or has been till yesterday, inclined to be impatient of metaphysical subtleties and far-off spiritual seekings, eager to get to work and, like Arjuna himself, mainly concerned for a workable law of works, a *dharma*. But it is the wrong way to handle this Scripture.

The equality which the Gita preaches is not disinterestedness, – the great command to Arjuna given *after* the foundation and main structure of the teaching have been laid and built, "Arise, slay thy enemies, enjoy a prosperous kingdom," has not the ring of an uncompromising altruism or of a white, dispassionate abnegation; it is a state of inner poise and wideness which is the foundation of spiritual freedom. With that poise, in that freedom we have to do the "work that is to be done," a phrase which the Gita uses with the greatest wideness including in it all works, *sarvakarmani*, and which far exceeds, though it may include, social duties or ethical obligations. What is the work to be done is not to be determined by the individual choice; nor is the right to the action and the rejection of claim to the fruit the great word of the Gita, but only a preliminary word governing the first state of the disciple when he begins ascending the hill of Yoga. It is practically superseded at a subsequent stage. For the Gita goes on to affirm emphatically that the man is not the doer of the action; it is Prakriti, it is Nature, it is the great Force with its three modes of action that works through him, and he must learn to see that it is *not* he who does the work.

Therefore the "right to action" is an idea which is only valid so long as we are still under the illusion of being the doer; it must necessarily disappear from the mind like the claim to the fruit, as soon as we cease to be to our own consciousness the doer of our works. All pragmatic egoism, whether of the claim to fruits or of the right to action, is then at an end.

But the determinism of Prakriti is not the last word of the Gita. The equality of the will and the rejection of fruits are only means for entering with the mind and the heart and the understanding into the divine consciousness and living in it; and the Gita expressly says that they are to be employed as a means as long as the disciple is unable so to live or even to seek by practice the gradual development of this higher state. And what is this Divine, whom Krishna declares himself to be? It is the Purushottama beyond the Self that acts not, beyond the Prakriti that acts, foundation of the one, master of the other, the Lord of whom all is the manifestation, who even in our present subjection to Maya sits in the heart of His creatures governing the works of Prakriti, He by whom the armies on the field of Kurukshetra have already been slain while yet they live and who uses Arjuna only as an instrument or immediate occasion of this great slaughter. Prakriti is only His executive force. The disciple has to rise beyond this Force and its three modes or *gun. as*; he has to become *trigunatita*. Not to her has he to surrender his actions, over which he has no longer any claim or "right", but into the being of the Supreme. Reposing his mind and understanding, heart and will in Him, with self-knowledge, with God-knowledge, with world-knowledge, with a perfect equality, a perfect devotion, an absolute self-giving, he has to do works as an offering to the Master of all self-energisings and all sacrifice. Identified

in will, conscious with that consciousness, That shall decide and initiate the action. This is the solution which the Divine Teacher offers to the disciple.

What the great, the supreme word of the Gita is, its *mahavakya*, we have not to seek; for the Gita itself declares it in its last utterance, the crowning note of the great diapason. "With the Lord in thy heart take refuge with all thy being; by His grace thou shalt attain to the supreme peace and the eternal status. So have I expounded to thee a knowledge more secret than that which is hidden. Further hear the most secret, the supreme word that I shall speak to thee. Become my-minded, devoted to Me, to Me do sacrifice and adoration; infallibly, thou shalt come to Me, for dear to me art thou. Abandoning all laws of conduct seek refuge in Me alone. I will release thee from all sin; do not grieve."

The argument of the Gita resolves itself into three great steps by which action rises out of the human into the divine plane leaving the bondage of the lower for the liberty of a higher law. First, by the renunciation of desire and a perfect equality works have to be done as a sacrifice by man as the doer, a sacrifice to a deity who is the supreme and only Self though by him not yet realised in his own being. This is the initial step. Secondly, not only the desire of the fruit, but the claim to be the doer of works has to be renounced in the realisation of the Self as the equal, the inactive, the immutable principle and of all works as simply the operation of universal Force, of the Nature-Soul, Prakriti, the unequal, active, mutable power. Lastly, the supreme Self has to be seen as the supreme Purusha governing this Prakriti, of whom the soul in Nature is a partial manifestation, by whom all works are

directed, in a perfect transcendence, through Nature. To him love and adoration and the sacrifice of works have to be offered; the whole being has to be surrendered to Him and the whole consciousness raised up to dwell in this divine consciousness so that the human soul may share in His divine transcendence of Nature and of His works and act in a perfect spiritual liberty.

The first step is Karmayoga, the selfless sacrifice of works, and here the Gita's insistence is on action. The second is Jnanayoga, the self-realisation and knowledge of the true nature of the self and the world; and here the insistence is on knowledge; but the sacrifice of works continues and the path of Works becomes one with but does not disappear into the path of Knowledge. The last step is Bhaktiyoga, adoration and seeking of the supreme Self as the Divine Being, and here the insistence is on devotion; but the knowledge is not subordinated, only raised, vitalised and fulfilled, and still the sacrifice of works continues; the double path becomes the triune way of knowledge, works and devotion. And the fruit of the sacrifice, the one fruit still placed before the seeker, is attained, union with the divine Being and oneness with the supreme divine nature."[9]

The Dejection of Arjuna

"The peculiarity of the Gita among the great religious books of the world is that it does not stand apart as a work by itself, the fruit of the spiritual life of a creative personality like Christ, Mahomed or Buddha or of an epoch of pure spiritual searching like the Veda and Upanishads, but is given as an episode in an epic history of nations and their wars and men and their deeds and arises out of a critical moment in the soul of one of its leading personages face to face with the crowning action of his life, a work terrible, violent and sanguinary, at the point when he must either recoil from it altogether or carry it through to its inexorable completion. It matters little whether or no, as modern criticism supposes, the Gita is a later composition inserted into the mass of the Mahabharata by its author in order to invest its teaching with the authority and popularity of the great national epic. There seem to me to be strong grounds against this supposition for which, besides, the evidence, extrinsic or internal, is in the last degree scanty and insufficient. But even if it be sound, there remains the fact that the author has not only taken pains to interweave his work inextricably into the vast web of the larger poem, but is careful again and again to remind us of the situation from which the teaching has arisen; he returns to it prominently, not only at the end, but in the middle of his profoundest philosophical disquisitions. We must accept the insistence of the author and give its full importance to this recurrent preoccupation of the Teacher and the disciple. The teaching of the Gita must therefore be regarded not merely in the light of a general spiritual philosophy or ethical

doctrine, but as bearing upon a practical crisis[1] in the application of ethics and spirituality to human life."[10]

धृतराष्ट्र उवाच
धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे समवेता युयुत्सवः ।
मामकाः पाण्डवाश्चैव किमकुर्वत संजय ।। 1.1।।*

1. 1. Dhritarashtra said: Assembled on the plain of Kurukshetra, the field of evolving Dharma, and eager for battle, what did they do, O Sanjaya, my people and the Pandavas?"

अर्जुन उवाच
सेनयोरुभयोर्मध्ये रथं स्थापय मेऽच्युत ।। 1.21।।
यावदेतान्निरीक्षेऽहं योद्धुकामानवस्थितान् ।
कैर्मया सह योद्धव्यमस्मिन् रणसमुद्यमे ।। 1.22।।

[1] *There is a method of explaining the Gita in which not only this episode but the whole Mahabharata is turned into an allegory of the inner life and has nothing to do with our outward human life and action, but only with the battles of the soul and the powers that strive within us for possession. That is a view which the general character and the actual language of the epic do not justify and, if pressed, would turn the straightforward philosophical language of the Gita into a constant, laborious and somewhat puerile mystification. The language of the Veda and part at least of the Puranas is plainly symbolic, full of figures and concrete representations of things that lie behind the veil, but the Gita is written in plain terms and professes to solve the great ethical and spiritual difficulties which the life of man raises, and it will not do to go behind this plain language and thought and wrest them to the service of our fancy.*

* *These and the numbers in the margin indicate the chapter and the verse number of the Gita.*

1. 21-22. Arjuna said: O Achyuta (the faultless, the immovable), station my chariot between the two armies so that I may view all these standing here, desirous of battle, with whom I have to fight in this holiday of fight."

यो‌त्स्यमानानवेक्षेऽहं य एतेऽत्र समागताः ।
धार्तराष्ट्रस्य दुर्बुद्धेर्युद्धे प्रियचिकीर्षवः ।। 1.23।।

1. 23. I should have a look upon those who have come here and who would engage in fighting, to champion the cause of the evil-minded son of Dhritarashtra.

"It is typical... of the pragmatic man that it is through his sensations that he awakens to the meaning of his action. He has asked his friend and charioteer to place him between the two armies, not with any profounder idea, but with the proud intention of viewing and looking in the face these myriads of the champions of unrighteousness whom he has to meet and conquer and slay "in this holiday of fight" so that the right may prevail."[11]

तान्समीक्ष्य स कौन्तेयः सर्वान् बन्धूनवस्थितान् ।। 1.27।।
कृपया परयाविष्टो विषीदन्निदमब्रवीत् । 1.28।

1 . 27-28. On seeing all these kinsmen thus standing arrayed, the son of Kunti, overwhelmed with pity, spoke thus in sadness and dejection:

"It is as he gazes that the revelation of the meaning of a

civil and domestic war comes home to him, a war in which not only men of the same race, the same nation, the same clan, but those of the same family and household stand upon opposite sides. All whom the social man holds most dear and sacred, he must meet as enemies and slay, – the worshipped teacher and preceptor, the old friend, comrade and companion in arms, grandsires, uncles, those who stood in the relation to him of father, of son, of grandson, connections by blood and connections by marriage, – all these social ties have to be cut asunder by the sword."[12]

अर्जुन उवाच
दृष्ट्वेमं स्वजनं कृष्ण युयुत्सुं समुपस्थितम् ।। 1.28।।
सीदन्ति मम गात्राणि मुखं च परिशुष्यति ।
वेपथुश्च शरीरे मे रोमहर्षश्च जायते ।। 1.29।।

1. 28-29. Arjuna said: Seeing these my own people, O Krishna, thus eager for battle, my limbs fail and my mouth is parched, my body is quivering and my hair stands on end.

"It is not that he did not know these things before, but he has never realised it all; obsessed by his claims and wrongs and by the principles of his life, the struggle for the right, the duty of the Kshatriya to protect justice and the law and fight and beat down injustice and lawless violence, he has neither thought out deeply nor felt it in his heart and at the core of his life. And now it is shown to his vision by the divine charioteer, placed sensationally before his eyes, and comes home to him like a blow delivered at the very centre of his

sensational, vital and emotional being."[13]

न काङ्क्षे विजयं कृष्ण न च राज्यं सुखानि च ।
किं नो राज्येन गोविन्द किं भोगैर्जीवितेन वा ।। 1.32।।

1. 32. O Krishna, I desire not victory, nor kingdom, nor pleasures. What is kingdom to us, O Govinda, and what enjoyment, or even life?

"The first result is a violent sensational and physical crisis which produces a disgust of the action and its material objects and of life itself. He rejects the vital aim pursued by egoistic humanity in its action, – happiness and enjoyment; he rejects the vital aim of the Kshatriya, victory and rule and power and the government of men. What after all is this fight for justice when reduced to its practical terms, but just this, a fight for the interests of himself, his brothers and his party, for possession and enjoyment and rule? But at such a cost these things are not worth having."[14]

निहत्य धार्तराष्ट्रान्नः का प्रीतिः स्याज्जनार्दन ।
पापमेवाश्रयेदस्मान्हत्वैतानाततायिनः ।। 1.36।।

1. 36. What pleasure can be ours, O Janardana (Sri Krishna), on killing these sons of Dhritarashtra? Sin alone would take hold of us in our slaying these hostile aggressors.

