The Greatness of India and Its Culture

13. The Greatness of Indian Literature – 11

The Bhagavad Gita – 4

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25. Deva and Asura

"The development of the idea of the Gita has reached a point at which one question alone remains for solution, – the question of our nature bound and defective and how it is to effect, not only in principle but in all its movements, its evolution from the lower to the higher being and from the law of its present action to the immortal Dharma. The difficulty is one which is implied in certain of the positions laid down in the Gita, but has to be brought out into greater prominence than it gets there and to be put into a clearer shape before our intelligence.

...For at present all our activities are determined in their trend and shape by the nature, and this Nature here is the nature of the three Gunas, and in all natural being and in all natural activities there is the triple Guna, Tamas with its ignorance and inertia, Rajas with its kinesis and action, its passion and grief and perversion, Sattwa with its light and happiness, and the bondage of these things. And granted that the soul becomes superior in the self to the three Gunas, how does it escape in its instrumental nature from their working and result and bondage? For even the man of knowledge, says the Gita, must act according to his nature. To feel and bear the reactions of the Gunas in the outer manifestation, but to be free from them and superior in the observing conscious self behind is not sufficient; for it leaves still a dualism of freedom and subjection, a contradiction between what we are within and what we are without, between our self and our power, what we know ourselves to be and what we will and do. Where is the release here, where the full elevation

and transformation to the higher spiritual nature, the immortal Dharma, the law proper to the infinite purity and power of a divine being? If this change cannot be effected while in the body, then so it must be said, that the whole nature cannot be transformed and there must remain an unreconciled duality until the mortal type of existence drops off like a discarded shell from the spirit. But in that case the gospel of works cannot well be the right or at least cannot be the ultimate gospel: a perfect quiescence or at least as perfect a quiescence as possible, a progressive Sannyasa and renunciation of works would seem still to be the true counsel of perfection, – as indeed the Mayavadin contends, who says that the Gita's way is no doubt the right way so long as we remain in action, but still all works are an illusion and quiescence the highest path. To act in this spirit is well, but only as a transition to a renunciation of all works, to cessation, to an absolute quiescence.

This is the difficulty which the Gita has still to meet in order to justify works to the seeker after the Spirit....

To act is to be subject to the three qualities of Nature; to be beyond these conditions of her working is to be silent in the spirit. The Ishwara, the Supreme who is master of all her works and functions and guides and determines them by his divine will, is indeed above this mechanism of quality, not touched or limited by her modes; but still it would seem that he acts always through them, always shapes by the power of the Swabhava and through the psychological machinery of the Gunas. These three are fundamental properties of Prakriti, necessary operations of the executive Nature-force which takes shape here in us and the Jiva himself is only a portion of the Divine in this Prakriti. If then the liberated man still does

works, still moves in the kinetic movement, it must be so that he moves and acts, in Nature and by the limitation of her qualities, subject to their reactions, not, in so far as the natural part of him persists, in the freedom of the Divine. But the Gita has said exactly the opposite, that the liberated Yogin is delivered from the Guna reactions and whatever he does, however he lives, moves and acts in God, in the power of his freedom and immortality, in the law of the supreme eternal Infinite, *sarvathā vartamāno'pi sa yogī mayi vartate*. There seems here to be a contradiction, an impasse. 6.31

But this is only when we knot ourselves up in the rigid logical oppositions of the analytic mind, not when we look freely and subtly at the nature of spirit and at the spirit in Nature. What moves the world is not really the modes of Prakriti, – these are only the lower aspect, the mechanism of our normal nature. The real motive power is a divine spiritual Will which uses at present these inferior conditions, but is itself not limited, not dominated, not mechanised, as is the human will, by the Gunas. No doubt, since these modes are so universal in their action, they must proceed from something inherent in the power of the Spirit; there must be powers in the divine Will-force from which these aspects of Prakriti have their origin. For everything in the lower normal nature is derived from the higher spiritual power of being of the Purushottama, *mattaḥ pravartate*; it does not come into being *de novo* and without a spiritual cause. Something in the essential power of the spirit there must be from which the sattwic light and satisfaction, the rajasic kinesis, the tamasic inertia of our nature are derivations and of which they are the imperfect or degraded forms. But once we get back to these sources in their purity above this imperfection and degradation of them 10.18

in which we live we shall find that these motions put on a quite different aspect as soon as we begin to live in the spirit. Being and action and the modes of being and action become altogether different things, far above their present limited appearance.

For what is behind this troubled kinesis of the cosmos with all its clash and struggle? What is it that when it touches the mind, when it puts on mental values, creates the reactions of desire, striving, straining, error of will, sorrow, sin, pain? It is a will of the spirit in movement, it is a large divine will in action which is not touched by these things; it is a power[1] of the free and infinite conscious Godhead which has no desire because it exercises universal possession and a spontaneous Ananda of its movement. Wearied by no striving and straining, it enjoys a free mastery of its means and its objects; misled by no error of the will, it holds a knowledge of self and things which is the source of its mastery and its Ananda: overcome by no sorrow, sin or pain, it has the joy and purity of its being and the joy and purity of its power. The soul that lives in God acts by this spiritual Will and not by the normal will of the unliberated mind: its kinesis takes place by this spiritual force and not by the rajasic mode of Nature, precisely because it no longer lives in the lower movement to which that deformation belongs, but has got back in the divine nature to the pure and perfect sense of the kinesis.

The strife of the gunas is only a representation in the imperfection of the lower nature; what the three gunas stand for are three essential powers of the Divine which are not merely existent in a perfect equilibrium of quietude, but unified

[1] tapas, cit-śakti.

in a perfect consensus of divine action. Tamas in the spiritual being becomes a divine calm, which is not an inertia and incapacity of action, but a perfect power, *śakti*, holding in itself all its capacity and capable of controlling and subjecting to the law of calm even the most stupendous and enormous activity: Rajas becomes a self-effecting initiating sheer Will of the spirit, which is not desire, endeavour, striving passion, but the same perfect power of being, *śakti*, capable of an infinite, imperturbable and blissful action. Sattwa becomes not the modified mental light, *prakāśa*, but the self-existent light of the divine being, *jyotiḥ*, which is the soul of the perfect power of being and illumines in their unity the divine quietude and the divine will of action... That light is full of a luminous spiritual will and there is no gulf or disparateness between its knowledge and its action. That delight is not our paler mental happiness, *sukham*, but a profound concentrated intense self-existent bliss extended to all that our being does, envisages, creates, a fixed divine rapture, Ananda. The liberated soul participates more and more profoundly in this light and bliss and grows the more perfectly into it, the more integrally it unites itself with the Divine. And while among the Gunas of the lower Nature there is a necessary disequilibrium, a shifting inconstancy of measures and a perpetual struggle for domination, the greater light and bliss, calm, will of kinesis of the Spirit do not exclude each other, are not at war, are not even merely in equilibrium, but each an aspect of the two others and in their fullness all are inseparable and one. Our mind when it approaches the Divine may seem to enter into one to the exclusion of another, may appear for instance to achieve calm to the exclusion of kinesis of action, but that is because we approach him first through the selecting spirit in

the mind. Afterwards when we are able to rise above even the spiritual mind, we can see that each divine power contains all the rest and can get rid of this initial error[2].

We see, then, that action is possible without the subjection of the soul to the normal degraded functioning of the modes of Nature. That functioning depends on the mental, vital and physical limitation into which we are cast; it is a deformation, an incapacity, a wrong or depressed value imposed on us by the mind and life in matter. When we grow into the spirit, this Dharma or inferior law of Nature is replaced by the immortal Dharma of the spirit; there is the experience of a free immortal action, a divine illimitable knowledge, a transcendent power, an unfathomable repose. But still there remains the question of the transition; for there must be a transition, a proceeding by steps, since nothing in God's workings in this world is done by an abrupt action without procedure or basis. We have the thing we seek in us, but we have in practice to evolve it out of the inferior forms of our nature[3]. Therefore in the action of

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[2] *The account given here of the supreme spiritual and supramental forms of highest Nature action corresponding to the Gunas is not derived from the Gita, but introduced from spiritual experience. The Gita does not describe in any detail the action of the highest Nature,* rahasyam uttamam*; it leaves that for the seeker to discover by his own spiritual experience. It only points out the nature of the high sattwic temperament and action through which this supreme mystery has to be reached and insists at the same time on the overpassing of Sattwa and transcendence of the three Gunas.*

[3] *This is from the point of view of our nature ascending upwards by self-conquest, effort and discipline. There must also intervene more and more a descent of the divine Light, Presence and Power into the being to transform it; otherwise the change at the point of culmination and beyond it cannot take place. That is why there comes in as the last movement the necessity of an absolute self-surrender.*

the modes itself there must be some means, some leverage, some *point d'appui*, by which we can effect this transformation. The Gita finds it in the full development of the sattwic Guna till that in its potent expansion reaches a point at which it can go beyond itself and disappear into its source. The reason is evident, because Sattwa is a power of light and happiness, a force that makes for calm and knowledge, and at its highest point it can arrive at a certain reflection, almost a mental identity with the spiritual light and bliss from which it derives. The other two Gunas cannot get this transformation, Rajas into the divine kinetic will or Tamas into the divine repose and calm, without the intervention of the sattwic power in Nature... The sattwic quality is a first mediator between the higher and the lower nature... To develop Sattwa till it becomes full of spiritual light and calm and happiness is the first condition of this preparatory discipline of the nature.

That, we shall find, is the whole intention of the remaining chapters of the Gita. But first it prefaces the consideration of this enlightening movement by a distinction between two kinds of being, the Deva and the Asura; for the Deva is capable of a high self-transforming sattwic action, the Asura incapable. We must see what is the object of this preface and the precise bearing of this distinction. The general nature of all human beings is the same, it is a mixture of the three Gunas; it would seem then that in all there must be the capacity to develop and strengthen the sattwic element and turn it upward towards the heights of the divine transformation. That our ordinary turn is actually towards making our reason and will the servants of our rajasic or tamasic egoism, the ministers of our restless and ill-balanced kinetic desire or our self-indulgent indolence and static inertia, can only be, one would imagine,

a temporary characteristic of our undeveloped spiritual being, a rawness of its imperfect evolution and must disappear when our consciousness rises in the spiritual scale. But we actually see that men, at least men above a certain level, fall very largely into two classes, those who have a dominant force of sattwic nature turned towards knowledge, self-control, beneficence, perfection and those who have a dominant force of rajasic nature turned towards egoistic greatness, satisfaction of desire, the indulgence of their own strong will and personality which they seek to impose on the world, not for the service of man or God, but for their own pride, glory and pleasure. These are the human representatives of the Devas and Danavas or Asuras, the Gods and the Titans[4]. This distinction is a very ancient one in Indian religious symbolism... The ancient mind, more open than ours to the truth of things behind the physical

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[4] *Ignorance means Avidya, the separative consciousness and the egoistic mind and life that flow from it and all that is natural to the separative consciousness and the egoistic mind and life... Falsehood, on the other hand, is not this Avidya, but an extreme result of it. It is created by an Asuric power which intervenes in this creation and is not only separated from the Truth and therefore limited in knowledge and open to error, but in revolt against the Truth or in the habit of seizing the Truth only to pervert it...*

These are the forces and beings that are interested in maintaining the falsehoods they have created in the world of the Ignorance and in putting them forward as the Truth which men must follow. In India they are termed Asuras, Rakshasas, Pishachas (beings respectively of the mentalised vital, middle vital and lower vital planes) who are in opposition to the Gods, the Powers of Light.