"The whole thing is a dreadful sin, – for now the moral sense awakens to justify the revolt of the sensations and the

emotions. It is a sin, there is no right nor justice in mutual slaughter; especially are those who are to be slain the natural objects of reverence and of love, those without whom one would not care to live, and to violate these sacred feelings can be no virtue, can be nothing but a heinous crime."[15]

यद्यप्येते न पश्यन्ति लोभोपहतचेतसः ।
कुलक्षयकृतं दोषं मित्रद्रोहे च पातकम् ।। 1.38।।
कथं न ज्ञेयमस्माभिः पापादस्मान्निवर्तितुम् ।
कुलक्षयकृतं दोषं प्रपश्यद्भिर्जनार्दन ।। 1.39।।

1- 38-39. Even if these, with their consciousness clouded by greed, do not see any guilt in the destruction of the family and no crime in hostility to friends, why should not we have the wisdom to draw back from such a sin, we who see, O Janardana, the evil in the destruction of the family?

"We see in the teaching of the Gita how subtle a thing is the freedom from egoism which is demanded. Arjuna is driven to fight by the egoism of strength, the egoism of the Kshatriya; he is turned from the battle by the contrary egoism of weakness, the shrinking, the spirit of disgust, the false pity that overcomes the mind, the nervous being and the senses, – not that divine compassion which strengthens the arm and clarifies the knowledge. But this weakness comes garbed as renunciation, as virtue: "Better the life of the beggar than to taste these blood-stained enjoyments; I desire not the rule of all the earth, no, nor the kingdom of the gods." How foolish of the Teacher, we might say, not to confirm this mood, to

lose this sublime chance of adding one more great soul to the army of Sannyasins, one more shining example before the world of a holy renunciation. But the Guide sees otherwise, the Guide who is not to be deceived by words; "This is weakness and delusion and egoism that speak in thee. Behold the Self, open thy eyes to the knowledge, purify thy soul of egoism." And afterwards? "Fight, conquer, enjoy a wealthy kingdom." Or to take another example from ancient Indian tradition. It was egoism, it would seem, that drove Rama, the Avatara, to raise an army and destroy a nation in order to recover his wife from the King of Lanka. But would it have been a lesser egoism to drape himself in indifference and misusing the formal terms of the knowledge to say, "I have no wife, no enemy, no desire; these are illusions of the senses; let me cultivate the Brahman-knowledge and let Ravana do what he will with the daughter of Janaka"?

The criterion is within, as the Gita insists. It is to have the soul free from craving and attachment, but free from the attachment to inaction as well as from the egoistic impulse to action, free from attachment to the forms of virtue as well as from the attraction to sin. It is to be rid of "I-ness" and "my-ness" so as to live in the one Self and act in the one Self; to reject the egoism of refusing to work through the individual centre of the universal Being as well as the egoism of serving the individual mind and life and body to the exclusion of others. To live in the Self is not to dwell for oneself alone in the Infinite immersed and oblivious of all things in that ocean of impersonal self-delight; but it is to live as the Self and in the Self equal in this embodiment and all embodiments and beyond all embodiments. This is the integral knowledge."[16]

Kurukshetra

In this first chapter of the Gita, although Arjuna is himself concerned only with his own situation, "his inner struggle and the law of action he must follow, yet, as we have seen, the particular question he raises, in the manner in which he raises it does really bring up the whole question of human life and action, what the world is and why it is and how possibly, it being what it is, life here in the world can be reconciled with life in the Spirit. And all this deep and difficult matter the Teacher insists on resolving as the very foundation of his command to an action which must proceed from a new poise of being and by the light of a liberating knowledge.

But what, then, is it that makes the difficulty for the man who has to take the world as it is and act in it and yet would live, within, the spiritual life? What is this aspect of existence which appals his awakened mind and brings about what the title of the first chapter of the Gita calls significantly the Yoga of the dejection of Arjuna, the dejection and discouragement felt by the human being when he is forced to face the spectacle of the universe as it really is with the veil of the ethical illusion, the illusion of self-righteousness torn from his eyes, before a higher reconciliation with himself is effected?"[17]

"To man's righteousness this is his cosmic crime,
Almighty beyond good and evil to dwell
Leaving the good to their fate in a wicked world
And evil to reign in this enormous scene.
All opposition seems and strife and chance,
An aimless labour with but scanty sense,

To eyes that see a part and miss the whole..."[18]

"...if we accept at all, as the Gita accepts, the existence of God, that is to say, of the omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, yet always transcendent Being who manifests the world and Himself in the world, who is not the slave but the lord of His creative Consciousness, Nature or Force (Maya, Prakriti or Shakti), who is not baffled or thwarted in His world-conception or design by His creatures, man or devil, who does not need to justify Himself by shifting the responsibility for any part of His creation or manifestation on that which is created or manifested, then the human being has to start from a great, a difficult act of faith. Finding himself in a world which is apparently a chaos of battling powers, a clash of vast and obscure forces, a life which subsists only by constant change and death, menaced from every side by pain, suffering, evil and destruction, he has to see the omnipresent Deity in it all and conscious that of this enigma there must be a solution and beyond this Ignorance in which he dwells a Knowledge that reconciles, he has to take his stand upon this faith, "Though Thou slay me, yet will I trust in Thee." All human thought or faith that is active and affirmative, whether it be theistic, pantheistic or atheistic, does in fact involve more or less explicitly and completely such an attitude. It admits and it believes: admits the discords of the world, believes in some highest principle of God, universal Being or Nature which shall enable us to transcend, overcome or harmonise these discords, perhaps even to do all three at once, to harmonise by overcoming and transcending."[19]

"God is not only the Destroyer, but the Friend of creatures; not only the cosmic Trinity, but the Transcendent;

the terrible Kali is also the loving and beneficent Mother; the lord of Kurukshetra is the divine comrade and charioteer, the attracter of beings, incarnate Krishna. And whithersoever he is driving through all the strife and clash and confusion, to whatever goal or godhead he may be attracting us, it is — no doubt of that — to some transcendence of all these aspects... But where, how, with what kind of transcendence, under what conditions, this we have to discover; and to discover it, the first necessity is to see the world as it is, to observe and value rightly his action as it reveals itself at the start and now; afterwards the way and the goal will better reveal themselves. We must acknowledge Kurukshetra; we must submit to the law of Life by Death before we can find our way to the life immortal; we must open our eyes, with a less appalled gaze than Arjuna's, to the vision of our Lord of Time and Death and cease to deny, hate or recoil from the universal Destroyer.... It is only a few religions which have had the courage to say without any reserve, like the Indian, that this enigmatic World-Power is one Deity, one Trinity, to lift up the image of the Force that acts in the world in the figure not only of the beneficent Durga, but of the terrible Kali in her blood-stained dance of destruction and to say, "This too is the Mother; this also know to be God; this too, if thou hast the strength, adore." And it is significant that the religion which has had this unflinching honesty and tremendous courage, has succeeded in creating a profound and widespread spirituality such as no other can parallel. For truth is the foundation of real spirituality and courage is its soul."[20]

The Creed of the Aryan Fighter

The answer of the divine Teacher Sri Krishna to the first flood of Arjuna's self-questioning and dejection and refusal to fight is a strongly worded rebuke. He says, **Whence has come to thee this dejection in this hour of difficulty and peril, O Arjuna. It is not cherished by Aryan men; it leads neither to heaven nor to glory. Yield not to impotence, it is not worthy of thee. Shake off this paltry faintheartedness and arise, O Parantapa.**

"The answer of a hero to a hero, shall we say, but not that which we should expect from a divine Teacher from whom we demand rather that he shall encourage always gentleness and saintliness and self-abnegation and the recoil from worldly aims and cessation from the ways of the world?"[21] Are we in face of a mere gospel of war and heroic action? The divine Teacher himself in a later chapter (16.2) puts compassion to creatures, gentleness, freedom from wrath and harmlessness as endowments of one who is born with Daivic nature. It is not from any such standpoint that Arjuna merits rebuke. It is not compassion but pity by which Arjuna is invaded, *krpayavistam*, that merits this rebuke. "It is .. compassion in the Aryan fighter, the soul of his chivalry, which will not break the bruised reed, but helps and protects the weak and the oppressed and the wounded and the fallen. But it is also the divine compassion that smites down the strong tyrant and the confident oppressor, not in wrath and with hatred, – for these are not the high divine qualities, the wrath of God against the sinner, God's hatred of the wicked are the fables of half-enlightened creeds, as much a fable as the

eternal torture of the Hells they have invented, – but, as the old Indian spirituality clearly saw, with as much love and compassion for the strong Titan erring by his strength and slain for his sins as for the sufferer and the oppressed who have to be saved from his violence and injustice."[22]

But it is not this compassion but an impotence full of week self-pity, a recoil from the mental suffering which his act must entail. This pity, when for others, is also a form of self-indulgence; it is the physical shrinking of the nerves from the act of slaughter. "This pity is a weakness of the mind and senses, – a weakness which may well be beneficial to men of a lower grade of development, who have to be weak because otherwise they will be hard and cruel.... But this way is not for the developed Aryan man who has to grow not by weakness, but by an ascension from strength to strength. Arjuna is the divine man, the master-man in the making and as such he has been chosen by the gods. He has a work given to him, he has God beside him in his chariot, he has the heavenly bow Gandiva in his hand, he has the champions of unrighteousness, the opponents of the divine leading of the world in his front. Not his is the right to determine what he shall do or not do according to his emotions and his passions, or to shrink from a necessary destruction by the claim of his egoistic heart and reason, or to decline his work because it will bring sorrow and emptiness to his life or because its earthly result has no value to him in the absence of the thousands who must perish. All that is a weak falling from his higher nature. He has to see only the work that must be done, *kartavyam karma,* to hear only the divine command breathed through his warrior nature, to feel only for the world and the destiny of mankind calling to him as its God-sent man to assist its march and clear its

path of the dark armies that beset it."[23]

Arjuna in his reply to Sri Krishna admits the rebuke even while he strives against and refuses his command. He says, **Better in this world to live even on alms than to slay these (Bhisma and Drona) high-souled Gurus. For even by slaying these Gurus, I would be tasting only blood-stained enjoyments of wealth and desire in this world.** He admits, **It is poorness of spirit that has smitten away from me my (true heroic) nature, my whole consciousness is bewildered in its view of right and wrong, I ask thee what may be right and good – that tell me decisively. I am thy disciple and seek refuge in thee; enlighten me.** He is resolved that on the old basis of thought and motive he will not fight saying, "I will not fight", and awaits is silance the answer to his objections that seem to him unanswarable. **I see not what shall thrust from me the sorrow that dries up my senses, even if I should obtain a rich and unrivalled kingdom on earth or even the sovereignty of the gods.**

Sri Krishna's answer to the claims of Arjuna's egoistic being proceeds upon two different lines, first, a brief reply founded upon the highest ideas of the general Aryan culture in which Arjuna has been educated, secondly, another and larger founded on a more intimate knowledge, opening into deeper truths of our being, which is the real starting-point of the teaching of the Gita. In this section we shall be concerned only with the first answer which has been formed, "The creed of the Aryan fighter," by SriAurobindo. The first part of this answer which may be formed stoical spirituality – relies on the philosophic and moral conceptions of the vedantic philosophy. This is popularly mistaken by many as the

profoundest part of the Gita's teaching. The second part relies on the social idea of duty and honour which formed the ethical basis of Aryan society.

The Stoical Spirituality

The ethical and rational grounds that Arjuna has used to justify his refusal to fight are nothing but apparently rational words used merely to cloak the revolt of his ignorant and unchastened emotions. Sri Krishna smilingly points this out vividly in the following words.

श्रीभगवान् उवाच
अशोच्यानन्वशोचस्त्वं प्रज्ञावादांश्च भाषसे ।
गतासूनगतासूंश्च नानुशोचन्ति पण्डिताः ।। 2.11 ।।

2.11. The Blessed Lord said: Thou grievest for those who should not be grieved for and yet speakest wise-seeming words, but the enlightened man does not mourn either for the living or for the dead.

It is not true that at any time I was not, nor thou, nor these kings of men; nor is it true that any of us shall ever cease to be hereafter. As the embodied soul passes through childhood, youth and old age in the body, so too is its change over to another body. The calm and wise man is not deluded by this.... The man whom these things do not trouble or pain, O best of men, the firm and the wise who is equal in pleasure and sorrow, makes himself fit for immortality. That which really is, cannot go out of existence, just as that which is non-existent cannot come

into being. The end of this opposition of 'is' and 'is not' has been perceived by the seers of essential truths. Know that to be imperishable by whom all this is pervaded. No one can bring about the destruction of this imperishable One. These bodies of the embodied One, who is eternal, indestructible and illimitable, are known to have an end. Therefore, fight, O Bharata. He who regards this as a slayer, and he who thinks that it is slain, both of them fail to perceive the truth. It does not slay, nor is it slain. This is not born, nor does it die, nor is it a thing that comes into being once and passing away will never come into being again. It is unborn, ancient, sempiternal; it is not slain with the slaying of the body. One who knows it as unborn, immutable, eternal and imperishable, how can, O Partha, such a man slay or cause to be slain? The embodied soul casts away old and takes up new bodies as a man changes worn-out raiment for new. Weapons cannot cleave it, nor the fire burn, nor do the waters drench it, nor the wind dry. It is uncleavable, it is incombustible, it can neither be drenched nor dried. Eternally stable, immobile, all-pervading, it is for ever and for ever.... Beings are unmanifest in the beginning, manifest in the middle, unmanifest again in disintegration, O Bharata. What is there to be grieved at?

"This high and great knowledge, this strenuous self-discipline of the mind and soul by which it is to rise beyond the clamour of the emotions and the cheat of the senses to true self-knowledge, may well free us from grief and delusion;... it may well teach us to look undisturbed upon the most terrible assaults of life and upon the death of the body as a trifle;... But how does it justify the action demanded of

Arjuna and the slaughter of Kurukshetra?"[24]

Or in other words, all this means that are should rise above one's ignorant reactions to life and death but where in all this, is the justification for fighting and killing of others? "The answer is that this is the action required of Arjuna in the path he has to travel; it has come inevitably in the performance of the function demanded of him by his *svadharma*, his social duty, the law of his life and the law of his being."[25]

The Heroic Appeal – The Svadharma of the Kshartiya

After suiccintly stating precpts of stoical spirituality with which he must have been familiar, the Teacher turns to ogive another answer to Arjuna's cry. "What is the true object of the Kshatriya's life and his true happiness? Not self-pleasing and domestic happiness and a life of comfort and peaceful joy with friends and relatives, but to battle for the right is his true object of life and to find a cause for which he can lay down his life or by victory win the crown and glory of the hero's existence is his greatest happiness."[26] **Happy are the Kshatriyas, O Partha, when such a battle comes to them of itself like the open gate of heaven. But if thou dost not fight this battle for the right, then hast thou abandoned thy Swadharma and thy glory, and sin shall be thy portion. Besides, men will recount thy perpetual dishonour, and to one in noble station, dishonour is worse than death. The mighty warriors will think thee fled from the battle through fear, and thou shall be belittled in the eyes of those who once highly esteemed thee. Many unseemly words will be spoken by thy enemies, slandering thy**

strength; what is worse grief than that? Slain thou shalt attain heaven, victorious thou shalt enjoy the earth; therefore, arise, O son of Kunti, resolved upon battle.

"This heroic appeal may seem to be on a lower level than the stoical spirituality which precedes and the deeper spirituality which follows; for in the next verse the Teacher bids him to make grief and happiness, loss and gain, victory and defeat equal to his soul and then turn to the battle, – the real teaching of the Gita."[27]

सुखदुःखे समे कृत्वा लाभालाभौ जयाजयौ ।
ततो युद्धाय युज्यस्व नैवं पापमवाप्स्यसि ।। 2.38 ।।

2.38. Make grief and happiness, loss and gain, victory and defeat equal to thy soul and then turn to battle; so thou shalt not incur sin.

The Creed of the Aryan Fighter

"It is the creed of the Aryan fighter. "Know God," it says, "know thyself, help man; protect the Right, do without fear or weakness or faltering thy work of battle in the world. Thou art the eternal and imperishable Spirit, thy soul is here on its upward path to immortality; life and death are nothing, sorrow and wounds and suffering are nothing, for these things have to be conquered and overcome. Look not at thy own pleasure and gain and profit, but above and around, above at the shining summits to which thou climbest, around at this world of battle and trial in which good and evil, progress and retrogression are locked in stern conflict. Men call to thee,

their strong man, their hero for help; help then, fight. Destroy when by destruction the world must advance but hate not that which thou destroyest, neither grieve for all those who perish. Know everywhere the one self, know all to be immortal souls and the body to be but dust. Do thy work with a calm, strong and equal spirit; fight and fall nobly or conquer mightily. For this is the work that God and thy nature have given to thee to accomplish."[28]

Thus Arjuna has been answered according to the highest knowledge and ethical ideals to which his race and age had attained. The higher knowledge of self and the world and the ethical standard of Kshatriya order point in the same direction. That Arjuna is still not satisfied – is not intended to be satisfied – with all this is plain to the divine Teacher who now turns away from this summary answer to present before him – to make vividly living to him – a spiritual solution to the problem which will be independent of all mental ideals, ethics and philosophy which appear like a translucent screen between the human mind and the spirit..

Sankhya and Yoga in the Gita

"In the moment of his turning from this first and summary answer to Arjuna's difficulties and in the very first words which strike the keynote of a spiritual solution, the Teacher makes at once a distinction which is of the utmost importance for the understanding of the Gita, – the distinction of Sankhya and Yoga."[29]

एषा तेऽभिहिता सांख्ये बुद्धिर्योगे त्विमां शृणु ।
बुद्ध्या युक्तो यया पार्थ कर्मबन्धं प्रहास्यसि ।। 2.39 ।।

2.39. Such is the intelligence (the intelligent knowledge of things and will) declared to thee in the Sankhya, hear now this in the Yoga, for if thou art in the Yoga by this intelligence, O son of Pritha, thou shalt cast away the bondage of works.

"The whole object of the first six chapters of the Gita is to synthetise in a large frame of Vedantic truth the two methods, ordinarily supposed to be diverse and even opposite, of the Sankhyas and the Yogins. The Sankhya is taken as the starting-point and the basis; but it is from the beginning and with a progressively increasing emphasis permeated with the ideas and methods of Yoga and remoulded in its spirit. The practical difference, as it seems to have presented itself to the religious minds of that day, lay first in this that Sankhya proceeded by knowledge and through the Yoga of the intelligence, while Yoga proceeded by works and the transformation of the active consciousness and, secondly, –

a corollary of this first distinction, – that Sankhya led to entire passivity and the renunciation of works, *sannyDsa*, while Yoga held to be quite sufficient the inner renunciation of desire, the purification of the subjective principle which leads to action and the turning of works Godwards, towards the divine existence and towards liberation. Yet both had the same aim, the transcendence of birth and of this terrestrial existence and the union of the human soul with the Highest. This at least is the difference as it is presented to us by the Gita.

The Gita is in its foundation a Vedantic work; it is one of the three recognised authorities for the Vedantic teaching... But still its Vedantic ideas are throughout and thoroughly coloured by the ideas of the Sankhya and the Yoga way of thinking and it derives from this colouring the peculiar synthetic character of its philosophy....

What, then, are the Sankhya and Yoga of which the Gita speaks? They are certainly not the systems which have come down to us under these names as enunciated respectively in the Sankhya Karika of Ishwara Krishna and the Yoga aphorisms of Patanjali. This Sankhya is not the system of the Karikas, — at least as that is generally understood; for the Gita nowhere for a moment admits the multiplicity of Purushas as a primal truth of being and it affirms emphatically what the traditional Sankhya strenuously denies, the One as Self and Purusha, that One again as the Lord, Ishwara or Purushottama, and Ishwara as the cause of the universe. The traditional Sankhya is, to use our modern distinctions, atheistic; the Sankhya of the Gita admits and subtly reconciles the theistic, pantheistic and monistic views of the universe.

Nor is this Yoga the Yoga system of Patanjali; for that is

a purely subjective method of Rajayoga, an internal discipline, limited, rigidly cut out, severely and scientifically graded, by which the mind is progressively stilled and taken up into Samadhi so that we may gain the temporal and eternal results of this self-exceeding, the temporal in a great expansion of the soul's knowledge and powers, the eternal in the divine union. But the Yoga of the Gita is a large, flexible and many-sided system with various elements, which are all successfully harmonised by a sort of natural and living assimilation, and of these elements Rajayoga is only one and not the most important and vital.... Accordingly, its idea of Samadhi is quite different from the ordinary notion of the Yogic trance; and while Patanjali gives to works only an initial importance for moral purification and religious concentration, the Gita goes so far as to make works the distinctive characteristic of Yoga....

This much has to be said in order to avoid any confusion of thought that might be created by the use of familiar words in a connotation wider than the technical sense now familiar to us. Still, all that is essential in the Sankhya and Yoga systems, all in them that is large, catholic and universally true, is admitted by the Gita, even though it does not limit itself by them like the opposing schools. Its Sankhya is the catholic and Vedantic Sankhya such as we find it in its first principles and elements in the great Vedantic synthesis of the Upanishads and in the later developments of the Puranas. Its idea of Yoga is that large idea of a principally subjective practice and inner change, necessary for the finding of the Self or the union with God, of which the Rajayoga is only one special application...."[30]

The First Words of the Gita's Yoga

The Gita's first words on the great initial fruits and the nature of the path of yoga are greatly answering to all the perspective seekers of yoga.

नेहाभिक्रमनाशोऽस्ति प्रत्यवायो न विद्यते ।
स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात् ।। 2.40 ।।

2.40. On this path no effort is lost, nor is there any retrogression, even a little of this Dharma delivers from the great fear.

What is the great fear that besieges humanity? The fear of sin and sufering here in this world or in other worlds and its fear of the world and its Creator where true nature is beyond its understanding. As is clear from his utterences, Arjuna himself – the chief hero – is afraid of many things, afraid of suffering, afraid of sin and its result hell and punishment, afraid of the hearafter, afraid of himself and God. What is there that he is not afraid of? To all such the Lord says, "My Yoga will deliver you from the great fear and even a little of it will bring deliverance. When you have once set out on this path, you will find that no step is lost; every least movement will be a gain; you will find there no obstacle that can baulk you of your advance. A bold and absolute promise and one to which the fearful and hesitating mind beset and stumbling in all its paths cannot easily lend an assured trust; nor is the large and full truth of it apparent unless with these first words of the message of the Gita we read also the last, 'Abandon all laws

of conduct and take refuge in Me alone; I will deliver you from all sin and evil; do not grieve.'

But it is not with this deep and moving word of God to man, but rather with the first necessary rays of light on the path, directed not like that to the soul, but to the intellect, that the exposition begins. Not the Friend and Lover of man speaks first, but the Guide and Teacher who has to remove from him his ignorance of his true self and of the nature of the world and of the springs of his own action."[31]

If one could have faith in this bold and absolute promise of the Master of Yoga, one would be relieved of all fear and worry. But for this, as the Gita says, This yoga must be continually applied with a heart free from despondent sinking.

"It is difficult to acquire or to practise this faith and steadfastness on the rough and narrow path of Yoga because of the impatience of both heart and mind and the eager but faltering will of our rajasic nature. The vital nature of man hungers always for the fruit of its labour and, if the fruit appears to be denied or long delayed, he loses faith in the ideal and in the guidance. For his mind judges always by the appearance of things, since that is the first ingrained habit of the intellectual reason in which he so inordinately trusts. Nothing is easier for us than to accuse God in our hearts when we suffer long or stumble in the darkness or to abjure the ideal that we have set before us. For we say, 'I have trusted to the Highest and I am betrayed into suffering and sin and error.' Or else, 'I have staked my whole life on an idea which the stern facts of experience contradict and discourage. It would have been better to be as other men are who accept their limitations and walk on the firm ground of normal

experience.' In such moments – and they are sometimes frequent and long – all the higher experience is forgotten and the heart concentrates itself in its own bitterness. It is in these dark passages that it is possible to fall for good or to turn back from the divine labour.