If there were no hostile forces and there were still the evolutionary world, there could be ignorance still but not perversity in the ignorance. All would be a partial truth acting through imperfect instruments but for the best purposes of this or that stage in a progressive manifestation.

veil, saw behind the life of man great cosmic Powers or beings representative of certain turns or grades of the universal Shakti, divine, titanic, gigantic, demoniac, and men who strongly represented in themselves these types of nature were themselves considered as Devas, Asuras, Rakshasas, Pisachas[5]. The Gita for its own purposes takes up this distinction and develops the difference between these two kinds of beings, *dvau bhūtasargau*. It has spoken previously of the nature which is Asuric and Rakshasic and obstructs God-knowledge, salvation and perfection; it now contrasts it with the Daivic nature which is turned to these things."[1]

The Blessed Lord said: Fearlessness, purity of 16.1
nature, steadfastness in the Yoga of knowledge, charity,
self-control and sacrifice, study of the Scriptures, askesis,
and straightforwardness. Harmlessness, truthfulness, 16.2
absence of wrath, renunciation[6], peace, aversion to fault-
finding, compassion for all beings, uncovetousness,

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[5] *The Asuras and Rakshasas etc. do not belong to the earth, but to supraphysical worlds; but they act upon the earth-life and dispute the control of human life and character and action with the Gods. They are the Powers of Darkness combating the Powers of Light.*

Sometimes they possess men in order to act through them, sometimes they take birth in a human body. When their use in the play is over, they will either change or disappear or no longer seek to intervene in the earth-play.

[6] *...its gentleness and self-denial and self-control are free...from all weakness: it has energy and soul-force, strong resolution, the fearlessness of the soul that lives in the right and according to the truth as well as its harmlessness,* tejaḥ, abhayam, dhṛtiḥ, ahiṁsā, satyam. *The whole being, the whole temperament is integrally pure; there is a seeking for knowledge and a calm and fixed abiding in knowledge.*

gentleness, modesty, and steadiness (absence of
16.3 **fickleness). Vigour, forgiveness, patience, purity, absence of envy and pride, these, O Bharata, are the endowments of him who is born with the Daivic nature.**

16.4 **Hypocrisy, arrogance and conceit, wrath as well as harshness and ignorance, these, O Partha, are the endowments of him who is born with the Asuric nature.**

16.5 **The Daivic endowments are said to lead towards liberation, the Asuric towards bondage. Grieve not, O Pandava, thou art born with the Daivic endowments.**

"Arjuna, says the Teacher, is of the Deva nature. He need not grieve with the thought that by acceptance of battle and slaughter he will be yielding to the impulses of the Asuras. The action on which all turns, the battle which Arjuna has to fight with the incarnate Godhead as his charioteer at the bidding of the Master of the world in the form of the Time-Spirit, is a struggle to establish the kingdom of the Dharma, the empire of Truth, Right and Justice. He himself is born in the Deva kind; he has developed in himself the sattwic being, until he has now come to a point at which he is capable of a high transformation and liberation from the *traiguṇya* and therefore even from the sattwic nature."[2]

द्वौ भूतसर्गौ लोकेऽस्मिन्दैव आसुर एव च ।
दैवो विस्तरशः प्रोक्त आसुरं पार्थ मे शृणु ।। 16.6।।

16.6. There are two types of beings created in this world, the Daivic and the Asuric; the Daivic has been described at length. Hear now from me, O Partha, about the Asuric.

"The distinction between the Deva and the Asura is not comprehensive of all humanity, not rigidly applicable to all its individuals, neither is it sharp and definite in all stages of the moral or spiritual history of the race or in all phases of the individual evolution. The tamasic man who makes so large a part of the whole, falls into neither category as it is here described, though he may have both elements in him in a low degree and for the most part serves tepidly the lower qualities. The normal man is ordinarily a mixture; but one or the other tendency is more pronounced, tends to make him predominantly rajaso-tamasic or sattwo-rajasic and can be said to be preparing him for either culmination, for the divine clarity or the titanic turbulence. For here what is in question is a certain culmination in the evolution of the qualitative nature, as will be evident from the descriptions given in the text. On one side there can be a sublimation of the sattwic quality, the culmination or manifestation of the unborn Deva, on the other a sublimation of the rajasic turn of the soul in nature, the entire birth of the Asura. The one leads towards that movement of liberation on which the Gita is about to lay stress; it makes possible a high self-exceeding of the Sattwa quality and a transformation into the likeness of the divine being, *vimokṣāya*. The other leads away from that universal potentiality and precipitates towards an exaggeration of our bondage to the ego. This is the point of the distinction."[3] 16.5

प्रवृत्तिं च निवृत्तिं च जना न विदुरासुराः ।
न शौचं नापि चाचारो न सत्यं तेषु विद्यते ।। 16.7।।

16.7. Asuric men have not the knowledge of the way of action (Pravritti) or the way of abstention

(Nivritti); in them there is neither purity, nor right conduct, nor truth.

16.8 **"The world", they say, "is without God, not true, without foundation, brought about by mutual union, its**
16.9 **sole cause is Desire, nothing else." Holding fast to this view, these lost souls of little understanding, of violent and evil deeds, arise as the enemies of the world for its**
16.10 **destruction. Given to insatiable desire, full of self-esteem, arrogance and excessive pride, holding wrong views through delusion, addicted to impure resolutions, they**
16.11 **act in the world. Obsessed with innumerable anxieties which would end only with (their) death, looking upon gratification of desires as the highest aim, feeling sure**
16.12 **that this is all. Bound by a hundred ties of hope, given over to desires and wrath, they strive to amass riches by unjust means for the gratification of desires.**

अहंकारं बलं दर्पं कामं क्रोधं च संश्रिताः ।
मामात्मपरदेहेषु प्रद्विषन्तोऽभ्यसूयकाः ।। 18।।

16.18. Given over to egoism, power, insolence, desire and wrath, these malicious people despise Me dwelling in their own bodies and in the bodies of others.

16.19 **These evil and cruel haters, the vilest among men, I cast down constantly into Asuric wombs in the world.**
16.20 **Cast into Asuric wombs birth after birth, these deluded ones, O Kaunteya, attain not to Me and sink down into the lowest status of soul-nature.**

"This graphic description, even giving its entire value to the distinction it implies, must not be pressed to carry more in it than it means. When it is said that there are two creations of beings in this material world, Deva and Asura[7], it is not meant that human souls are so created by God from the beginning each with its own inevitable career in Nature, nor is it meant that there is a rigid spiritual predestination and those rejected from the beginning by the Divine are blinded by him so that they may be thrust down to eternal perdition and the impurity of Hell. All souls are eternal portions of the Divine, the Asura as well as the Deva, all can come to salvation: even the greatest sinner can turn to the Divine. But the evolution of the soul in Nature is an adventure of which Swabhava and the Karma governed by the Swabhava are ever the chief powers; and if an excess in the manifestation of the Swabhava, the self-becoming of the soul, a disorder in its play turns the law of being to the perverse side, if the rajasic qualities are given the upper hand, cultured to the diminution of Sattwa, then the trend of Karma and its results necessarily culminate not in the sattwic height which is capable of the movement of liberation, but in the highest exaggeration of the perversities of the lower nature. The man, if he does not stop short and abandon his way of error, has eventually the

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[7] *The distinction between the two creations has its full truth in supraphysical planes where the law of spiritual evolution does not govern the movement. There are worlds of the Devas, worlds of the Asuras, and there are in these worlds behind us constant types of beings which support the complete divine play of creation indispensable to the march of the universe and cast their influence also on the earth and on the life and nature of man in this physical plane of existence.*

Asura full-born in him, and once he has taken that enormous turn away from the Light and Truth, he can no more reverse the fatal speed of his course because of the very immensity of the misused divine power in him until he has plumbed the depths to which it falls, found bottom and seen where the way has led him, the power exhausted and misspent, himself down in the lowest state of the soul nature, which is Hell. Only when he understands and turns to the Light, does that other truth of the Gita come in, that even the greatest sinner, the most impure and violent evil-doer is saved the moment he turns to adore and follow after the Godhead within him. Then, simply by that turn, he gets very soon into the sattwic way which leads to perfection and freedom."[4]

त्रिविधं नरकस्येदं द्वारं नाशनमात्मनः ।
कामः क्रोधस्तथा लोभस्तस्मादेतत्त्रयं त्यजेत् ।। 16.21 ।।

16.21. Threefold are the doors of Hell, leading to the ruin of the soul – desire, wrath and greed: therefore let man renounce these three.

16.22 **A man liberated from these three doors of darkness, O Kaunteya, practises what is good for his soul and reaches the highest status.**

26. Action Done According to the Shastra and the Threefold Faith

At the end of the sixteenth chapter (Deva and Asura) the Gita makes a distinction between action done according to the licence of personal desire and action done according to the shastra – the recognised science, and art if life which is the outcome of mankind's collective living, its culture, religion, science, its progressive discovery of the best rule of life. "The action of personal desire belongs to the unregenerated state of our nature and is dictated by ignorance or false knowledge and an unregulated or ill-regulated kinetic or rajasic egoism. The action controlled by Shastra is an outcome of intellectual, ethical, aesthetic, social and religious culture; it embodies an attempt at a certain right living, harmony and right order and is evidently an effort, more or less advanced according to circumstances, of the sattwic element in man to overtop, regulate and control or guide, where it must be admitted, his rajasic and tamasic egoism. It is the means to a step in advance, and therefore mankind must first proceed through it and make this Shastra its law of action rather than obey the impulsion of its personal desires."[5]

He who, disregarding the rule of the Shastra, acts under the impulsions of desire, attains not to perfection, nor happiness, nor the highest status. Therefore let the Shastra be for thee the authority to determine what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. Knowing what has been declared by the rules of the Shastra, thou shouldst work here.

16.23

16.24

"To follow the law of desire is not the true rule of our

nature; there is a higher and juster standard of its works. But where is it embodied or how is it to be found? In the first place, the human race has always been seeking for this just and high Law and whatever it has discovered is embodied in its Shastra, its rule of science and knowledge, rule of ethics, rule of religion, rule of best social living, rule of one's right relations with man and God and Nature. Shastra does not mean a mass of customs, some good, some bad, unintelligently followed by the customary routine mind of the tamasic man. Shastra is the knowledge and teaching laid down by intuition, experience and wisdom, the science and art and ethic of life, the best standards available to the race. The half-awakened man who leaves the observance of its rule to follow the guidance of his instincts and desires, can get pleasure but not happiness, for the inner happiness can only come by right living. He cannot move to perfection, cannot acquire the highest spiritual status. The law of instinct and desire seems to come first in the animal world, but the manhood of man grows by the pursuit of truth and religion and knowledge and a right life. The Shastra, the recognised Right that he has set up to govern his lower members by his reason and intelligent will, must therefore first be observed and made the authority for conduct and works and for what should or should not be done, till the instinctive desire nature is schooled and abated and put down by the habit of self-control and man is ready first for a freer intelligent self-guidance and then for the highest supreme law and supreme liberty of the spiritual nature.