If one has walked long and steadily in the path, the faith of the heart will remain under the fiercest adverse pressure; even if it is concealed or apparently overborne, it will take the first opportunity to re-emerge. For something higher than either heart or intellect upholds it in spite of the worst stumblings and through the most prolonged failure. But even to the experienced Sadhaka such falterings or overcloudings bring a retardation of his progress and they are exceedingly dangerous to the novice. It is therefore necessary from the beginning to understand and accept the arduous difficulty of the path and to feel the need of a faith which to the intellect may seem blind, but yet is wiser than our reasoning intelligence. For this faith is a support from above; it is the brilliant shadow thrown by a secret light that exceeds the intellect and its data; it is the heart of a hidden knowledge that is not at the mercy of immediate appearances. Our faith, persevering, will be justified in its works and will be lifted and transfigured at last into the self-revelation of a divine knowledge. Always we must adhere to the injunction of the Gita, 'Yoga must be continually applied with a heart free from despondent sinking.' Always we must repeat to the doubting intellect the promise of the Master, 'I will surely deliver thee from all sin and evil; do not grieve.' At the end, the flickerings of faith will cease;"[32] but only at the end, because the questionings of the surface nature continue for a long time even after one has earnestly taken to the path.

Arjuna, voicing one of the most prominent forms of such questionings, asks Sri Krishna: **He who takes up Yoga with faith, but cannot control himself with the mind wandering away from Yoga, failing to attain perfection in Yoga, what is his end, O Krishna? Does he not, O mighty-armed, lose both this life and the Brahmic consciousness to which he aspires and falling from both perish like a dissolving cloud? Please dispel this doubt of mine completely, O Krishna; for there is none other than Thyself who can destroy this doubt.**

To this the divine Teacher replied: **O Partha, neither in this life nor hereafter is there destruction for him; never does anyone who practises good, O beloved, come to woe. Having attained to the worlds of the righteous and having dwelt there for immemorial years, he who has fallen from Yoga is again born in the house of the pure and glorious. Or he may be born in the family of wise Yogins; such a birth as this is rare indeed to obtain in this world. There, O joy of the Kurus, he recovers the Buddhic-disposition which he had formed in his previous life and with that he again endeavours for perfection. By virtue of the practice of the past, he is carried on irresistibly; even the seeker after the knowledge of Yoga goes beyond the range of the Vedas and Upanishads.**

The Yoga of the Intelligent Will

The Gita begins by distinguishing between two types of intelligence in the humen being. "The first is concentrated, poised, one, homogenous, directed singly towards the Truth; unity is its characteristic, concentrated fixity is its very being. In the other there is no single will, no unified intelligence, but only an endless number of ideas many-branching, coursing about, that is to say, in this or that direction in pursuit of the desires which are offered to it by life and by the environment."[33]

व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिरेकेह कुरुनन्दन ।
बहुशाखा ह्यनन्ताश्च बुद्धयोऽव्यवसायिनाम् ।। 2.41 ।।

2.41. The resolute intelligence is one-pointed, O joy of the Kurus, many branching and endless is the intelligence of the irresolute.

"Buddhi, the word used, means, properly speaking, the mental power of understanding but it is evidently used by the Gita in a large philosophic sense for the whole action of the discriminating and deciding mind which determines both the direction and use of our thoughts and the direction and use of our acts; thought, intelligence, judgement, perceptive choice and aim are all included in its functioning: for the characteristic of the unified intelligence is not only concentration of the mind that knows, but especially concentration of the mind that decides and persists in the decision, *vyavasāya,* while the sign of the dissipated intelligence is not so much even discursiveness of the ideas and

perceptions as discursiveness of the aims and desires, therefore of the will. Will, then, and knowledge are the two functions of the Buddhi."[34]

The rest of the Second Chapter, traditionaly termed "Sankhya-Yoga", is concerned with the application of the Intelligent Will to properly value the Scriptures, to institute desireless works, to arrive at stable intelligence and to attain a firm standing in the Brahman – *brahmi-sthiti* – by utterly controling the mind and the senses.

The Vedavada and the Letter of the Scriptures

The first words of the Gita leading to a synthesis of Sankhya and Yoga or knowledge and works by the power of the intelligent will are a strong censuse and repudiation of the Vedavada. "The Gita even seems to go on to attack the Veda itself which, though it has been practically cast aside, is still to Indian sentiment intangible, inviolable, the sacred origin and authority for all its philosophy and religion.... The Vedas in the widest terms, 'all the Vedas', – which might well include the Upanishads also and seems to include them, for the general term Shruti is used later on, — are declared to be unnecessary for the man who knows."[35]

This flowery word which they declare who have not clear discernment, devoted to the creed of the Veda, whose creed is that there is nothing else, souls of desire, seekers of Paradise, – it gives the fruits of the works of birth, it is multifarious with specialities of rites, it is directed to enjoyment and lordship as its goal. The intelligence of those who are misled by that (flowery word), and cling to enjoyment and lordship, is not

established in the self with concentrated fixity. The action of the three Gunas is the subject matter of the Veda; but do thou, O Arjuna, become free from the triple Guna, without the dualities, ever based in the true being, without getting or having, possessed of the Self. As much use as there is in a well with water in flood on every side, so much is there in all the Vedas for the Brahmin who has the knowledge.

"Nay, the Scriptures are even a stumbling-block; for the letter of the Word – perhaps because of its conflict of texts and its various and mutually dissentient interpretations – bewilders the understanding, which can only find certainty and concentration by the light within.... So offensive is all this to conventional religious sentiment that attempts are naturally made by the convenient and indispensable human faculty of text-twisting to put a different sense on some of these verses, but the meaning is plain and hangs together from beginning to end."[36]

"Let us see, however, what all this means; for we may be sure that a synthetic and catholic system like the Gita's will not treat such important parts of the Aryan culture in a spirit of mere negation and repudiation[2].... It is not surprising at all, one may observe in passing, that with the conflict of so many philosophical schools all founding themselves on the texts of the Veda and Upanishads, the Gita should describe

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[2] *The Gita in later chapters speaks highly of the Veda and the Upanishads. They are divine Scriptures, they are the Word. The Lord himself is the knower of Veda and the author of Vedanta,* Vedavid Vedāntkṛt; *the Lord is the one object of knowledge in all the Vedas,* sarvair vedair aham eva vedyaḥ, *a language which implies that the word Veda means the book of knowledge and that these Scriptures deserve their appellation.*

the understanding as being perplexed and confused, led in different directions by the Shruti, *śrutivipratipannā*. What battles are even now delivered by Indian pundits and metaphysicians over the meaning of the ancient texts and to what different conclusions they lead! The understanding may well get disgusted and indifferent, *gantāsi nirvedam,* refuse to hear anymore texts new or old, *śrotavyasya śrutasya ca*, and go into itself to discover the truth in the light of a deeper and inner and direct experience."[37]

The Institution of Desireless Works

"I have declared to you the poise of a self-liberating intelligence in Sankhya, says the divine Teacher to Arjuna. I will now declare to you another poise in Yoga. You are shrinking from the results of your works, you desire other results and turn from your right path in life because it does not lead you to them. But this idea of works and their result, desire of result as the motive, the work as a means for the satisfaction of desire, is the bondage of the ignorant who know not what works are, nor their true source, nor their real operation, nor their high utility. My Yoga will free you from all bondage of the soul to its works..."[38]

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ।। 2.47 ।।

2.47. Thou hast a right to action, but only to action, never to its fruits; let not the fruits of thy works be thy motive, neither let there be in thee any attachment to inactivity.

"The fruit belongs solely to the Lord of all works; our

only business with it is to prepare the success by a true and careful action and to offer it, if it comes, to the divine Master. Afterwards even as we have renounced attachment to the fruit, we must renounce attachment to the work; at any moment we must be prepared to change one work, one course or one field of action for another or abandon all works if that is the clear command of the Master. Otherwise we do the act not for his sake but for our satisfaction and pleasure in the work, from the kinetic nature's need of action or for the fulfilment of our propensities; but these are all stations and refuges of the ego.... In the end, as the attachment to the fruit of the work and to the work itself has been excised from the heart, so also the last clinging attachment to the idea and sense of ourselves as the doer has to be relinquished; the Divine Shakti must be known and felt above and within us as the true and sole worker."[39]

In the next three verses (2.48 to 2.50) the Gita describes how desireless action are done by those who have attained Yoga or union with the divine. **Fixed in Yoga do thy actions, having abandoned attachment, having become equal in failure and success, O Dhananjaya, for it is equality that is meant by Yoga. Works are far inferior to Yoga of the intelligence, O Dhananjaya; desire rather refuge in the intelligence; poor and wretched souls are they who are motivated by the fruit of their works. One whose intelligence has attained to Union, casts away from him even here (in this world of dualities) both good doing and evil doing; therefore strive to be in Yoga; Yoga is skill in works.**

"Yoga, says the Gita, is skill in works, and by this phrase the ancient Scripture meant that the transformation of mind

and being to which it gave the name of Yoga brought with it a perfect inner state and faculty out of which the right principle of action and the right spiritual and divine result of works emerged naturally like a tree out of its seed. Certainly, it did not mean that the clever general or politician or lawyer or shoemaker deserves the name of Yogin; it did not mean that any kind of skill in works was Yoga, but by Yoga it signified a spiritual condition of universal equality and God-union and by the skill of the Yogic worker it intended a perfect adaptation of the soul and its instruments to the rhythm of the divine and universal Prakriti liberated from the shackles of egoism and the limitations of the sense-mind."[40]

"...action done in Yoga is not only the highest but the wisest, the most potent and efficient even for the affairs of the world..."[41]

Sthitiprajna or the Man of Stable Intelligence

Since Yoga is skill in works, the question that must naturally arise in the mind of the disciple is, how one may attain to it. The divine teacher says, **When thy intelligence which is bewildered by the Sruti, shall stand unmoving and stable in Samadhi, then shalt thou attain to Yoga.** Arjuna, voicing the average human mind asks for some outward signs of this state of Samadhi. He said, **What is the sign of the man in Samadhi, the man of stable intelligence? How does, O Keshava, the sage of settled understanding speak, how sit, how walk?**

"No such signs can be given, nor does the Teacher attempt to supply them; for the only possible test of its possession is inward and that there are plenty of hostile

psychological forces to apply. Equality is the great stamp of the liberated soul and of that equality even the most discernible signs are still subjective."[42] The divine Teacher said, **When a man expels, O Partha, all desires from the mind, and is satisfied in the Self by the Self, then is he called stable in intelligence. He whose mind is undisturbed in the midst of sorrows, and amid pleasures is free from desire, from whom liking and wrath and fear have passed away, is the sage of settled understanding. Who in all things is without affection though visited by this good or that evil and neither hates nor rejoices, his intelligence is firm in its seat.**

"The sign of the man in Samadhi is not that he loses consciousness of objects and surroundings and of his mental and physical self and cannot be recalled to it even by burning or torture of the body, – the ordinary idea of the matter; trance is a particular intensity, not the essential sign. The test is the expulsion of all desires, their inability to get at the mind, and it is the inner state from which this freedom arises, the delight of the soul gathered within itself with the mind equal and still and high-poised above the attractions and repulsions, the alternations of sunshine and storm and stress of the external life. It is drawn inward even when acting outwardly; it is concentrated in self even when gazing out upon things; it is directed wholly to the Divine even when to the outward vision of others busy and preoccupied with the affairs of the world."[43]

The Control of Mind and Senses and the Attainment of Brahmi-Sthiti

When the intelligent will takes an upward and inward orientation – rather than a downward and outward towards a

discursive action of the perceptions and the will, – towards a settled peace and equality in the calm and purity of the soul, the subjective being is no longer at the mercy of the objects of sense and the intelligence is fixed in the calm self-knowledge of the Purusha.. The first necessity for this orientation of the intelligent will is to get rid of desire which is whole root of the evil and suffering. And to get rid of desire we must put and end to its cause – the rushing out of the senses to size and enjoy their objects. Therefore, the Gita says, **One who draws away the senses from the objects of sense, as the tortoise draws in his limbs into the shell, his intelligence is firm in its seat.** But it is not this external renunciation which will suffice or is recommended by the Gita. By abstention one gets rid of the physical contact with the object of sense, but does not get rid of the inner relation (affection *rasa*) which makes that contact hurtful. **The objects of sense cease to affect an abstemious dweller in the body, but the affection itself of the sense, the *rasa,* remains; the *rasa* also ceases when the Supreme is seen.**

The subjective cessation of the *rasa* is the only real sign of mastery because otherwise there is *nivṛtti*, cessation of the object, but no subjective cessation, no *nivṛtti* of the mind which can be attained only by union or oneness of the whole subjective being with the Soul, the Purusha satisfied in its own delight. This delight is free from dualities and can take the place of the sensuous pleasures and repulsions of the mind once we fix our mind and will on this Purusha. But to keep to this poise is not easy.

Even the mind of the wise man who labours for perfection is carried away by the vehement insistence of the senses, O son of Kunti. Having brought all the senses

under control, he must sit firm in Yoga, wholly given up to Me; for in him whose senses are mastered the intelligence is firmly established in its seat. The senses cannot be mastered by a mere mental self-discipline or the act of the intelligence on its own. "...it can only be done by Yoga with something which is higher than itself and in which calm and self-mastery are inherent. And this Yoga can only arrive at its success by devoting, by consecrating, by giving up the whole self to the Divine, "to Me", says Krishna; for the Liberator is within us, but it is not our mind, nor our intelligence, nor our personal will, — they are only instruments. It is the Lord in whom, as we are told in the end, we have utterly to take refuge. And for that we must at first make him the object of our whole being and keep in soul-contact with him. This is the sense of the phrase "he must sit firm in Yoga, wholly given up to Me"; but as yet it is the merest passing hint after the manner of the Gita, three words only which contain in seed the whole gist of the highest secret yet to be developed, *yukta āsīta matparaḥ.*"[44]

In him whose mind dwells on the objects of senses with absorbing interest, attachment to them is formed; from attachment arises desire; from desire anger comes forth. Anger leads to bewilderment, from bewilderment comes loss of memory; by loss of memory the intelligence is destroyed; and by the destruction of intelligence he perishes. But the self-disciplined being, moving among the objects of sense with the senses free from attraction and repulsion and under the control of the Self, attains to supreme felicity. In that felicity comes the cessation of all his miseries, and in the soul that has felicity the intelligence is rapidly established. For one who

is not in Yoga, there is no intelligence, no concentration of thought; for him without concentration there is no peace, and for the unpeaceful how can there be happiness? Of the roving senses whichever the mind takes after, that sense carries away the understanding, just as the winds carry away a ship upon the sea. Therefore, O mighty-armed, one who has utterly restrained the excitement of the senses by their objects, his intelligence sits firmly in its seat. What to all creatures is night, in that the self-mastering sage is awake; that in which all creatures wake, is night to the sage who sees.

"He regards the same facts, but from the higher outlook of the whole-knower, *kṛtsnavit*, while we view it altogether from the more limited mentality of our partial knowledge, *akṛtsnavidaḥ*, which is an ignorance. What we vaunt of as our freedom is to him bondage.... What we now call in our ordinary mentality our free will and have a certain limited justification for so calling it, yet appears to the Yogin who has climbed beyond and to whom our night is day and our day night, not free will at all, but a subjection to the modes of Nature."[45]

He attains peace, into whom all desires enter as waters into the sea which is ever being filled, yet ever motionless, not he who longs for desires. He who abandons all desires and lives and acts free from longing, free from the sense of "I" or "mine", attains to peace. This is the *brahmi-sthithi* (firm standing in the Brahman), O Partha. Having attained thereto one is bewildered no more and, fixed in that status even at the end, one attains to extinction (Nirvana) in the Brahman.

The Synthesis of Knowledge and Works

"The Yoga of the intelligent will and its culmination in the Brahmic status, which occupies all the close of the second chapter, contains the seed of much of the teaching of the Gita, – its doctrine of desireless works, of equality, of the rejection of outward renunciation, of devotion to the Divine; but as yet all this is slight and obscure. What is most strongly 3.1
emphasised as yet is the withdrawal of the will from the ordinary motive of human activities, desire, from man's normal temperament of the sense-seeking thought and will 3.2
with its passions and ignorance, and from its customary habit of troubled many-branching ideas and wishes to the desireless calm unity and passionless serenity of the Brahmic poise. So much Arjuna has understood. He is not unfamiliar with all this; it is the substance of the current teaching which points man to the path of knowledge and to the renunciation of life 3.3
and works as his way of perfection. The intelligence withdrawing from sense and desire and human action and turning to the Highest, to the One, to the actionless Purusha, to the immobile, to the featureless Brahman, that surely is the 3.4
eternal seed of knowledge. There is no room here for works, since works belong to the Ignorance; action is the very opposite of knowledge; its seed is desire and its fruit is bondage. That is the orthodox philosophical doctrine, and Krishna seems quite to admit it when he says that works are far inferior to the Yoga of the intelligence. And yet works are insisted upon as part of the Yoga; so that there seems to be in this teaching a radical inconsistency. Not only so; for some kind of work no doubt may persist for a while, the minimum, the most inoffensive; but here is a work wholly inconsistent with

knowledge, with serenity and with the motionless peace of the self-delighted soul, – a work terrible, even monstrous, a bloody strife, a ruthless battle, a giant massacre. Yet it is this that is enjoined, this that it is sought to justify by the teaching of inner peace and desireless equality and status in the Brahman! Here then is an unreconciled contradiction."[46]

Arjuna complains that, **If thou holdest the intelligence to be greater than works, O Janardana, why then dost thou, O Keshava, appoint me to this terrible work? Thou bewilderest my intelligence with a mixed and tangled speech; tell me decisively the one thing by which I may attain to the supreme good.** It is in answer to this objection of Arjuna that the Gita begins at once to develop its positive and imperative doctrine of works and its reconciliation with the path of knowledge of the Sankhyas.

The Blessed Lord said: Twofold is the abiding faith and discipline in this world, as declared by Me before, O sinless one: that of the Sankhyas by the Yoga of knowledge and that of the Yogins by the Yoga of works. Not by abstention from works does a man enjoy *naiṣkarmya* (actionlessness), nor by mere renunciation (of works) does he attain to his perfection.

Traditonal Sankhya Yoga, the Yoga of knowledge, insisted on the renunciation of works which it considered an obstacle to salvation while Yoga, the Yoga of works accepted them as a means of salvation. After making a distinction between the two paths, the Teacher says that a man cannot enjoy *naiṣkarmya* by abstention from works. It is not the cessation of the work of prakriti that is meant by *naiṣkarmya*. Rather it is the purusha's poise of a calm voidness from works which are done only by

the Prakriti and which it watches from above but is not affected by them. By mere renunciation of works one cannot attain perfection. Thus renunciation (of works) is neither a necessary nor a sufficient means of perfection. In the next verse the Teacher goes even further and says that a complete renunciation of works, far from being indispensable, is not even possible. **For none stands even for a moment not doing work; everyone is made to do action helplessly by the modes born of Prakriti.** 3.5

"Man embodied in the natural world cannot cease from action, not for a moment, not for a second; his very existence here is an action; the whole universe is an act of God, mere living even is His movement.... For it is not our physical movements and activities alone which are meant by works, by *karma*; our mental existence also is a great complex action, it is even the greater and more important part of the works of the unresting energy, – subjective cause and determinant of the physical. We have gained nothing if we repress the effect but retain the activity of the subjective cause. The objects of sense are only an occasion for our bondage, the mind's insistence on them is the means, the instrumental cause."[47]

He who controls the organs of action, but continues in his mind to remember and dwell upon the objects of sense, is a deluded[3] soul, and his method of self-discipline 3.6

[3] *"I cannot think that* mithyā*c*ā*r*a *means a hypocrite. How is a man a hypocrite who inflicts on himself so severe and complete a privation? He is mistaken and deluded,* vimūḍhātmā*, and his* ā*c*ā*r*a*, his formally regulated method of self-discipline, is a false and vain method, – this surely is all that the* 3.6

is said to be false and vain. He who controls the senses by the mind, O Arjuna, and without attachment engages with the organs of action in Yoga of action, he excels.

It is not inaction but the control of senses and elimination of all attachment that is necessary. Action may continue, even the most stupendous action may be undertaken and still the soul may enjoy the Gita's *naiṣkarmya*. On the other hand a man who controls his organs of action and refuges to allow them their natural play would have gained nothing if his mind continues to remember and dwell upon the objects of sense in his mind. Such a man has only deluded himself with false notions of self-discip;ine. Therefore it is not complete inaction – which anyway is an impossibility – but action full and free done without subjection to sense and desire is the first secret of perfection. In the following verses in chapters 3, 4 and 5, the Gita continues to dwell upon this point to reconcile Sankhya and Yoga or knowledge and works.

He who in action can see inaction and can see action still continuing in cessation from works, is the man of true reason and discernment among men; he is in Yoga and a many-sided universal worker. Giving up all thy works to Me, with thy consciousness founded in the Self, free from hope and egoism, fight delivered from the fever of thy soul.

Gita means." This problem arises because of a failure to distinguish between nigraha *and* samyama. *"The difference between suppression (nigraha) and self-control* (samyama) *is that one says 'I cannot help desiring but I will not satisfy my desire', while the other says 'I refuse the desire as well as the satisfaction of the desire'."*

It is clear that giving up all works in the sense of the Gita does not mean cessation from action, rather the contrary. Even in the full flood of action, as the expression many sided universal worker, *kṛtsnakarmakṛt*, implies, the soul is free from its works, is not the doer, not bound by what is done. The Divine is the Lord of his works and he (the divine worker) is only their channel through the instrumentality of his nature. In this light the following verses of the Gita are perfectly in tune with what the Gita has been insisting all along.

Whose inceptions and undertakings are all free from the will of desire, whose works are burned up by the fire of knowledge; him the wise have called a sage. Having abandoned all attachment to the fruits of his works, ever satisfied without any kind of dependence, he does nothing even though engaged in works.

And still further, it goes on to add: **As a fire kindled turns to ashes its fuel, O Arjuna, so the fire of knowledge turns all works to ashes. There is nothing in the world equal in purity to knowledge, the man who is perfected by Yoga, finds it of himself in the self by the course of Time.**

Arjuna is again perplexed by above statements of Sri Krishna at the end of the fourth Chapter which seen to give an absolute prominence to knowledge – there is nothing in the world equal in purity to knowledge – whose fire turns all works to ashes. For, it appears to him that, "here are desireless works, the principle of Yoga, and renunciation of works, the principle of Sankhya, put together side by side as if part of one method, yet there is no evident reconciliation between them. For the kind of reconciliation which the Teacher has

already given, – in outward inaction to see action still persisting and in apparent action to see a real inaction since the soul has renounced its illusion of the worker and given up works into the hands of the Master of sacrifice, – is for the practical mind of Arjuna too slight, too subtle and expressed almost in riddling words; he has not caught their sense or at least not penetrated into their spirit and reality. Therefore he asks again..."[48]

Arjuna said: Thou declarest to me the renunciation of works, O Krishna; and again thou declarest to me Yoga; which one of these is the better way, that tell me with a clear decisiveness.

"The answer is important, for it puts the whole distinction very clearly and indicates though it does not develop entirely the line of reconciliation."[49]

The Blessed Lord said: Renunciation and Yoga of works both bring about the soul's salvation, but of the two the Yoga of works is distinguished above the renunciation of works. He should be known as always a Sannyasin who neither loathes nor desires; free from the dualities he is released easily and happily from the bondage, O mighty-armed. Children speak of Sankhya and Yoga as different (apart from each other), not the wise; if a man applies himself integrally to one, he gets the fruit of both. The status which is attained by the Sankhyas, to that the men of Yoga also arrive; who sees Sankhya and Yoga as one, he sees.