For the Shastra in its ordinary aspect is not that spiritual law, although at its loftiest point, when it becomes a science and art of spiritual living Adhyatma-shastra, – the Gita itself describes its own teaching as the highest and most secret

Shastra, – it formulates a rule of the self-transcendence of the sattwic nature and develops the discipline which leads to spiritual transmutation. Yet all Shastra is built on a number of preparatory conditions, Dharmas; it is a means, not an end. The supreme end is the freedom of the spirit when abandoning all Dharmas the soul turns to God for its sole law of action, acts straight from the divine will and lives in the freedom of the divine nature, not in the Law, but in the Spirit. This is the development of the teaching which is prepared by the next question of Arjuna."[6]

अर्जुन उवाच
ये शास्त्रविधिमुत्सृज्य यजन्ते श्रद्धयान्विताः ।
तेषां निष्ठा तु का कृष्ण सत्त्वमाहो रजस्तमः ।। 17.1।।

17.1. Arjuna said: Those who offer sacrifice full of faith (*śraddhā*), but abandoning the rule of the Shastra, what is that concentrated will of devotion (*niṣṭhā*) in them, O Krishna? Is it Sattwa, Rajas or Tamas?

"...there is a freer tendency in man other than the leading of his desires and other than his will to accept the Law, the fixed idea, the safe governing rule of the Shastra. The individual frequently enough, the community at any moment of its life is seen to turn away from the Shastra, becomes impatient of it, loses that form of its will and faith and goes in search of another law which it is now more disposed to accept as the right rule of living and regard as a more vital or higher truth of existence. This may happen when the established Shastra ceases to be a living thing and degenerates or stiffens into a mass of customs and conventions. Or it may

come because it is found that the Shastra is imperfect or no longer useful for the progress demanded; a new truth, a more perfect law of living has become imperative... This movement begins with the individual, who is no longer satisfied with the law because he finds that it no longer corresponds to his idea and largest or intensest experience of himself and existence and therefore he can no longer bring to it the will to believe and practise. It does not correspond to his inner way of being, it is not to him *sat*, the thing that truly is, the right, the highest or best or real good; it is not the truth and law of his or of all being. The Shastra is something impersonal to the individual, and that gives it its authority over the narrow personal law of his members; but at the same time it is personal to the collectivity and is the outcome of its experience, its culture or its nature. It is not in all its form and spirit the ideal rule of fulfilment of the Self or the eternal law of the Master of our nature, although it may contain in itself in small or larger measure indications, preparations, illuminating glimpses of that far greater thing. And the individual may have gone beyond the collectivity and be ready for a greater truth, a wider walk, a deeper intention of the Life-Spirit.

But what then shall be the secure base of an action which departs both from the guidance of desire and from the normal law? For the rule of desire has an authority of its own, no longer safe or satisfactory to us as it is to the animal or as it might have been to a primitive humanity, but still, so far as it goes, founded on a very living part of our nature and fortified by its strong indications; and the law, the Shastra has behind it all the authority of long established rule, old successful sanctions and a secure past experience. But this new movement

is of the nature of a powerful adventure into the unknown or partly known, a daring development and a new conquest, and what then is the clue to be followed, the guiding light on which it can depend or its strong basis in our being? The answer is that the clue and support is to be found in man's *śraddhā*, his faith, his will to believe, to live what he sees or thinks to be the truth of himself and of existence. In other words this movement is man's appeal to himself or to something potent and compelling in himself or in universal existence for the discovery of his truth, his law of living, his way to fullness and perfection. And everything depends on the nature of his faith, the thing in himself or in the universal soul – of which he is a portion or manifestation – to which he directs it and on how near he gets by it to his real self and the Self or true being of the universe. If he is tamasic, obscure, clouded, if he has an ignorant faith and inapt will, he will reach nothing true and will fall away to his lower nature. If he is lured by false rajasic lights, he can be carried away by self-will into bypaths that may lead to morass or precipice. In either case his only chance of salvation lies in a return of Sattwa upon him to impose a new enlightened order and rule upon his members which will liberate him from the violent error of his self-will or the dull error of his clouded ignorance. If, on the other hand, he has the sattwic nature and a sattwic faith and direction for his steps, he will arrive in sight of a higher yet unachieved ideal rule which may lead him even in rare instances beyond the sattwic light some way at least towards a highest divine illumination and divine way of being and living. For if the sattwic light is so strong in him as to bring him to its own culminating point, then he will be able advancing from that point to make out his gate of entrance into some

first ray of that which is divine, transcendent and absolute. In all effort at self-finding these possibilities are there; they are the conditions of this spiritual adventure."[7]

श्रीभगवान् उवाच
त्रिविधा भवति श्रद्धा देहिनां सा स्वभावजा ।
सात्त्विकी राजसी चैव तामसी चेति तां शृणु ।। 17.2।।

17.2. The Blessed Lord said: The faith of embodied beings is of three kinds, born of their nature; it is sattwic, rajasic, or tamasic. Hear thou of these.

"When we live, when we are and do according to our desires, that is a persistent act of *śraddhā* belonging mostly to our vital and physical, our tamasic and rajasic nature. And when we try to be, to live and to do according to the Shastra, we proceed by a persistent act of *śraddhā* which belongs, supposing it to be not a routine faith, to a sattwic tendency that is constantly labouring to impose itself on our rajasic and tamasic parts. When we leave both these things and try to be, to live and to do according to some ideal or novel conception of truth of our own finding or our own individual acceptance, that too is a persistent act of *śraddhā* which may be dominated by any one of these three qualities that constantly govern our every thought, will, feeling and act. And again when we try to be, to live and to do according to the divine nature, then too we must proceed by a persistent act of *śraddhā*, which must be according to the Gita the faith of the sattwic nature when it culminates and is preparing to exceed its own clear-cut limits. But all and any of these things implies some kinesis or displacement of nature, all suppose an inner

or outer or ordinarily both an inner and an outer action. And what then will be the character of this action? The Gita states three main elements of the work we have to do, *kartavyam karma*, and these three are sacrifice, giving[8] and askesis[9]. For

[8] *When the Dana (gift) is given for the sake of giving, to one from whom no benefit in return is expected, and in the right place, at the right time and to the right person, that gift is said to be sattwic. "The culmination of the sattwic way of* dāna *will bring into the action an increasing element of that wide self-giving to others and to the world and to God,* ātmadāna*,* ātma-samarpaṇa*, which is the high consecration of the sacrifice of works enjoined by the Gita... All this manifold universe comes into birth and is constantly maintained by God's giving of himself and his powers and the lavish outflow of his self and spirit into all these existences; universal being, says the Veda, is the sacrifice of the Purusha. All the action of the perfected soul will be even such a constant divine giving of itself and its powers, an outflowing of the knowledge, light, strength, love, joy, helpful Shakti which it possesses in the Divine and by his influence and effluence on all around it according to their capacity of reception or on all this world and its creatures. That will be the complete result of the complete self-giving of the soul to the Master of our existence."*

[9] *The Gita describes three kinds of sattwic askesis (Tapa). Worship of the godhead, of the twice-born, of the guru and of the wise, purity, straightforwardness, chastity and non-violence, are called the askesis (Tapa) of the body. Speech which gives no offence, truthful, pleasant and beneficial, and the regular study of Scripture, are called the askesis of speech. Serenity of mind, gentleness, silence, self-control, purity of feelings, are called the askesis of mind. This threefold askesis, practised with a supreme faith, by men in Yoga and with no desire for fruit, is said to be sattwic. "Here comes in all that quiets or disciplines the rajasic and egoistic nature and all that replaces it by the happy and tranquil principle of good and virtue. This is the askesis of the sattwic Dharma so highly prized in the system of the ancient Indian culture. Its greater culmination will be a high purity of the reason and will, an equal soul, a deep peace and calm, a wide sympathy and preparation of oneness, a reflection of the inner soul's divine gladness in the mind, life and body. There at that lofty point the ethical is already passing away into the spiritual type and character. And this culmination too can be made to transcend itself, can be raised*

18.1 when questioned by Arjuna on the difference between the outer and inner renunciation, *sannyāsa* and *tyāga*, Krishna insists that
18.5 these three things ought not to be renounced at all but ought altogether to be done, for they are the work before us, *kartavyam karma*, and they purify the wise. In other words these acts constitute the means of our perfection. But at the same time they may be done unwisely or less wisely by the unwise."[8]

सत्त्वानुरूपा सर्वस्य श्रद्धा भवति भारत ।
श्रद्धामयोऽयं पुरुषो यो यच्छ्रद्धः स एव सः ।। 17.3 ।।

17.3. The faith of each man takes the shape given to it by his stuff of being, O Bharata. This Purusha, this soul in man, is made of faith; and whatever is that faith in him, he is that and that is he.

"...a remarkable line in which the Gita tells us that this Purusha, this soul in man, is, as it were, made of *śraddhā*, a faith, a will to be, a belief in itself and existence, and whatever is that will, faith or constituting belief in him, he is that and that is he, *śraddhā-mayo'yam puruṣo yo yac-chraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ*. If we look into this pregnant saying a little closely, we shall find that this single line contains implied in its few forceful words almost the whole theory of the modern gospel of pragmatism. For if a man or the soul in a man consists of

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into a higher and freer light, can pass away into the settled godlike energy of the supreme nature. And what will remain then will be the spirit's immaculate Tapas, a highest will and luminous force in all the members, acting in a wide and solid calm and a deep and pure spiritual delight, Ananda. There will then be no farther need of askesis, no Tapasya, because all is naturally and easily divine, all is that Tapas."

the faith which is in him, taken in this deeper sense, then it follows that the truth which he sees and wills to live is for him the truth of his being, the truth of himself that he has created or is creating and there can be for him no other real truth. This truth is a thing of his inner and outer action, a thing of his becoming, of the soul's dynamics, not of that in him which never changes. He is what he is today by some past will of his nature sustained and continued by a present will to know, to believe and to be in his intelligence and vital force, and whatever new turn is taken by this will and faith active in his very substance, that he will tend to become in the future. We create our own truth of existence in our own action of mind and life, which is another way of saying that we create our own selves, are our own makers.

But very obviously this is only one aspect of the truth, and all one-aspected statements are suspect to the thinker. Truth is not merely whatever our own personality is or creates; that is only the truth of our becoming, one point or line of emphasis in a movement of widest volume. Beyond our personality there is, first, a universal being as well as a universal becoming of which ours is a little movement; and beyond that too there is the eternal Being out of which all becoming derives and to which it owes its potentialities, elements, original and final motives..."[9]

"Purusha is able by this power of its nature to take whatever poise it may will and to follow the law and form of being proper to any self-formulation. It is eternal soul and spirit in its own power of self-existence superior to and governing its manifestations; it is universal soul and spirit developed in power of becoming of its existence, infinite in

the finite; it is individual soul and spirit absorbed in development of some particular course of its becoming, in appearance mutably finite in the infinite. All these things it can be at once, eternal spirit universalised in cosmos, individualised in its beings; it can too found the consciousness rejecting, governing or responding to the action of Nature in any one of them, put the others behind it or away from it, know itself as pure eternity, self-supporting universality or exclusive individuality. Whatever the formulation of its nature, soul can seem to become that and view itself as that only in the frontal active part of its consciousness; but it is never only what it seems to be; it is too the so much else that it can be; secretly, it is the all of itself that is yet hidden. It is not irrevocably limited by any particular self-formulation in Time, but can break through and beyond it, break it up or develop it, select, reject, new-create, reveal out of itself a greater self-formulation. What it believes itself to be by the whole active will of its consciousness in its instruments, that it is or tends to become, *yo yacchraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ* : what it believes it can be and has full faith in becoming, that it changes to in nature, evolves or discovers.

This power of the soul over its nature is of the utmost importance in the Yoga of self-perfection; if it did not exist, we could never get by conscious endeavour and aspiration out of the fixed groove of our present imperfect human being; if any greater perfection were intended, we should have to wait for Nature to effect it in her own slow or swift process of evolution. In the lower forms of being the soul accepts this complete subjection to Nature, but as it rises higher in the scale, it awakes to a sense of something in itself which can

command Nature; but it is only when it arrives at self-knowledge that this free will and control becomes a complete reality. The change effects itself through process of nature, not therefore by any capricious magic, but an ordered development and intelligible process. When complete mastery is gained, then the process by its self-effective rapidity may seem a miracle to the intelligence, but it still proceeds by law of the truth of Spirit, – when the Divine within us by close union of our will and being with him takes up the Yoga and acts as the omnipotent master of the nature. For the Divine is our highest Self and the self of all Nature, the eternal and universal Purusha."[10]

27. Sannyasa and Tyaga

अर्जुन उवाच
संन्यासस्य महाबाहो तत्त्वमिच्छामि वेदितुम् ।
त्यागस्य च हृषीकेश पृथक्केशिनिषूदन ।। 18.1 ।।

18.1. Arjuna said: I desire to know, O Mighty-armed, the essence of Sannyasa and Tyaga, O Hrishikesha, and their difference[10], O Keshinisudana (destroyer of Keshi).

18.2 **The Blessed Lord said: The seers understand by Sannyasa the giving up of works prompted by desire; the abandonment of the fruits of all works is called Tyaga by the wise.**

"In that sense Tyaga, not Sannyasa, is the better way. It is not the desirable actions that must be laid aside, but the desire which gives them that character has to be put away from us. The fruit of the action may come in the dispensation of the Master of works, but there is to be no egoistic demand for

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[10] *The frequent harping, the reiterated emphasis of the Gita on this crucial distinction has been amply justified by the subsequent history of the later Indian mind, its constant confusion of these two very different things and its strong bent towards belittling any activity of the kind taught by the Gita as at best only a preliminary to the supreme inaction of Sannyasa. As a matter of fact, when people talk of Tyaga, of renunciation, it is always the physical renunciation of the world which they understand by the word or at least on which they lay emphasis, while the Gita takes absolutely the opposite view that the real Tyaga has action and living in the world as its basis and not a flight to the monastery, the cave or the hill-top. The real Tyaga is action with a renunciation of desire and that too is the real Sannyasa.*

that as a reward and condition of doing works. Or the fruit may not at all come and still the work has to be performed as the thing to be done, *kartavyam karma*, the thing which the Master within demands of us. The success, the failure are in his hands and he will regulate them according to his omniscient will and inscrutable purpose. Action, all action has indeed to be given up in the end, not physically by abstention, by immobility, by inertia, but spiritually to the Master of our being by whose power alone can any action be accomplished. There has to be a renunciation of the false idea of ourselves as the doer; for in reality it is the universal Shakti that works through our personality and our ego. The spiritual transference of all our works to the Master and his Shakti is the real Sannyasa in the teaching of the Gita."[11] 18.9

"Action as such should be given up as an evil," declare some learned men. "Acts of sacrifice, giving and askesis should not be given up," say others. 18.3

"The question still arises, what works are to be done? Those even who stand for a final physical renunciation are not at one in this difficult matter. Some would have it that all works must be excised from our life, as if that were possible. But it is not possible so long as we are in the body and alive; nor can salvation consist in reducing our active selves by trance to the lifeless immobility of the clod and the pebble... What then are the actions to be done? The thoroughgoing ascetic answer, not noted by the Gita – it was perhaps not altogether current at the time – might be that solely begging, eating and meditation are to be permitted among voluntary activities and otherwise only the necessary actions of the body. But the more liberal and comprehensive solution was evidently to

continue the three most sattwic activities, sacrifice, giving and askesis. And these certainly are to be done, says the Gita, for they purify the wise."[12]

18.4 **Hear, O best of the Bharatas, My conclusions about Tyaga (renunciation). Tyaga, O tiger of men, has been declared to be threefold.**

यज्ञदानतपः कर्म न त्याज्यं कार्यमेव तत् ।
यज्ञो दानं तपश्चैव पावनानि मनीषिणाम् ।। 18.5।।

18.5. Acts of sacrifice, giving and askesis ought not to be abandoned. Sacrifice, giving and askesis purify the wise; therefore, they should certainly be performed.

18.6 **But even these works ought to be performed giving up attachment and desire for fruit. This, O Partha, is my**
18.7 **decided and highest view. Verily, renunciation of rightly regulated actions is not proper; to renounce them out of**
18.8 **delusion is declared to be tamasic. He who gives up works because they bring sorrow or out of fear of physical suffering, thus doing rajasic renunciation, obtains not the**
18.9 **fruit of renunciation. When one performs the rightly regulated actions, O Arjuna, as a thing that ought to be done, renouncing attachment to action as well as to the**
18.10 **fruit, that Tyaga is regarded as sattwic. The wise Tyagi, fully imbued with sattwa and with doubts cast away, has no aversion to unpleasant action, no attachment to pleasant action.**

"There must be no attachment to pleasant, desirable, lucrative or successful work and no doing of it because it has

that nature; but that kind of work too has to be done, – done totally, selflessly, with the assent of the spirit, – when it is the action demanded from above and from within us, *kartavyam karma*. There must be no aversion to unpleasant, undesirable or ungratifying action or work that brings or is likely to bring with it suffering, danger, harsh conditions, inauspicious consequences; for that too has to be accepted, totally, selflessly, with a deep understanding of its need and meaning, when it is the work that should be done, *kartavyam karma*. The wise man puts away the shrinkings and hesitations of the desire-soul and the doubts of the ordinary human intelligence, that measure by little personal, conventional or otherwise limited standards."[13] 18.9

Nor indeed is it possible for an embodied being to abandon work altogether; verily he who gives up the fruit of work is called a Tyagi, a renouncer. 18.11

"The essence of renunciation, the true Tyaga, the true Sannyasa, is not any rule of thumb of inaction but a disinterested soul, a selfless mind, the transition from ego to the free impersonal and spiritual nature. The spirit of this inner renunciation is the first mental condition of the highest culminating sattwic discipline."[14]

28. Swabhava and Swadharma

"We must realise that the ancient Aryan Rishis meant by the Chaturvarnya not a mere social division, but a recognition of God manifesting Himself in fundamental Swabhava, which our bodily distinctions, our social orders are merely an attempt to organise in the symbols of human life, often a confused attempt, often a mere parody and distortion of the divine thing they try to express. Every man has in himself all the four Dharmas, but one predominates, in one he is born and that strides the note of his character and determines the type and cast of all his actions; the rest is subordinated to the dominant type and helps to give it its complement. No Brahamana is a complete Brahmana unless he has the Kshatratejas in him, the Vaishyashakti and the Shudrashakti, but all these have to serve in him the fullness of his Brahmanyam. God manifests Himself as
10.6 **the four Prajapatis or Manus, *catvāro manavaḥ* of the Gita, and each man is born in the *aṁśa* of one of the four; the first characterised by wisdom and largeness, the second by heroism and force, the third by dexterity and enjoyment, the fourth by work and service. The perfected man develops in himself all four capacities and contains at once the god of wisdom and largeness, the god of heroism and force, the god of skill and enjoyment, the god of work and service. Only one stands dominant and leads and uses the others."**[15]

"All action on the normal level is determined by the Gunas; the action which is to be done, *kartavyam karma*, takes

the triple form of giving, askesis and sacrifice, and any or all of these three may assume the character of any of the Gunas. Therefore we have to proceed by the raising of these things to the highest sattwic height of which they are capable and go yet farther beyond to a largeness in which all works become a free self-giving, an energy of the divine Tapas, a perpetual sacrament of the spiritual existence. But this is a general law and all these considerations have been the enunciation of quite general principles and refer indiscriminately to all actions and to all men alike. All can eventually arrive by spiritual evolution to this strong discipline, this large perfection, this highest spiritual state. But while the general rule of mind and action is the same for all men, we see too that there is a constant law of variation and each individual acts not only according to the common laws of the human spirit, mind, will, life, but according to his own nature; each man fulfils different functions or follows a different bent according to the rule of his own circumstances, capacities, turn, character, powers. What place is to be assigned to this variation, this individual rule of nature in the spiritual discipline?

The Gita has laid some stress on this point and even assigned to it a great preliminary importance. At the very start it has spoken of the nature, rule and function of the Kshatriya as Arjuna's own law of action, *svadharma*; it has proceeded to lay it down with a striking emphasis that one's own nature, rule, function should be observed and followed, – even if defective, it is better than the well-performed rule of another's nature. Death in one's own law of nature is better for a man than victory in an alien movement. To follow the law of 3.35
another's nature is dangerous to the soul, contradictory, as we may say, to the natural way of his evolution, a thing

mechanically imposed and therefore imported, artificial and sterilising to one's growth towards the true stature of the spirit. What comes out of the being is the right and healthful thing, the authentic movement, not what is imposed on it from outside or laid on it by life's compulsions or the mind's error. This Swadharma is of four general kinds formulated outwardly in the action of the four orders of the old Indian social culture, *cāturvaṃya*. That system corresponds, says the Gita, to a divine law, it 'was created by Me according to the divisions of the Gunas and works', – created from the
4.13 beginning by the Master of existence. In other words, there are four distinct orders of the active nature, or four fundamental types of the soul in nature, *svabhāva*, and the work and proper function of each human being corresponds to his type of nature. This is now finally explained in preciser detail."[16]

न तदस्ति पृथिव्यां वा दिवि देवेषु वा पुनः ।
सत्त्वं प्रकृतिजैर्मुक्तं यदेभिः स्यात्त्रिभिर्गुणैः ।। 18.40 ।।

18.40. Neither on earth, nor in heaven among the gods, is there a being that is free from the workings of these three Gunas, born of Prakriti (nature).

18.41 **The works of the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras are divided, O Parantapa, according to the**
18.42 **Gunas born of their Swabhava (self-nature). Calm, self-control, askesis, purity, long-suffering, candour, essential and comprehensive knowledge, acceptance and practice of spiritual truth are the work of the Brahmin, born of**

his Swabhava (self-nature). Heroism, high spirit, resolution, ability, not fleeing in the battle, giving and lordship are the natural work of the Kshatriya. 18.43

Agriculture, cattle-keeping and trade are the natural works of the Vaishya. All the actions of the character of service are the natural work of the Shudra. 18.44

Devotedly engaged in one's own work, man attains perfection; how, engaged in one's own work, one attains perfection, that do thou hear. 18.45

He from whom all beings originate and by whom all this is pervaded, by worshipping Him by his own work, a man attains perfection. 18.46

Better is one's Swadharma (own law of works) though in itself faulty, than an alien law well carried out; one does not incur sin when one does the work regulated by one's self-nature. 18.47

The inborn work, O Kaunteya, though defective, ought not to be abandoned, for all initiations are clouded by defects as fire by smoke. 18.48

"These verses and the earlier pronouncements of the Gita on the same subject have been seized upon in current controversies on the caste question and interpreted by some as a sanction of the present system, used by others as a denial of the hereditary basis of caste. In point of fact the verses in the Gita have no bearing on the existing caste system, because that is a very different thing from the ancient social ideal of *caturvarṇa*, the four clear-cut orders of the Aryan community, and in no way corresponds with the description of the Gita. Agriculture, cattle-keeping and trade of every kind are said here to be the work of the Vaishya; but in the later system the majority of those concerned in trade and in cattle-keeping, artisans, small craftsmen and others are actually classed as Sudras, – where they are not put altogether outside the pale,

– and, with some exceptions, the merchant class is alone and that too not everywhere ranked as Vaishya. Agriculture, government and service are the professions of all classes from the Brahmin down to the Sudra. And if the economical divisions of function have been confounded beyond any possibility of rectification, the law of the Guna or quality is still less a part of the later system. There all is rigid custom, *ācāra*, with no reference to the need of the individual nature. If again we take the religious side of the contention advanced by the advocates of the caste system, we can certainly fasten no such absurd idea on the words of the Gita as that it is a law of a man's nature that he shall follow without regard to his personal bent and capacities the profession of his parents or his immediate or distant ancestors, the son of a milkman be a milkman, the son of a doctor a doctor, the descendants of shoemakers remain shoemakers to the end of measurable time, still less that by doing so, by this unintelligent and mechanical repetition of the law of another's nature without regard to his own individual call and qualities a man automatically farthers his own perfection and arrives at spiritual freedom. The Gita's words refer to the ancient system of *caturvarṇa*, as it existed or was supposed to exist in its ideal purity, – there is some controversy whether it was ever anything more than an ideal or general norm more or less loosely followed in practice, – and it should be considered in that connection alone. Here too there is considerable difficulty as to the exact outward significance."[17]

The ancient system of the four orders had a triple aspect: (i) Social and Economic (ii) Cultural and (iii) Spiritual.