This must be so because in the Gita the integrality of both Sankhya and Yoga is such that each contains the other.

He who is in Yoga, the pure soul, the master of his

self, who has conquered the senses, whose self becomes the self of all existences, even though he does works, he is not involved in them.

He knows that the actions are not his, but Nature's and by that very knowledge he is free; he has renounced works, does no actions, though actions are done through him; he becomes the Self, the Brahman, *brahmabhūta,* he sees all existences as becomings (*bhūtāni*) of that self-existent Being, his own only one of them, all their actions as only the development of cosmic Nature working through their individual nature and his own actions also as a part of the same cosmic activity[4].[50]

Thus the upshot of all this is that action must be self-controlled.

नियतं कुरु कर्म त्वं कर्म ज्यायो ह्यकर्मणः ।
शरीरयात्रापि च ते न प्रसिद्ध्येदकर्मणः ।। 3.8।।

3.8 Do thou action thus self-controlled, for action is

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[4] *This is not the whole teaching of the Gita; for as yet there is only the idea of the immutable self or Purusha, the Akshara Brahman, and of Nature, Prakriti, as that which is responsible for the cosmos and not yet the idea, clearly expressed, of the Ishwara, the Purushottama; as yet only the synthesis of works and knowledge and not yet, in spite of certain hints, the introduction of the supreme element of devotion which becomes so important afterwards; as yet only the one inactive Purusha and the lower Prakriti and not yet the distinction of the triple Purusha and the double Prakriti. It is true the Ishwara is spoken of, but his relation to the self and nature is not yet made definite. The first six chapters only carry the synthesis so far as it can be carried without the clear expression and decisive entrance of these all-important truths which, when they come in, must necessarily enlarge and modify, though without abolishing, these first reconciliations.*

greater than inaction; even the maintenance of thy physical life cannot be effected without action.

"Do action thus self-controlled, says Krishna, *niyatam kuru karma tvam*:[5] I have said that knowledge, the intelligence, is greater than works... but I did not mean that inaction is greater than action; the contrary is the truth, *karma jyāyo hyakarmaṇaḥ*. For knowledge does not mean renunciation of works, it means equality and non-attachment to desire and the objects of sense; and it means the poise of the intelligent will in the Soul free and high-uplifted above the lower instrumentation of Prakriti and controlling the works of the mind and the senses and body in the power of self-knowledge and the pure objectless self-delight of spiritual realisation... *Buddhiyoga* is fulfilled by *karmayoga*; the Yoga of the self-liberating intelligent will finds its full meaning by the Yoga of desireless works. Thus the Gita founds its teaching of the necessity of desireless works, *niṣkāma karma,* and unites the subjective practice of the Sankhyas – rejecting their merely physical rule – with the practice of Yoga.

But still there is an essential difficulty unsolved.... The difficulty is this, how, our nature being what it is and desire the common principle of its action, is it possible to institute a really desireless action?... By doing all works with sacrifice as the only object, is the reply of the divine Teacher."[51]

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[5] *... I cannot accept the current interpretation of* niyatam karma *as if it meant fixed and formal works and were equivalent to the Vedic* nityakarma, *the regular works of sacrifice, ceremonial and the daily rule of Vedic living. Surely,* niyata *simply takes up the* niyamya *of the last verse.... Not formal works fixed by an external rule, but desireless works controlled by the liberated* buddhi, *is the Gita's teaching.*

यज्ञार्थात्कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः ।
तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय मुक्तसङ्गः समाचर ।। 3.9।।

3.9. By doing works otherwise than for sacrifice, this world of men is in bondage to works; for sacrifice practise works, O son of Kunti, becoming free from all attachment.

"It is evident that all works and not merely sacrifice[6] and social duties can be done in this spirit; any action may be done either from the ego-sense narrow or enlarged or for the sake of the Divine. All being and all action of Prakriti exist only for the sake of the Divine; from that it proceeds, by that it endures, to that it is directed. But so long as we are dominated by the ego-sense we cannot perceive or act in the spirit of this truth, but act for the satisfaction of the ego and in the spirit of the ego, otherwise than for sacrifice. Egoism is the knot of the bondage. By acting Godwards, without any thought of ego, we loosen this knot and finally arrive at freedom."[52]

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[6] *Let us... interpret the* niyata karma *of the Gita as the* nityakarma *of the Vedic rule, its* kartavya karma *or work that has to be done as the Aryan rule of social duty and let us take too its work done as a sacrifice to mean simply these Vedic sacrifices and this fixed social duty performed disinterestedly and without any personal object. This is how the Gita's doctrine of desireless work is often interpreted. But it seems to me that the Gita's teaching is not so crude and simple, not so local and temporal and narrow as all that. It is large, free, subtle and profound; it is for all time and for all men, not for a particular age and country. Especially, it is always breaking free from external forms, details, dogmatic notions and going back to principles and the great facts of our nature and our being. It is a work of large philosophic truth and spiritual practicality, not of constrained religious and philosophical formulas and stereotyped dogmas.*

The Gita's Doctrine of Sacrifice

The Law of Sacrifice

"The law of sacrifice[7] is the common divine action that was thrown out into the world in its beginning as a symbol of the solidarity of the universe. It is by the attraction of this law that a divinising principle, a saving power descends to limit and correct and gradually to eliminate the errors of an egoistic and self-divided creation. This descent, this sacrifice of the Purusha, the Divine Soul submitting itself to Force and Matter so that it may inform and illuminate them, is the seed of redemption of this world of Inconscience and Ignorance. For 'with sacrifice as their companion', says the Gita, 'the All-Father created these peoples.' The acceptance of the law of sacrifice is a practical recognition by the ego that it is neither alone in the world nor chief in the world. It is its admission that, even in this much fragmented existence, there is beyond itself and behind that which is not its own egoistic person, something greater and completer, a diviner All which demands from it subordination and service. Indeed, sacrifice is imposed and, where need be, compelled by the universal World-Force; it takes it even from those who do not

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[7] In the spiritual sense... sacrifice has a different meaning – it does not so much indicate giving up what is held dear as an offering of oneself, one's being, one's mind, heart, will, body, life, actions to the Divine. It has the original sense of "making sacred" and is used as an equivalent of the word yajña. When the Gita speaks of the "sacrifice of knowledge", it does not mean a giving up of anything, but a turning of the mind towards the Divine in the search for knowledge and an offering of oneself through it. It is in this sense, too, that one speaks of the offering or sacrifice of works.... the European sense of the word is

consciously recognise the law, – inevitably, because this is the intrinsic nature of things. Our ignorance or our false egoistic view of life can make no difference to this eternal bedrock truth of Nature. For this is the truth in Nature, that this ego which thinks itself a separate independent being and claims to live for itself, is not and cannot be independent nor separate, nor can it live to itself even if it would, but rather all are linked together by a secret Oneness. Each existence is continually giving out perforce from its stock; out of its mental receipts from Nature or its vital and physical assets and acquisitions and belongings a stream goes to all that is around it. And always again it receives something from its environment gratis or in return for its voluntary or involuntary tribute. For it is only by this giving and receiving that it can effect its own growth while at the same time it helps the sum of things. At length, though at first slowly and partially, we learn to make the conscious sacrifice; even, in the end, we take joy to give ourselves and what we envisage as belonging to us in a spirit of love and devotion to That which appears for the moment other than ourselves and is certainly other than our limited personalities. The sacrifice and the divine return for our sacrifice then become a gladly accepted means towards our last perfection; for it is recognised now as the road to the fulfilment in us of the eternal purpose.

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not the sense of the word "Yajna" or the sense of "sacrifice" in such phrases as "the sacrifice of works". It doesn't mean that you give up all works for the sake of the Divine – for there would be no sacrifice of works at all. Similarly the sacrifice of knowledge doesn't mean that you painfully and resolutely make yourself a fool for the sake of the Lord. Sacrifice means an inner offering to the Divine and the real spiritual sacrifice is a very joyful thing. Otherwise one is only trying to make oneself fit and has not yet begun the real Yajna.

But, most often, the sacrifice is done unconsciously, egoistically and without knowledge or acceptance of the true meaning of the great world-rite. It is so that the vast majority of earthcreatures do it; and, when it is so done, the individual derives only a mechanical minimum of natural inevitable profit, achieves by it only a slow painful progress limited and tortured by the smallness and suffering of the ego. Only when the heart, the will and the mind of knowledge associate themselves with the law and gladly follow it, can there come the deep joy and the happy fruitfulness of divine sacrifice. The mind's knowledge of the law and the heart's gladness in it culminate in the perception that it is to our own Self and Spirit and the one Self and Spirit of all that we give."[53]

"Nearness, sympathy, solidarity create a mental, moral and emotional unity; theirs is a sacrifice of mutual support and mutual gratifications. But the true unity is spiritual; its sacrifice is a mutual self-giving, an interfusion of our inner substance. The law of sacrifice travels in Nature towards its culmination in this complete and unreserved self-giving; it awakens the consciousness of one common self in the giver and the object of the sacrifice. This culmination of sacrifice is the height even of human love and devotion when it tries to become divine; for there too the highest peak of love points into a heaven of complete mutual self-giving, its summit is the rapturous fusing of two souls into one.

This profounder idea of the world-wide law is at the heart of the teaching about works given in the Gita; a spiritual union with the Highest by sacrifice, an unreserved self-giving to the Eternal is the core of its doctrine. The vulgar conception of sacrifice is an act of painful self-immolation, austere self-

mortification, difficult self-effacement; this kind of sacrifice may go even as far as self-mutilation and self-torture. These things may be temporarily necessary in man's hard endeavour to exceed his natural self; if the egoism in his nature is violent and obstinate, it has to be met sometimes by an answering strong internal repression and counterbalancing violence. But the Gita discourages any excess of violence done to oneself; for the self within is really the Godhead evolving, it is Krishna, it is the Divine; it has not to be troubled and tortured as the Titans of the world trouble and torture it, but to be increased, fostered, cherished, luminously opened to a divine light and strength and joy and wideness. It is not one's self, but the band of the spirit's inner enemies that we have to discourage, expel, slay upon the altar of the growth of the spirit; these can be ruthlessly excised, whose names are desire, wrath, inequality, greed, attachment to outward pleasures and pains, the cohort of usurping demons that are the cause of the soul's errors and sufferings. These should be regarded not as part of oneself but as intruders and perverters of our self's real and diviner nature; these have to be sacrificed in the harsher sense of the word, whatever pain in going they may throw by reflection on the consciousness of the seeker.

But the true essence of sacrifice is not self-immolation, it is self-giving; its object not self-effacement, but self-fulfilment; its method not self-mortification, but a greater life, not self-mutilation, but a transformation of our natural human parts into divine members, not self-torture, but a passage from a lesser satisfaction to a greater Ananda. There is only one thing painful in the beginning to a raw or turbid part of the surface nature; it is the indispensable discipline demanded, the denial necessary for the merging of the incomplete ego.