(i) Social and Economic Aspect: "On the economic side

it recognised four functions of the social man in the community, the religious and intellectual, the political, the economic and the servile functions. There are thus four kinds of works, the work of religious ministration, letters, learning and knowledge, the work of government, politics, administration and war, the work of production, wealth-making and exchange, the work of hired labour and service. An endeavour was made to found and stabilise the whole arrangement of society on the partition of these four functions among four clearly marked classes[11]. This system was not peculiar to India, but was with certain differences the dominating feature of a stage of social evolution in other ancient or mediaeval societies. The four functions are still inherent in the life of all normal communities, but the clear divisions no longer exist anywhere. The old system everywhere broke down and gave place to a more fluid order or, as in India, to a confused and complex social rigidity and economic immobility degenerating towards a chaos of castes."[18]

(ii) The Cultural Aspect: The cultural idea gave to each class its religious custom, its law of honour, ethical rule,

[11]*A man's social function and position were no doubt determined originally, as they are still in freer, less closely ordered communities by environment, occasion, birth and capacity; but as there set in a more fixed stratification, his rank came practically to be regulated by birth mainly or alone and in the later system of caste birth came to be the sole rule of status... This was an inevitable evolution, because the external signs are the only ones which are easily and conveniently determinable and birth was the most handy and manageable in an increasingly mechanised, complex and conventional social order. For a time the possible disparity between the hereditary function and the individual's real inborn character and capacity was made up or minimised by education and training: but eventually this effort ceased to be sustained and the hereditary convention held absolute rule.*

suitable education and training, type of character, family ideal and discipline. "The facts of life did not always correspond to the idea, – there is always a certain gulf found between the mental ideal and the vital and physical practice, – but there was a constant and strenuous endeavour to keep up as much as possible a real correspondence. The importance of this attempt and of the cultural ideal and atmosphere it created in the past training of the social man, can hardly be put too high; but at the present day it has little more than a historical, a past and evolutionary significance."[19]

(iii) The Spiritual Aspect: Wherever the system of fourfold orders existed, it was given more or less a religious section (more in the East, very little in Europe) and in India a profounder spiritual use and significance. The Gita is primarily concerned with this spiritual significance.

In the passage quoted above (shlokas 18.40 to 18.48) the eye of the thought is fixed on the spiritual value. The Gita always lays a very great stress on the internal law and very little on the mere external rule and practice. "The Gita accepted the Vedic theory of sacrifice, but gave it a profound turn, an inner, subjective and universal meaning, a spiritual sense and direction which alters all its values. Here too and in the same way it accepts the theory of the four orders of men, but gives to it a profound turn, an inner, subjective and universal meaning, a spiritual sense and direction. And immediately the idea behind the theory changes its values and becomes an enduring and living truth not bound up with the transience of a particular social form and order. What the Gita is concerned with is not the validity of the Aryan social order now abolished or in a state of deliquescence, – if that

were all, its principle of the Swabhava and Swadharma would have no permanent truth or value, – but the relation of a man's outward life to his inward being, the evolution of his action from his soul and inner law of nature.

And we see in fact that the Gita itself indicates very clearly its intention when it describes the work of the Brahmin and the Kshatriya not in terms of external function, not defined as learning, priest-work and letters or government, war and politics, but entirely in terms of internal character. The language reads a little curiously to our ear. Calm, self-control, askesis, purity, long-suffering, candour, knowledge, acceptance and practice of spiritual truth would not ordinarily be described as a man's function, work or life occupation. Yet this is precisely what the Gita means and says, – that these things, their development, their expression in conduct, their power to cast into form the law of the sattwic nature are the real work of the Brahmin: learning, religious ministration and the other outer functions are only its most suitable field, a favourable means of this inner development, its appropriate self-expression, its way of fixing itself into firmness of type and externalised solidity of character. War, government, politics, leadership and rule are a similar field and means for the Kshatriya; but his real work is the development, the expression in conduct, the power to cast into form and dynamic rhythm of movement the law of the active battling royal or warrior spirit. The work of the Vaishya and Sudra is expressed in terms of external function, and this opposite turn may have some significance. For the temperament moved to production and wealth-getting or limited in the circle of labour and service, the mercantile and the servile mind, are usually turned outward, more occupied with the external

values of their work than its power for character, and this disposition is not so favourable to a sattwic or spiritual action of the nature. That too is the reason why a commercial and industrial age or a society preoccupied with the idea of work and labour creates around it an atmosphere more favourable to the material than the spiritual life, more adapted to vital efficiency than to the subtler perfection of the high-reaching mind and spirit. Nevertheless, this kind of nature too and its functions have their inner significance, their spiritual value and can be made a means and power for perfection. As has been said elsewhere, not alone the Brahmin with his ideal of spirituality, ethical purity and knowledge and the Kshatriya with his ideal of nobility, chivalry and high character, but the wealth-seeking Vaishya, the toil-imprisoned Sudra, woman with her narrow, circumscribed and subject life, the very
9.32 outcast born from a womb of sin, *pāpayonayaḥ*, can by this road rise at once towards the highest inner greatness and spiritual freedom, towards perfection, towards the liberation and fulfilment of the divine element in the human being.

Three propositions suggest themselves even at the first view and may be taken as implicit in all that the Gita says in this passage. First, all action must be determined from within because each man has in him something his own, some characteristic principle and inborn power of his nature... that creates the dynamic form of his soul in nature and to express and perfect it by action, to make it effective in capacity and conduct and life is his work, his true Karma: that points him to the right way of his inner and outer living and is the right starting-point for his farther development. Next, there are broadly four types of nature each with its characteristic function and ideal rule of work and character and the type

indicates the man's proper field and should trace for him his just circle of function in his outer social existence. Finally, whatever work a man does, if done according to the law of his being, the truth of his nature, can be turned Godwards and made an effective means of spiritual liberation and perfection."[20]

The external idea of the four orders of men in life is concerned only with the more outward working of this truth of the divine action implicit in the teachings of the Gita. "It is true that in this birth men fall very largely into one of four types, the man of knowledge, the man of power, the productive vital man, the man of rude labour and service. These are not fundamental divisions, but stages of self-development in our manhood. The human being starts with a sufficient load of ignorance and inertia; his first state is one of rude toil enforced on his animal indolence by the needs of the body, by the impulsion of life, by necessity of Nature and, beyond a certain point of need, by some form of direct or indirect compulsion which society lays upon him, and those who are still governed by this Tamas are the Sudras, the serfs of society who give it their toil and can contribute nothing or very little else in comparison with more developed men to its manifold play of life. By kinetic action man develops the rajasic Guna in him and we get a second type of man who is driven by a constant instinct for useful creation, production, having, acquisition, holding and enjoying, the middle economic and vital man, the Vaishya. At a higher elevation of the rajasic or kinetic quality of our one common nature we get the active man with a more dominant will, with bolder ambitions, with the instinct to act, battle, and enforce his will, at the strongest to lead, command, rule, carry masses of men in his orbit, the

fighter, leader, ruler, prince, king, the Kshatriya. And where the sattwic mind predominates, we get the Brahmin, the man with a turn for knowledge, who brings thought, reflection, the seeking for truth and an intelligent or at the highest a spiritual rule into life and illumines by it his conception and mode of existence.

There is always in human nature something of all these four personalities developed or undeveloped, wide or narrow, suppressed or rising to the surface, but in most men one or the other tends to predominate and seems to take up sometimes the whole space of action in the nature. And in any society we should have all four types, – even, for an example, if we could create a purely productive and commercial society such as modern times have attempted, or for that matter a Sudra society of labour, of the proletariate such as attracts the most modern mind and is now being attempted in one part of Europe and advocated in others. There would still be the thinkers moved to find the law and truth and guiding rule of the whole matter, the captains and leaders of industry who would make all this productive activity an excuse for the satisfaction of their need of adventure and battle and leadership and dominance, the many typical purely productive and wealth-getting men, the average workers satisfied with a modicum of labour and the reward of their labour. But these are quite outward things, and if that were all, this economy of human type would have no spiritual significance. Or it would mean at most, as has been sometimes held in India, that we have to go through these stages of development in our births; for we must perforce proceed progressively through the tamasic, the rajaso-tamasic, the rajasic or rajaso-sattwic to the sattwic nature, ascend and fix

ourselves in an inner Brahminhood, *brāhmaṇya*[12], and then seek salvation from that basis. But in that case there would be no logical room for the Gita's assertion that even the Sudra or Chandala can by turning his life Godwards climb straight to spiritual liberty and perfection."[21]

"The fundamental truth is not this outward thing, but a force of our inner being in movement, the truth of the fourfold active power of the spiritual nature. Each Jiva possesses in his spiritual nature these four sides, is a soul of knowledge, a soul of strength and of power, a soul of mutuality and interchange, a soul of works and service, but one side or other predominates in the action and expressive spirit and tinges the dealings of the soul with its embodied nature; it leads and gives its stamp to the other powers and uses them for the principal strain of action, tendency, experience. The Swabhava then follows, not crudely and rigidly as put in the social demarcation, but subtly and flexibly the law of this strain and develops in developing it the other three powers. Thus the pursuit of the impulse of works and service rightly done develops knowledge, increases power, trains closeness or balance of mutuality and skill and order of relation. Each front of the fourfold godhead moves through the enlargement of its own dominant principle of nature and enrichment by the other three towards a total perfection[13]. This development undergoes the law of the three

[12] *The ancients held that all men are born in their lower nature as Sudras and only regenerated by ethical and spiritual culture, but in their highest inner self are Brahmanas capable of the full spirit and godhead, a theory which is not far perhaps from the psychological truth of our nature.*

[13] *None of these four types of personality can be complete even in its own field if it does not bring into it something of the other qualities. The*

Gunas. There is possible a tamasic and rajasic way of following even the Dharma of the soul of knowledge, a brute tamasic and a high sattwic way of following the Dharma of power, a forceful rajasic or a beautiful and noble sattwic way of following the Dharma of works and service. To arrive at the sattwic way of the inner individual Swadharma and of the works to which it moves us on the ways of life is a preliminary condition of perfection. **And it may be noted that the inner Swadharma is not bound to any outward social or other form of action, occupation or function. The soul of works that is satisfied to serve or that element in us can, for example, make the life of the pursuit of knowledge, the life of struggle and power or the life of mutuality, production and interchange a means of satisfying its divine impulse to labour and to service.**

And in the end to arrive at the divinest figure and most

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man of knowledge cannot serve Truth with freedom and perfection, if he has not intellectual and moral courage, will, audacity, the strength to open and conquer new kingdoms, otherwise he becomes a slave of the limited intellect or a servant or at most a ritual priest of only an established knowledge, – cannot use his knowledge to the best advantage unless he has the adaptive skill to work out its truths for the practice of life, otherwise he lives only in the idea, – cannot make the entire consecration of his knowledge unless he has the spirit of service to humanity, to the Godhead in man and the Master of his being. The man of power must illumine and uplift and govern his force and strength by knowledge, light of reason or religion or the spirit, otherwise he becomes the mere forceful Asura, – must have the skill which will help him best to use and administer and regulate his strength and make it creative and fruitful and adapted to his relations with others, otherwise it becomes a mere drive of force across the field of life, a storm that passes and devastates more than it constructs, – must be capable too of obedience and make the use of his strength a service to God and the world, otherwise he becomes a selfish dominator,

dynamic soul-power of this fourfold activity is a wide doorway to a swiftest and largest reality of the most high spiritual perfection. This we can do if we turn the action of the Swadharma into a worship of the inner Godhead, the universal Spirit, the transcendent Purushottama and, eventually, surrender the whole action into his hands, *mayi sannyasya karmāṇi*. Then as we get beyond the limitation of the three Gunas, so also do we get beyond the division of the fourfold law and beyond the limitation of all distinctive Dharmas, *sarvadharmān parityajya*. The Spirit takes up the individual into the universal Swabhava, perfects and unifies the fourfold soul of nature in us and does its self-determined works according to the divine will and the accomplished power of the godhead in the creature."[22]

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tyrant, brutal compeller of men's souls and bodies. The man of productive mind and work must have an open inquiring mind and ideas and knowledge, otherwise he moves in the routine of his functions without expansive growth, must have courage and enterprise, must bring a spirit of service into his getting and production, in order that he may not only get but give, not only amass and enjoy his own life, but consciously help the fruitfulness and fullness of the surrounding life by which he profits. The man of labour and service becomes a helpless drudge and slave of society if he does not bring knowledge and honour and aspiration and skill into his work, since only so can he rise by an opening mind and will and understanding usefulness to the higher dharmas. But the greater perfection of man comes when he enlarges himself to include all these powers, even though one of them may lead the others, and opens his nature more and more into the rounded fullness and universal capacity of the fourfold spirit. Man is not cut out into an exclusive type of one of these dharmas, but all these powers are in him at work at first in an ill-formed confusion, but he gives shape to one or another in birth after birth, progresses from one to the other even in the same life and goes on towards the total development of his inner existence.

29. The Supreme Secret

"An ordinary religious teaching or philosophical doctrine is well enough satisfied to seize on certain great and vital aspects of truth and turn them into utilisable dogma and instruction, method and practice for the guidance of man in his inner life and the law and form of his action; it does not go farther, it does not open doors out of the circle of its own system, does not lead us out into some widest freedom and unimprisoned largeness. This limitation is useful and indeed for a time indispensable. Man bounded by his mind and will has need of a law and rule, a fixed system, a definite practice selective of his thought and action; he asks for the single unmistakable hewn path hedged, fixed and secure to the tread, for the limited horizons, for the enclosed resting-places. It is only the strong and few who can move through freedom to freedom. And yet in the end the free soul ought to have an issue out of the forms and systems in which the mind finds its account and takes its limited pleasure. To exceed our ladder of ascent, not to stop short even on the topmost stair but move untrammelled and at large in the wideness of the spirit is a release important for our perfection; the spirit's absolute liberty is our perfect status. And this is how the Gita leads us: it lays down a firm and sure but very large way of ascent, a great Dharma, and then it takes us out beyond all that is laid down, beyond all Dharmas, into infinitely open spaces, divulges to us the hope, lets us into the secret of an absolute perfection founded in an absolute spiritual liberty, and that
18.64 secret, *guhyatamam*, is the substance of what it calls its supreme word, that the hidden thing, the inmost knowledge."[23]

"The essence of the teaching and the Yoga has .. been given to the disciple on the field of his work and battle and the divine Teacher now proceeds to apply it to his action, but in a way that makes it applicable to all action. Attached to a crucial example, spoken to the protagonist of Kurukshetra, the words bear a much wider significance and are a universal rule for all who are ready to ascend above the ordinary mentality and to live and act in the highest spiritual consciousness. To break out of ego and personal mind and see everything in the wideness of the self and spirit, to know God and adore him in his integral truth and in all his aspects, to surrender all oneself to the transcendent Soul of nature and existence, to possess and be possessed by the divine consciousness, to be one with the One in universality of love and delight and will and knowledge, one in him with all beings, to do works as an adoration and a sacrifice on the divine foundation of a world in which all is God and in the divine status of a liberated spirit, is the sense of the Gita's Yoga. It is a transition from the apparent to the supreme spiritual and real truth of our being, and one enters into it by putting off the many limitations of the separative consciousness and the mind's attachment to the passion and unrest and ignorance, the lesser light and knowledge, the sin and virtue, the dual law and standard of the lower nature. Therefore, says the Teacher..."[24]

चेतसा सर्वकर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्परः ।
बुद्धियोगमुपाश्रित्य मच्चित्तः सततं भव ।। 18.57।।

18.57. Devoting all thyself to Me, giving up in thy conscious mind all thy actions into Me,

resorting to Yoga of the will and intelligence, be always one in heart and consciousness with Me.

मच्चित्तः सर्वदुर्गाणि मत्प्रसादात्तरिष्यसि ।
अथ चेत्त्वमहंकारान्न श्रोष्यसि विनङ्क्ष्यसि ।। 18.58।।

18.58. One in heart and consciousness with Me at all times, by My grace thou shalt pass safe through all difficult and perilous passages; but if from egoism thou hear not, thou shalt fall into perdition.

यदहंकारमाश्रित्य न योत्स्य इति मन्यसे ।
मिथ्यैष व्यवसायस्ते प्रकृतिस्त्वां नियोक्ष्यति ।। 18.59।।

18.59. If in thy egoism, thou thinkest, "I will not fight", then vain is this thy resolve; thy nature shall appoint thee to thy work.

स्वभावजेन कौन्तेय निबद्धः स्वेन कर्मणा ।
कर्तुं नेच्छसि यन्मोहात्करिष्यस्यवशोऽपि तत् ।। 18.60।।

18.60. What from delusion thou desirest not to do, O Kaunteya, that helplessly thou shalt do bound by thy own work born of thy Swabhava (self-nature).

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति ।
भ्रामयन्सर्वभूतानि यन्त्रारूढानि मायया ।। 18.61।।

18.61. The Lord is stationed in the heart of all existences, O Arjuna, and turns them all round and round, mounted on a machine by his Maya.

तमेव शरणं गच्छ सर्वभावेन भारत ।
तत्प्रसादात्परां शान्तिं स्थानं प्राप्स्यसि शाश्वतम् ।। 18.62।।

18.62. In Him, O Bharata, take refuge in every way of thy being and by His grace thou shalt come to the supreme peace and the eternal status.

The verses 57 to 62 "...carry in them the innermost heart of this Yoga and lead to its crowning experience and we must understand them in their innermost spirit and in the whole vastness of that high summit of experience. The words express the most complete, intimate and living relation possible between God and man; they are instinct with the concentrated force of religious feeling that springs from the human being's absolute adoration, his upward surrender of his whole existence, his unreserved and perfect self-giving to the transcendent and universal Divinity from whom he comes and in whom he lives. This stress of feeling is in entire consonance with the high and enduring place that the Gita assigns to Bhakti, to the love of God, to the adoration of the Highest, as the inmost spirit and motive of the supreme action and the crown and core of the supreme knowledge. The phrases used and the spiritual emotion with which they vibrate seem to give the most intense prominence possible and an utmost importance to the personal truth and presence of the Godhead. It is no abstract Absolute of the philosopher, no indifferent impersonal Presence or ineffable Silence intolerant

of all relations to whom this complete surrender of all our works can be made and this closeness and intimacy of oneness with him in all the parts of our conscious existence imposed as the condition and law of our perfection or of whom this divine intervention and protection and deliverance are the promise. It is a Master of our works, a Friend and Lover of our soul, an intimate Spirit of our life, an indwelling and overdwelling Lord of all our personal and impersonal self and nature who alone can utter to us this near and moving message. And yet this is not the common relation established by the religions between man living in his sattwic or other ego-mind and some personal form and aspect of the Deity, *iṣṭa-deva*, constructed by that mind or offered to it to satisfy its limited ideal, aspiration or desire. That is the ordinary sense and actual character of the normal mental being's religious devotion; but here there is something wider that passes beyond the mind and its limits and its Dharmas. It is something deeper than the mind that offers and something greater than the Ishta-deva that receives the surrender.

That which surrenders here is the Jiva, the essential soul, the original central and spiritual being of man, the individual Purusha... This is the profound comprehensiveness of the teaching of the Gita that while it recognises the truth of the universalised impersonality into which we enter by the extinction of ego, *brahma-nirvāṇa*, – for indeed without it there can be no liberation or at least no absolute release, – it recognises too the persistent spiritual truth of our personality as a factor of the highest experience. Not this natural but that divine and central being in us is the eternal Jiva. It is the Ishwara, Vasudeva who is all things, that takes up our mind and life and body for the enjoyment of the lower Prakriti; it

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is the supreme Prakriti, the original spiritual nature of the supreme Purusha that holds together the universe and appears in it as the Jiva. This Jiva then is a portion of the Purushottama's original divine spiritual being, a living power of the living Eternal. He is not merely a temporary form of lower Nature, but an eternal portion of the Highest in his supreme Prakriti, an eternal conscious ray of the divine existence and as everlasting as that supernal Prakriti. 7.5 15.7

And he who receives our surrender is no limited Deity but the Purushottama, the one eternal Godhead, the one supreme Soul of all that is and of all Nature, the original transcendent Spirit of existence... It is He, ineffable Absolute but also Friend and Lord and Enlightener and Lover, who is the object of this most complete devotion and approach and this most intimate inner becoming and surrender...