But for that there can be a speedy and enormous compensation in the discovery of a real greater or ultimate completeness in others, in all things, in the cosmic oneness, in the freedom of the transcendent Self and Spirit, in the rapture of the touch of the Divine. Our sacrifice is not a giving without any return or any fruitful acceptance from the other side; it is an interchange between the embodied soul and conscious Nature in us and the eternal Spirit. For even though no return is demanded, yet there is the knowledge deep within us that a marvellous return is inevitable. The soul knows that it does not give itself to God in vain; claiming nothing, it yet receives the infinite riches of the divine Power and Presence."[54]

The Reconciliation of Vedism and Vedantism

"The Gita's theory of sacrifice is stated in two separate passages; one we find in the third chapter, another in the fourth; the first gives it in language which might, taken by itself, seem to be speaking only of the ceremonial sacrifice; the second interpreting that into the sense of a large philosophical symbolism, transforms at once its whole significance and raises it to a plane of high psychological and spiritual truth."[55]

"At first, however, the Gita takes up the Vedic statement of the idea of sacrifice and phrases the law of sacrifice in its current terms. This it does with a definite object. We have seen that the quarrel between renunciation and works has two forms, the opposition of Sankhya and Yoga which is already in principle reconciled and the opposition of Vedism and Vedantism which the Teacher has yet to reconcile.... Vedism worshipped the Devas, the gods, with sacrifice and held them to be the powers who assist our salvation. Vedantism was inclined to regard them as powers of the mental and material

world opposed to our salvation (men, says the Upanishad, are the cattle of the gods, who do not desire man to know and be free); it saw the Divine as the immutable Brahman who has to be attained not by works of sacrifice and worship but by knowledge. Works only lead to material results and to an inferior Paradise; therefore they have to be renounced.

The Gita resolves this opposition by insisting that the Devas are only forms of the one Deva, the Ishwara, the Lord of all Yoga and worship and sacrifice and austerity, and if it is true that sacrifice offered to the Devas leads only to material results and to Paradise, it is also true that sacrifice offered to the Ishwara leads beyond them to the great liberation. For the Lord and the immutable Brahman are not two different beings, but one and the same Being, and whoever strives towards either, is striving towards that one divine Existence. All works in their totality find their culmination and completeness in the knowledge of the Divine, *sarvam karmākhilam pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate*. They are not an obstacle, but the way to the supreme knowledge. Thus this opposition too is reconciled with the help of a large elucidation of the meaning of sacrifice. In fact its conflict is only a restricted form of the larger opposition between Yoga and Sankhya. Vedism is a specialised and narrow form of Yoga; the principle of the Vedantists is identical with that of the Sankhyas, for to both the movement of salvation is the recoil of the intelligence, the *buddhi*, from the differentiating powers of Nature, from ego, mind, senses, from the subjective and the objective, and its return to the undifferentiated and the immutable. It is with this object of reconciliation in his mind that the Teacher first approaches his statement of the doctrine of sacrifice; but throughout, even from the very

beginning, he keeps his eye not on the restricted Vedic sense of sacrifice and works, but on their larger and universal application, – that widening of narrow and formal notions to admit the great general truths they unduly restrict which is always the method of the Gita."[56]

With sacrifice the Lord of creatures of old created creatures and said, By this shall you bring forth (fruits or offspring), let this be your milker of desires. Foster by this the gods and let the gods foster you; fostering each other, you shall attain to the supreme good. Fostered by sacrifice the gods shall give you desired enjoyments; who enjoys their given enjoyments and has not given to them, he is a thief. The righteous who eat what is left from the sacrifice are released from all sin; but evil are they who cook (the food) for their own sake, they verily eat sin. From food creatures come into being, from rain is the birth of food, from sacrifice comes into being the rain, sacrifice is born of work; work know to be born of Brahman, Brahman is born of the Immutable; therefore is the all pervading Brahman established in the sacrifice. He who follows not here the wheel thus set in movement, evil is his being, sensual is his delight, in vain, O Partha, that man lives. But the man whose delight is in the Self and who is satisfied with the enjoyment of the Self and in the Self he is content, for him there exists no work that needs to be done. He has no object here to be gained by action done and none to be gained by action undone; he has no dependence on all these existences for any object to be gained.

"The whole sense and drift of this teaching turns upon

the interpretation we are to give to the important words, *yajña*, *karma, brahma,* sacrifice, work, Brahman. If the sacrifice is simply the Vedic sacrifice, if the work from which it is born is the Vedic rule of works and if the *brahman* from which the work itself is born is the *śabda-brahman* in the sense only of the letter of the Veda, then all the positions of the Vedist dogma are conceded and there is nothing more. Ceremonial sacrifice is the right means of gaining children, wealth, enjoyment... Even salvation, even the highest good is to be gained by ceremonial sacrifice. It must never be abandoned. Even the seeker of liberation has to continue to do ceremonial sacrifice, although without attachment; it is by ceremonial sacrifice and ritualistic works done without attachment that men of the type of Janaka attained to spiritual perfection and liberation."[57]

"Obviously, this cannot be the meaning of the Gita, for it would be in contradiction with all the rest of the book. Even in the passage itself, without the illumining interpretation afterwards given to it in the fourth chapter, we have already an indication of a wider sense where it is said that sacrifice is born from work, work from *brahman, brahman* from the Akshara, and therefore the all-pervading Brahman, *sarvagatam brahma,* is established in the sacrifice. The connecting logic of the "therefore" and the repetition of the word *brahma* are significant; for it shows clearly that the *brahman* from which all work is born has to be understood with an eye not so much to the current Vedic teaching in which it means the Veda as to a symbolical sense in which the creative Word is identical with the all-pervading Brahman, the Eternal, the one Self present in all existences, *sarvabhūteṣu,* and present in all the workings of existence.... all the working of Prakriti is in its true nature

a sacrifice, *yajña*, with the Divine Being as the enjoyer of all energisms and works and sacrifice and the great Lord of all existences, *bhoktāram yajñatapasām sarvabhūtamaheśvaram,* and to know this Divine all-pervading and established in sacrifice, *sarvagatam yajñe pratiṣṭhitam,* is the true, the Vedic knowledge."[58]

"But he may be known in an inferior action through the Devas, the gods, the powers of the divine Soul in Nature and in the eternal interaction of these powers and the soul of man, mutually giving and receiving, mutually helping, increasing, raising each other's workings and satisfaction, a commerce in which man rises towards a growing fitness for the supreme good. He recognises that his life is a part of this divine action in Nature and not a thing separate and to be held and pursued for its own sake. He regards his enjoyments and the satisfaction of his desires as the fruit of sacrifice and the gift of the gods in their divine universal workings and he ceases to pursue them in the false and evil spirit of sinful egoistic selfishness as if they were a good to be seized from life by his own unaided strength without return and without thankfulness. As this spirit increases in him, he subordinates his desires, becomes satisfied with sacrifice as the law of life and works and is content with whatever remains over from the sacrifice, giving up all the rest freely as an offering in the great and beneficent interchange between his life and the world-life. Whoever goes contrary to this law of action and pursues works and enjoyments for his own isolated personal self-interest, lives in vain; he misses the true meaning and aim and utility of living and the upward growth of the soul; he is not on the path which leads to the highest good. But the highest only comes when the sacrifice is no longer to the gods, but to the one all-pervading Divine

established in the sacrifice, of whom the gods are inferior forms and powers, and when he puts away the lower self that desires and enjoys and gives up his personal sense of being the worker to the true executrix of all works, Prakriti, and his personal sense of being the enjoyer to the Divine Purusha, the higher and universal Self who is the real enjoyer of the works of Prakriti. In that Self and not in any personal enjoyment he finds now his sole satisfaction, complete content, pure delight; he has nothing to gain by action or inaction, depends neither on gods nor men for anything, seeks no profit from any, for the self-delight is all-sufficient to him, but does works for the sake of the Divine only, as a pure sacrifice, without attachment or desire. Thus he gains equality and becomes free from the modes of Nature, *nistraiguṇya*; his soul takes its poise not in the insecurity of Prakriti, but in the peace of the immutable Brahman, even while his actions continue in the movement of Prakriti. Thus is sacrifice his way of attaining to the Highest."[59]

तस्मादसक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर ।
असक्तो ह्याचरन्कर्म परमाप्नोति पूरुषः ॥ 3.19 ॥

3.19. Therefore without attachment perform ever the work that is to be done; for by doing work without attachment man attains to the highest.

"The phrase used in the Gita to express this work that has to be done has indeed been interpreted in the sense that we must do our duty without regard to the fruit. But this is a conception born of European culture which is ethical rather

than spiritual and external rather than inwardly profound in its concepts. No such general thing as duty exists; we have only duties, often in conflict with each other, and these are determined by our environment, our social relations, our external status in life. They are of great value in training the immature moral nature and setting up a standard which discourages the action of selfish desire. It has already been said that so long as the seeker has no inner light, he must govern himself by the best light he has, and duty, a principle, a cause are among the standards he may temporarily erect and observe. But for all that, duties are external things, not stuff of the soul and cannot be the ultimate standard of action in this path. It is the duty of the soldier to fight when called upon, even to fire upon his own kith and kin; but such a standard or any akin to it cannot be imposed on the liberated man. On the other hand, to love or have compassion, to obey the highest truth of our being, to follow the command of the Divine are not duties; these things are a law of the nature as it rises towards the Divine, an outflowing of action from a soul-state, a high reality of the spirit. The action of the liberated doer of works must be even such an outflowing from the soul; it must come to him or out of him as a natural result of his spiritual union with the Divine and not be formed by an edifying construction of the mental thought and will, the practical reason or the social sense."[60]

"...there are three kinds of works, that done without sacrifice for personal enjoyment which is entirely selfish and egoistic and misses the true law and aim and utility of life, *mogham pārtha sa jīvati,* that done with desire, but with sacrifice and the enjoyment only as a result of sacrifice and therefore to that extent consecrated and sanctified, and that done

without desire or attachment of any kind. It is the last which brings the soul of man to the highest, *param āpnoti pūruṣaḥ*."[61]

The Significance of Sacrifice

"The whole of the Gita's gospel of works rests upon its idea of sacrifice and contains in fact the eternal connecting truth of God and the world and works. The human mind seizes ordinarily only fragmentary notions and standpoints of a many-sided eternal truth of existence and builds upon them its various theories of life and ethics and religion, stressing this or that sign or appearance, but to some entirety of it it must always tend to reawaken whenever it returns in an age of large enlightenment to any entire and synthetic relation of its world-knowledge with its God-knowledge and self-knowledge. The gospel of the Gita reposes upon this fundamental Vedantic truth that all being is the one Brahman and all existence the wheel of Brahman, a divine movement opening out from God and returning to God. All is the expressive activity of Nature and Nature a power of the Divine which works out the consciousness and will of the divine Soul master of her works and inhabitant of her forms. It is for his satisfaction that she descends into the absorption of the forms of things and the works of life and mind and returns again through mind and self-knowledge to the conscious possession of the Soul that dwells within her. There is first an involving of self and all it is or means in an evolution of phenomena; there is afterwards an evolution of self, a revelation of all it is and means, all that is hidden and yet suggested by the phenomenal creation. This cycle of Nature could not be what it is but for the Purusha assuming and maintaining simultaneously three eternal poises each of which

is necessary to the totality of this action. It must manifest itself in the mutable, and there we see it as the finite, the many, all existences, *sarvabhūtāni.* It appears to us as the finite personality of these million creatures with their infinite diversities and various relations and it appears to us behind these as the soul and force of the action of the gods, – that is to say, the cosmic powers and qualities of the Divine which preside over the workings of the life of the universe and constitute to our perception different universal forms of the one Existence, or, it may be, various self-statements of personality of the one supreme Person. Then, secret behind and within all forms and existences, we perceive too an immutable, an infinite, a timeless, an impersonal, a one unchanging spirit of existence, an indivisible Self of all that is, in which all these many find themselves to be really one. And therefore by returning to that the active, finite personality of the individual being discovers that it can release itself into a silent largeness of universality and the peace and poise of an immutable and unattached unity with all that proceeds from and is supported by this indivisible Infinite. Or even he may escape into it from individual existence. But the highest secret of all, *uttamam rahasyam,* is the Purushottama. This is the supreme Divine, God, who possesses both the infinite and the finite and in whom the personal and the impersonal, the one Self and the many existences, being and becoming, the world-action and the supracosmic peace, *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti,* meet, are united, are possessed together and in each other. In God all things find their secret truth and their absolute reconciliation."[62]

"..the individual being begins with ignorance and persists long in ignorance. Acutely conscious of himself he sees the ego as the cause and whole meaning of life and not the Divine.