It is not an exclusive impersonality of the Absolute that is the highest secret. This highest secret is the miracle of a supreme Person and apparent vast Impersonal that are one, an immutable transcendent Self of all things and a Spirit that manifests itself here at the very foundation of cosmos as an infinite and multiple personality acting everywhere, – a Self and Spirit revealed to our last, closest, profoundest experience as an illimitable Being who accepts us and takes us to him, not into a blank of featureless existence, but most positively, deeply, wonderfully into all Himself and in all the ways of his and our conscious existence. This highest experience and this largest way of seeing open a profound, moving and endless significance to our parts of nature, our knowledge, will, heart's love and adoration, which is lost or diminished if we put an exclusive stress on the impersonal, because that stress

suppresses or minimises or does not allow of the intensest fulfilment of movements and powers that are a portion of our deepest nature, intensities and luminosities that are attached to the closest essential fibres of our self-experience. It is not the austerity of knowledge alone that can help us; there is room and infinite room for the heart's love and aspiration illumined and uplifted by knowledge, a more mystically clear, a greater calmly passionate knowledge. It is by the perpetual unified closeness of our heart-consciousness,
18.57 mind-consciousness, all-consciousness, *satatam maccittaḥ*, that we get the widest, the deepest, the most integral experience of our oneness with the Eternal. A nearest oneness in all the being, profoundly individual in a divine passion even in the midst of universality, even at the top of transcendence is here enjoined on the human soul as its way to reach the Highest and its way to possess the perfection and the divine consciousness to which it is called by its nature as a spirit. The intelligence and will have to turn the whole existence in all its parts to the Ishwara, to the divine Self and Master of that
18.57 whole existence, *buddhiyogam upāśritya*. The heart has to cast all other emotion into the delight of oneness with him and the love of him in all creatures. The sense spiritualised has to see and hear and feel him everywhere. The life has to be utterly his life in the Jiva. All the actions have to proceed from his sole power and sole initiation in the will, knowledge, organs of action, senses, vital parts, body. This way is deeply impersonal because the separateness of ego is abolished for the Soul universalised and restored to transcendence. And yet it is intimately personal because it soars to a transcendent passion and power of indwelling and oneness. A featureless extinction may be a rigorous demand of the mind's logic of

self-annulment, it is not the last word of the supreme mystery, *rahasyam uttamam*.

The refusal of Arjuna to persevere in his divinely appointed work proceeded from the ego sense in him, *ahaṁkāra*. Behind it was a mixture and confusion and tangled 18.58
error of ideas and impulsions of the sattwic, rajasic, tamasic ego, the vital nature's fear of sin and its personal consequences, the heart's recoil from individual grief and suffering, the clouded reason's covering of egoistic impulses by self-deceptive specious pleas of right and virtue, our nature's ignorant shrinking from the ways of God because they seem other than the ways of man and impose things terrible and unpleasant on his nervous and emotional parts and his intelligence. The spiritual consequences will be infinitely worse now than before, now that a higher truth and a greater way and spirit of action have been revealed to him, if yet persisting in his egoism he perseveres in a vain and impossible refusal. For it is a vain resolution, a futile recoil, since it springs only from a temporary failure of strength, a strong but passing deviation from the principle of energy of his inmost character and is not the true will and way of his nature. If now he casts down his arms, he will yet be compelled by that nature to resume them when he sees the battle and slaughter go on without him, his abstention a defeat of all for which he has lived, the cause for whose service he was born weakened and bewildered by the absence or inactivity of its protagonist, vanquished and afflicted by the cynical and unscrupulous strength of the champions of a self-regarding unrighteousness and injustice. And in this return there will be no spiritual virtue. It was a confusion of the ideas and feelings of the ego mind that impelled his refusal; it will be his nature working through

a restoration of the characteristic ideas and feelings of the ego mind that will compel him to annul his refusal. But whatever the direction, this continued subjection to the ego will mean a worse, a more fatal spiritual refusal, a perdition,
18.58 *vinaṣṭi*; for it will be a definite falling away from a greater truth of his being than that which he has followed in the ignorance of the lower nature. He has been admitted to a higher consciousness, a new self-realisation, he has been shown the possibility of a divine instead of an egoistic action; the gates have been opened before him of a divine and spiritual in place of a merely intellectual, emotional, sensuous and vital life. He is called to be no longer a great blind instrument, but a conscious soul and an enlightened power and vessel of the Godhead.

It is the Lord seated in the heart of every creature who has been turning us in all our inner and outer action during the ignorance as if mounted on a machine on the wheel of this Maya of the lower Nature. And whether obscure in the ignorance or luminous in the knowledge, it is for him in us and him in the world that we have our existence. To live consciously and integrally in this knowledge and this truth is to escape from ego and break out of Maya. All other highest Dharmas are only a preparation for this Dharma, and all Yoga is only a means by which we can come first to some kind of union and finally, if we have the full light, to an integral union with the Master and supreme Soul and Self of our existence. The greatest Yoga is to take refuge from all the perplexities and difficulties of our nature with this indwelling Lord of all Nature, to turn to him with our whole being, with the life and body and sense and mind and heart and understanding, with our whole dedicated knowledge and will and action,

sarvabhāvena, in every way of our conscious self and our instrumental nature. And when we can at all times and entirely do this, then the divine Light and Love and Power takes hold of us, fills both self and instruments and leads us safe through all the doubts and difficulties and perplexities and perils that beset our soul and our life, leads us to a supreme peace and the spiritual freedom of our immortal and eternal status, *parām śāntim, sthānam śāśvatam*."[25] 15.19 18.62

इति ते ज्ञानमाख्यातं गुह्याद्गुह्यतरं मया ।
विमृश्यैतदशेषेण यथेच्छसि तथा कुरु ।। 18.63।।

18.63. So have I expounded to thee a knowledge more secret than the secret; reflect on it fully, then do as thou wouldst.

सर्वगुह्यतमं भूयः शृणु मे परमं वचः ।
इष्टोऽसि मे दृढमिति ततो वक्ष्यामि ते हितम् ।। 18.64।।

18.64. Listen again to My supreme word, the most secret truth of all; intimate beloved art thou of Me, therefore shall I speak this for thy highest good.

"For after giving out all the laws, the Dharmas, and the deepest essence of its Yoga, after saying that beyond all the first secrets revealed to the mind of man by the transforming light of spiritual knowledge, *guhyāt*, this is a still deeper more secret truth, *guhyataram*, the Gita, suddenly declares that there is yet a supreme word that it has to speak, *paramam vacaḥ*, and a most secret truth of all, *sarva-guhyatamam*. This secret of secrets the Teacher will tell to Arjuna as his highest good

because he is the chosen and beloved soul, *iṣṭa*. For evidently, as had already been declared by the Upanishad, it is only the rare soul chosen by the Spirit for the revelation of his very body, *tanum svām*, who can be admitted to this mystery, because he alone is near enough in heart and mind and life to the Godhead to respond truly to it in all his being and to make it a living practice. The last, the closing supreme word of the Gita expressing the highest mystery is spoken in two brief, direct and simple Slokas and these are left without farther comment or enlargement to sink into the mind and reveal their own fullness of meaning in the soul's experience. For it is alone this inner incessantly extending experience that can make evident the infinite deal of meaning with which are forever pregnant these words in themselves apparently so slight and simple. And we feel, as they are being uttered, that it was this for which the soul of the disciple was being prepared all the time and the rest was only an enlightening and enabling discipline and doctrine. Thus runs this secret of secrets, the highest most direct message of the Ishwara."[26]

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।
मामेवैष्यसि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे ।। 18.65 ।।

18.65. Become My-minded, My lover and adorer, a sacrificer to Me, bow thyself to Me; to Me thou shalt come, this is My pledge and promise to thee, for dear art thou to Me.

सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ।। 18.66 ।।

18.66. Abandon all Dharmas and take refuge in

Me alone. I will deliver thee from all sin and evil, do not grieve.

"The Gita throughout has been insisting on a great and well-built discipline of Yoga, a large and clearly traced philosophical system, on the Swabhava and the Swadharma, on the sattwic law of life as leading out of itself by a self-exceeding exaltation to a free spiritual Dharma of immortal existence utterly wide in its spaces and high-lifted beyond the limitation of even this highest Guna, on many rules and means and injunctions and conditions of perfection, and now suddenly it seems to break out of its own structure and says to the human soul, 'Abandon all Dharmas, give thyself to the Divine alone, to the supreme Godhead above and around and within thee: that is all that thou needst, that is the truest and greatest way, that is the real deliverance.' The Master of the worlds in the form of the divine Charioteer and Teacher of Kurukshetra has revealed to man the magnificent realities of God and Self and Spirit and the nature of the complex world and the relation of man's mind and life and heart and senses to the Spirit and the victorious means by which through his own spiritual self-discipline and effort he can rise out of mortality into immortality and out of his limited mental into his infinite spiritual existence. And now speaking as the Spirit and Godhead in man and in all things he says to him, "All this personal effort and self-discipline will not in the end be needed, all following and limitation of rule and Dharma can at last be thrown away as hampering encumbrances if thou canst make a complete surrender to Me, depend alone on the Spirit and Godhead within thee and all things and trust to his sole guidance. Turn all thy mind to Me and fill it with the thought of Me and My presence. Turn all thy heart to Me, make thy

every action, whatever it be, a sacrifice and offering to Me. That done, leave Me to do My will with thy life and soul and action; do not be grieved or perplexed by My dealings with thy mind and heart and life and works or troubled because they do not seem to follow the laws and Dharmas man imposes on himself to guide his limited will and intelligence. My ways are the ways of a perfect wisdom and power and love that knows all things and combines all its movements in view of a perfect eventual result; for it is refining and weaving together the many threads of an integral perfection. I am here with thee in thy chariot of battle revealed as the Master of existence within and without thee and I repeat the absolute assurance, the infallible promise that I will lead thee to Myself through and beyond all sorrow and evil. Whatever difficulties and perplexities arise, be sure of this that I am leading thee to a complete divine life in the universal and an immortal existence in the transcendent Spirit.'

The secret thing, *guhyam*, that all deep spiritual knowledge reveals to us, mirrored in various teachings and justified in the soul's experience, is for the Gita the secret of the spiritual self hidden within us of which mind and external Nature are only manifestations or figures. It is the secret of the constant relations between soul and Nature, Purusha and Prakriti, the secret of an indwelling Godhead who is the lord of all existence and veiled from us in its forms and movements. These are the truths taught in many ways by Vedanta and Sankhya and Yoga and synthetised in the earlier chapters of the Gita. And amidst all their apparent distinctions they are one truth and all the different ways of Yoga are various means of spiritual self-discipline by which our unquiet mind and blinded life are stilled and turned towards this many-aspected

One and the secret truth of self and God made so real to us and intimate that we can either consciously live and dwell in it or lose our separate selves in the Eternal and no longer be compelled at all by the mental Ignorance.

The more secret thing, *guhyataram*, developed by the Gita is the profound reconciling truth of the divine Purushottama, at once self and Purusha, supreme Brahman and a sole, intimate, mysterious, ineffable Godhead. That gives to the thought a larger and more deeply understanding foundation for an ultimate knowledge and to the spiritual experience a greater and more fully comprehending and comprehensive Yoga. This deeper mystery is founded on the secret of the supreme spiritual Prakriti and of the Jiva, an eternal portion of the Divine in that eternal and this manifested Nature and of one spirit and essence with him in his immutable self-existence. This profounder knowledge escapes from the elementary distinction of spiritual experience between the Beyond and what is here. For the Transcendent beyond the worlds is at the same time Vasudeva who is all things in all worlds; he is the Lord standing in the heart of every creature and the self of all existences and the origin and supernal meaning of everything that he has put forth in his Prakriti. He is manifested in his Vibhutis and he is the Spirit in Time who compels the action of the world and the Sun of all knowledge and the Lover and Beloved of the soul and the Master of all works and sacrifice. The result of an inmost opening to this deeper, truer, more secret mystery is the Gita's Yoga of integral knowledge, integral works and integral Bhakti. It is the simultaneous experience of spiritual universality and a free and perfected spiritual individuality, of an entire union with God and an entire dwelling in him as

at once the frame of the soul's immortality and the support and power of our liberated action in the world and the body.

And now there comes the supreme word and most secret thing of all, *guhyatamam*, that the Spirit and Godhead is an Infinite free from all dharmas and though he conducts the world according to fixed laws and leads man through his dharmas of ignorance and knowledge, sin and virtue, right and wrong, liking and disliking and indifference, pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow and the rejection of these opposites, through his physical and vital, intellectual, emotional, ethical and spiritual forms and rules and standards, yet the Spirit and Godhead transcends all these things, and if we too can cast away all dependence on Dharmas, surrender ourselves to this free and eternal Spirit and, taking care only to keep ourselves absolutely and exclusively open to him, trust to the light and power and delight of the Divine in us and, unafraid and ungrieving, accept only his guidance, then that is the truest, the greatest release and that brings the absolute and inevitable perfection of our self and nature. This is the way offered to the chosen of the Spirit, – to those only in whom he takes the greatest delight because they are nearest to him and most capable of oneness and of being even as he, freely consenting and concordant with Nature in her highest power and movement, universal in soul consciousness, transcendent in the spirit.

For a time comes in spiritual development when we become aware that all our effort and action are only our mental and vital reactions to the silent and secret insistence of a greater Presence in and around us. It is borne in on us that all our Yoga, our aspiration and our endeavour are

imperfect or narrow forms, because disfigured or at least limited by the mind's associations, demands, prejudgements, predilections, mistranslations or half-translations of a vaster truth. Our ideas and experiences and efforts are mental images only of greatest things which would be done more perfectly, directly, freely, largely, more in harmony with the universal and eternal will by that Power itself in us if we could only put ourselves passively as instruments in the hands of a supreme and absolute strength and wisdom. That Power is not separate from us; it is our own self one with the self of all others and at the same time a transcendent Being and an immanent Person. Our existence, our action taken up into this greatest Existence would be no longer, as it seems to us now, individually our own in a mental separation. It would be the vast movement of an Infinity and an intimate ineffable Presence; it would be the constant spontaneity of formation and expression in us of this deep universal self and this transcendent Spirit. The Gita indicates that in order that that may wholly be, the surrender must be without reservations; our Yoga, our life, our state of inner being must be determined freely by this living Infinite, not predetermined by our mind's insistence on this or that dharma or any dharma. The divine Master of the Yoga, *yogeśvaraḥ kṛṣṇaḥ*, will then himself take up 18.78
our Yoga and raise us to our utmost possible perfection, not the perfection of any external or mental standard or limiting rule, but vast and comprehensive, to the mind incalculable. It will be a perfection developed by an all-seeing Wisdom according to the whole truth, first indeed of our human Swabhava, but afterwards of a greater thing into which it will open, a spirit and power illimitable, immortal, free and all-transmuting, the light and splendour of a divine and infinite nature.

All must be given as material of that transmutation. An omniscient consciousness will take up our knowledge and our ignorance, our truth and our error, cast away their forms of insufficiency, *sarva-dharmān parityajya,* and transform all into its infinite light. An almighty Power will take up our virtue and sin, our right and wrong, our strength and our weakness, cast away their tangled figures, *sarva-dharmān parityajya,* and transform all into its transcendent purity and universal good and infallible force. An ineffable Ananda will take up our petty joy and sorrow, our struggling pleasure and pain, cast away their discordances and imperfect rhythms, *sarva-dharmān parityajya*, and transform all into its transcendent and universal unimaginable delight. All that all the Yogas can do will be done and more; but it will be done in a greater seeing way, with a greater wisdom and truth than any human teacher, saint or sage can give us. The inner spiritual state to which this supreme Yoga will take us, will be above all that is here and yet comprehensive of all things in this and other worlds, but with a spiritual transformation of all, without limitation, without bondage, *sarva-dharmān parityajya.* The infinite existence, consciousness and delight of the Godhead in its calm silence and bright boundless activity will be there, will be its essential, fundamental, universal stuff, mould and character. And in that mould of infinity, the Divine made manifest will overtly dwell, no longer concealed by his Yogamaya, and whenever and as he wills build in us whatever shapes of the Infinite, translucent forms of knowledge, thought, love, spiritual joy, power and action according to his self-fulfilling will and immortal pleasure. And there will be no binding effect on the free soul and the unaffected nature, no unescapable crystallising into this or that inferior formula.

For all the action will be executed by the power of the Spirit in a divine freedom, *sarva-dharmān parityajya*. An unfallen abiding in the transcendent Spirit, *param dhāma*, will be the foundation and the assurance of this spiritual state. An intimate understanding oneness with universal being and all creatures, released from the evil and suffering of the separative mind but wisely regardful of true distinctions, will be the conditioning power. A constant delight, oneness and harmony of the eternal individual here with the Divine and all that he is will be the effect of this integral liberation. The baffling problems of our human existence of which Arjuna's difficulty stands as an acute example, are created by our separative personality in the ignorance. This Yoga because it puts the soul of man into its right relation with God and world-existence and makes our action God's, the knowledge and will shaping and moving it his and our life the harmony of a divine self-expression, is the way to their total disappearance."[27]

इदं ते नातपस्काय नाभक्ताय कदाचन ।
न चाशुश्रूषवे वाच्यं न च मां योऽभ्यसूयति ।। 18.67।।

18.67. Never is this to be spoken by thee to one who is without askesis, or devotion, nor to one who does not wish to hear or who despises and belittles Me.

य इमं परमं गुह्यं मद्भक्तेष्वभिधास्यति ।
भक्तिं मयि परां कृत्वा मामेवैष्यत्यसंशयः ।। 18.68।।

18.68. He who with the highest devotion for Me shall declare this supreme secret among My

devotees, he shall undoubtedly come to Me.

न च तस्मान्मनुष्येषु कश्चिन्मे प्रियकृत्तमः ।
भविता न च मे तस्मादन्यः प्रियतरो भुवि ।। 18.69।।

18.69. There is none among men who does dearer service to Me than he, nor shall there be another on earth dearer to Me than he.

अध्येष्यते च य इमं धर्म्यं संवादमावयोः ।
ज्ञानयज्ञेन तेनाहमिष्टः स्यामिति मे मतिः ।। 18.70।।

18.70. And he who shall study this sacred discourse of ours, by him I shall be worshipped through the sacrifice of knowledge, — so I hold.

श्रद्धावाननसूयश्च शृणुयादपि यो नरः ।
सोऽपि मुक्तः शुभाँल्लोकान्प्राप्नुयात्पुण्यकर्मणाम् ।। 18.71।।

18.71. And even he who would listen to it, full of faith and uncarping, being liberated, shall attain to the happy worlds of the righteous.

कच्चिदेतच्छ्रुतं पार्थ त्वयैकाग्रेण चेतसा ।
कच्चिदज्ञानसंमोहः प्रनष्टस्ते धनंजय ।। 18.72।।

18.72. Has it been heard by thee, O Partha, with concentrated mind? Thy delusion caused by ignorance, has it been destroyed, O Dhananjaya.

अर्जुन उवाच
नष्टो मोहः स्मृतिर्लब्धा त्वत्प्रसादान्मयाच्युत ।
स्थितोऽस्मि गतसन्देहः करिष्ये वचनं तव ।। 18.73।।

18.73. Arjuna said: Destroyed is my delusion, I have regained memory through Thy grace O Achyuta (Infallible), I stand firm with my doubts dispelled. I will act according to Thy word.

"The whole Yoga is revealed, the great word of the teaching is given, and Arjuna the chosen human soul is once more turned, no longer in his egoistic mind but in this greatest self-knowledge, to the divine action. The Vibhuti is ready for the divine life in the human, his conscious spirit for the works of the liberated soul, *muktasya karma*. Destroyed is the illusion of the mind; the soul's memory of its self and its truth concealed so long by the misleading shows and forms of our life has returned to it and become its normal consciousness: all doubt and perplexity gone, it can turn to the execution of the command and do faithfully whatever work for God and the world may be appointed and apportioned to it by the Master of our being, the Spirit and Godhead self-fulfilled in Time and universe."[28]

संजय उवाच
इत्यहं वासुदेवस्य पार्थस्य च महात्मनः ।
संवादमिममश्रौषमद्भुतं रोमहर्षणम् ।। 18.74।।

18.74. Sanjaya said: Thus have I heard this wonderful dialogue of Vasudeva and the great-souled Partha, causing my hair to stand on end.

व्यासप्रसादाच्छ्रुतवानेतद् गुह्यमहं परम् ।
योगं योगेश्वरात्कृष्णात्साक्षात्कथयतः स्वयम् ।। 18.75।।

18.75. By the grace of Vyasa I have heard this

supreme secret Yoga, declared by Krishna Himself, the Master of Yoga, in person.

राजन्संस्मृत्य संस्मृत्य संवादमिममद्भुतम् ।
केशवार्जुनयोः पुण्यं हृष्यामि च मुहुर्मुहुः ।। 18.76।।

18.76. O King, as I recall again and again this wonderful and sacred dialogue of Keshava and Arjuna, I am thrilled with joy again and again.

तच्च संस्मृत्य संस्मृत्य रूपमत्यद्भुतं हरेः ।
विस्मयो मे महान् राजन्हृष्यामि च पुनः पुनः ।। 18.77।।

18.77. And as often as I recall that extraordinarily marvellous form of Hari (Krishna) great is my wonder, O King, and I am thrilled with joy again and again.

यत्र योगेश्वरः कृष्णो यत्र पार्थो धनुर्धरः ।
तत्र श्रीर्विजयो भूतिर्ध्रुवा नीतिर्मतिर्मम ।। 18.78।।

18.78. Wherever is Krishna, the Master of Yoga, wherever is Partha, the archer, assured are there glory, victory, prosperity and the undeviating Law of Truth – this is my conviction.

""The secret of action,' so we might summarise the message of the Gita, the word of its divine Teacher, 'is one with the secret of all life and existence. Existence is not merely a machinery of Nature, a wheel of law in which the soul is entangled for a moment or for ages; it is a constant

manifestation of the Spirit. Life is not for the sake of life alone, but for God, and the living soul of man is an eternal portion of the Godhead. Action is for self-finding, for self-fulfilment, for self-realisation and not only for its own external and apparent fruits of the moment or the future. There is an inner law and meaning of all things dependent on the supreme as well as the manifested nature of the self; the true truth of works lies there and can be represented only incidentally, imperfectly and disguised by ignorance in the outer appearances of the mind and its action. The supreme, the faultless largest law of action is therefore to find out the truth of your own highest and inmost existence and live in it and not to follow any outer standard and Dharma. All life and action must be till then an imperfection, a difficulty, a struggle and a problem. It is only by discovering your true self and living according to its true truth, its real reality that the problem can be finally solved, the difficulty and struggle overpassed and your doings perfected in the security of the discovered self and spirit turn into a divinely authentic action. Know then your self; know your true self to be God and one with the self of all others; know your soul to be a portion of God. Live in what you know; live in the self, live in your supreme spiritual nature, be united with God and Godlike. Offer, first, all your actions as a sacrifice to the Highest and the One in you and to the Highest and the One in the world; deliver last all you are and do into his hands for the supreme and universal Spirit to do through you his own will and works in the world. This is the solution that I present to you and in the end you will find that there is no other.'"[29]

List of References:

1. *SABCL 13, Pages 435, 446-50*
   SABCL 21, Pages 661-62
   SABCL 13, Pages 451-55
2. *SABCL 13, Page 455*
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27. *SABCL 13, Pages 536-41*
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29. *SABCL 13, Pages 553-54*

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1. *SABCL 13, Page 499*
2. *SABCL 13, Page 452*
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11. *SABCL 13, Page 496*
12. *SABCL 21, Page 719*
13. *SABCL 21, Pages 720-21*

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