He sees himself as the doer of works and does not see that all the workings of existence including his own internal and external activities are the workings of one universal Nature and nothing else. He sees himself as the enjoyer of works and imagines that for him all exists and him Nature ought to satisfy and obey his personal will; he does not see that she is not at all concerned with satisfying him or at all careful of his will, but obeys a higher universal will and seeks to satisfy a Godhead who transcends her and her works and creations; his finite being, his will and his satisfactions are hers and not his, and she offers them at every moment as a sacrifice to the Divine of whose purpose in her she makes all this the covert instrumentation. Because of this ignorance whose seal is egoism, the creature ignores the law of sacrifice and seeks to take all he can for himself and gives only what Nature by her internal and external compulsion forces him to give."[63]

"Only when the individual being begins to perceive and acknowledge in his acts the value of the self in others as well as the power and needs of his own ego, begins to perceive universal Nature behind his own workings and through the cosmic godheads gets some glimpse of the One and the Infinite, is he on his way to the transcendence of his limitation by the ego and the discovery of his soul. He begins to discover a law other than that of his desires, to which his desires must be more and more subordinated and subjected; he develops the purely egoistic into the understanding and ethical being. He begins to give more value to the claims of the self in others and less to the claims of his ego; he admits the strife between egoism and altruism and by the increase of his altruistic tendencies he prepares the enlargement of his own consciousness and being."[64]

But this is only a long intermediate stage. "The real self-knowledge and consequently the right way of works lies beyond; for the sacrifice done with knowledge is the highest sacrifice and that alone brings a perfect working. That can only come when he perceives that the self in him and the self in others are one being and this self is something higher than the ego, an infinite, an impersonal, a universal existence in whom all move and have their being.... This is the Purushottama to whom the sacrifice has to be offered, not for any transient personal fruit of works, but for the soul's possession of God and in order to live in harmony and union with the Divine."[65]

The following passages on Yajña in the fourth chapter provide.... "a perfectly explicit and detailed interpretation of the meaning of *yajña* in the language of the Gita which leaves no doubt at all about the symbolic use of the words and the psychological character of the sacrifice enjoined by this teaching.... This elaborate explanation of the Yajna sets out with a vast and comprehensive definition in which it is declared that the act and energy and materials of the sacrifice, the giver and receiver of the sacrifice, the goal and object of the sacrifice are all the one Brahman."[66]

Brahman is the giving, Brahman is the food-offering, by Brahman it is offered into the Brahman-fire, Brahman is that which is to be attained by Samadhi in Brahman-action.

"This then is the knowledge in which the liberated man has to do works of sacrifice. It is the knowledge declared of old in the great Vedantic utterances, "I am He", "All this verily is the Brahman, Brahman is this Self". It is the knowledge of

the entire unity; it is the One manifest as the doer and the deed and the object of works, knower and knowledge and the object of knowledge.... But all even of the Yogins have not attained to this knowledge."[67]

Some Yogins follow after the sacrifice which is of the gods; others offer the sacrifice by the sacrifice itself into the Brahman-fire. Some offer hearing and other senses into the fires of control, others offer sound and the other objects of sense into the fires of sense. And others offer all the actions of the sense and all the actions of the vital force into the fire of the Yoga of self-control kindled by knowledge. There are some who offer in sacrifice their material possessions, others who offer the austerities of their self-discipline, others who offer their practice of some form of Yoga, and others who, firm in their vows, offer their study and knowledge. Others again who are devoted to controlling the breath, having restrained the Prana (the outgoing breath) and Apana (the incoming breath) pour as sacrifice Prana into Apana and Apana into Prana. Still others, having regulated and controlled their diet, pour as sacrifice their life-breaths into life-breaths. All these are knowers of sacrifice, and by sacrifice have destroyed their sins. They who enjoy the nectar of immortality left over from the sacrifice attain to the eternal Brahman; this world is not for him who doeth not sacrifice, how then any other world, O Best of the Kurus? Therefore all these and many other forms of sacrifice have been extended in the mouth of the Brahman. Know thou that all these are born of work and so knowing thou shalt become free. The sacrifice of knowledge, O Parantapa, is greater than any material

sacrifice. Knowledge is that in which all actions culminate (not any lower knowledge, but the highest self-knowledge and God-knowledge), O Partha! Learn that knowledge by prostrating (worshipping) at the feet of the teacher, by questioning and by service. The men of knowledge who have seen the true principles of things will instruct thee in that knowledge. When thou has known it, thou shalt not again fall into this confusion, O Pandava; for by this thou shalt see all existences without exception in the Self, then in Me.

Here the "self" means the.... "one, immutable, all-pervading, all-containing, self-existent reality or Brahman hidden behind our mental being into which our consciousness widens out when it is liberated from the ego...."[68]

The "Me" refers to God, the Divine, the Purushottama. "To Him we offer everything as a sacrifice; into His hands we give up our actions; in His existence we live and move; unified with Him in our nature and with all existence in Him, we become one soul and one power of being with Him and with all beings; with His supreme reality we identify and unite our self-being. By works done for sacrifice, eliminating desire, we arrive at knowledge and at the soul's possession of itself; by works done in self-knowledge and God-knowledge we are liberated into the unity, peace and joy of the divine existence."[69]

The Principle of Divine Works

The full significance of the Gita's doctrine of sacrifice depends on the idea of the Purushottama which is not yet developed and which is set forth in the Gita explicitly only in the fifteenth chapter.. At present the divine Teacher does not at all speak in set terms of the Purushottama, but of himself, – 'I', Krishna, Narayana, the Avatar. He merely gives a hint of his relation to the immobile self when he says '...thou shall see all existences without exception in the self, then in Me.' The antimony between the tranquil and immutable self and the action of Nature was at the root of the problem of the reconciliation of knowledge and works. The idea of the Purushottama, seen here incarnate Krishna, is the key to the resolution of this problem for good. "Without it the withdrawal from the lower nature to the Brahmic condition leads necessarily to inaction of the liberated man, his indifference to the works of the world; with it the same withdrawal becomes a step by which the works of the world are taken up in the spirit, with the nature and in the freedom of the Divine. See the silent Brahman as the goal and the world with all its activities has to be forsaken; see God, the Divine, the Purushottama as the goal, superior to action yet its inner spiritual cause and object and original will, and the world with all its activities is conquered and possessed in a divine transcendence of the world. It can become instead of a prison-house an opulent kingdom, *rājyam samṛddham*, which we have conquered for the spiritual life by slaying the limitation of the tyrant ego and overcoming the bondage of our gaoler desires and breaking the prison of our individualistic possession and enjoyment. The liberated universalised soul becomes *svarāṭ*,

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samrāṭ, self-ruler and emperor."[70]

It was even by works that Janaka and the rest attained to perfection. Thou shouldst do works regarding also the holding together of the peoples. Whatsoever the Best doeth, that the other men also do; the standard he creates, the people follow. I have no work whatsoever, O Partha, that I need to do in all the three worlds (physical, vital, mental), nor is there anything that I have not gained and have yet to gain, and I abide verily in the paths of action. For if I did not abide sleeplessly in the paths of action, men follow in every way My path, O son of Pritha, – these peoples would sink to destruction if I did not work and I should be the creator of confusion and slayer of these creatures. As those who know not act with attachment to the action, he who knows, O Bharata, should act without attachment, having for his motive to hold together the peoples. He should not create a division of their understanding in the ignorant who are attached to their works; he should set them to all actions, doing them himself with knowledge and in Yoga.

"There are few more important passages in the Gita than these seven striking couplets. But let us clearly understand that they must not be interpreted, as the modern pragmatic tendency concerned much more with the present affairs of the world than with any high and far-off spiritual possibility seeks to interpret them, as no more than a philosophical and religious justification of social service, patriotic, cosmopolitan and humanitarian effort and attachment to the hundred eager social schemes and dreams which attract the modern intellect. It is not the rule of a large moral and intellectual altruism which is here announced, but that of a spiritual unity with

God and with this world of beings who dwell in him and in whom he dwells. It is not an injunction to subordinate the individual to society and humanity or immolate egoism on the altar of the human collectivity, but to fulfil the individual in God and to sacrifice the ego on the one true altar of the all-embracing Divinity. The Gita moves on a plane of ideas and experiences higher than those of the modern mind which is at the stage indeed of a struggle to shake off the coils of egoism, but is still mundane in its outlook and intellectual and moral rather than spiritual in its temperament. Patriotism, cosmopolitanism, service of society, collectivism, humanitarianism, the ideal or religion of humanity are admirable aids towards our escape from our primary condition of individual, family, social, national egoism into a secondary stage in which the individual realises, as far as it can be done on the intellectual, moral and emotional level, – on that level he cannot do it entirely in the right and perfect way, the way of the integral truth of his being, – the oneness of his existence with the existence of other beings. But the thought of the Gita reaches beyond to a tertiary condition of our developing self-consciousness towards which the secondary is only a partial stage of advance.... The rule given here by the Gita is the rule for the masterman, the superman, the divinised human being, the Best, not in the sense of any Nietzschean, any one-sided and lopsided, any Olympian, Apollonian or Dionysian, any angelic or demoniac supermanhood, but in that of the man whose whole personality has been offered up into the being, nature and consciousness of the one transcendent and universal Divinity and by loss of the smaller self has found its greater self, has been divinised."[71]

"The Gita declares that the action of the liberated man

must be directed not by desire, but towards the keeping together of the world, its government, guidance, impulsion, maintenance in the path appointed to it. This injunction has been interpreted in the sense that the world being an illusion in which most men must be kept, since they are unfit for liberation, he must so act outwardly as to cherish in them an attachment to their customary works laid down for them by the social law. If so, it would be a poor and petty rule and every noble heart would reject it to follow rather the divine vow of Amitabha Buddha[8], the sublime prayer of the Bhagavata[9], the passionate aspiration of Vivekananda[10]. But if we accept rather the view that the world is a divinely guided movement of Nature emerging in man towards God and that this is the work in which the Lord of the Gita declares that he is ever occupied although he himself has nothing ungained that he has yet to win, then a deep and true sense will appear for this great injunction. To participate in that divine work, to live for God in the world will be the rule of the

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[8] *...Amitabha Buddha... turned away when his spirit was on the threshold of Nirvana and took the vow never to cross it while a single being remained in the sorrow and the Ignorance.*

[9] *"I desire not the supreme state with all its eight siddhis nor the cessation of rebirth; may I assume the sorrow of all creatures who suffer and enter into them so that they may be made free from grief."*

[10] *"I have lost all wish for my salvation," wrote the great Vedantin, "may I be born again and again and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum-total of all souls, – and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species is the special object of my worship. He who is the high and low, the saint and the sinner, the god and the worm, Him worship, the visible, the knowable, the real, the omnipresent; break all other idols." The last two sentences contain indeed the whole gist of the matter.*

Karmayogin; to live for God in the world and therefore so to act that the Divine may more and more manifest himself and the world go forward by whatever way of its obscure pilgrimage and move nearer to the divine ideal."[72]

"The whole range of human works must be that in which the God-knower shall move. All individual, all social action, all the works of the intellect, the heart and the body are still his, not any longer for his own separate sake, but for the sake of God in the world, of God in all beings and that all those beings may move forward, as he has moved, by the path of works towards the discovery of the Divine in themselves. Outwardly his actions may not seem to differ essentially from theirs; battle and rule as well as teaching and thought, all the various commerce of man with man may fall in his range; but the spirit in which he does them must be very different, and it is that spirit which by its influence shall be the great attraction drawing men upwards to his own level, the great lever lifting the mass of men higher in their ascent."[73]

"The giving of the example of God himself to the liberated man is profoundly significant; for it reveals the whole basis of the Gita's philosophy of divine works.... The divinised man entering into his divine nature will act even as he acts; he will not give himself up to inaction. The Divine is at work in man in the ignorance and at work in man in the knowledge.... for it is he who works in the steps and measures of his power; every movement of it, every particle of the world of beings it forms is instinct with his presence, full of his consciousness, impelled by his will, shaped by his knowledge."[74]

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