

importance, goes to Indra's heaven if slain on the field of battle. If he wins, he acquires possessions wherewith he can fulfil such religious obligations as are imposed upon his caste. Fighting is "like the gates of heaven unclosed," especially to him who is slain, for he goes forthwith to heaven; whereas the slayer gains that benefit only by the performance of duty during the rest of his life.

In order to strengthen Arjuna's faith in the performance of duty, the Blessed Lord declared in the last verse what would result from it; he next says what will follow its non-performance:—

33. Contrariwise, if thou dost not engage in this lawful battle, then thou shalt incur sin by abandoning thy natural duty as well as fame.

Not only shalt thou incur the sin of omission shutting thee out of heaven, but even on this earth

34. Men will speak of thy ill-fame forever. For those much esteemed ill-fame exceeds death.

35. Masters of great car will consider thee as turning away from fight through fear, and before them thou shalt grow low, having once been so high.

36. Enemies, reviling thy prowess, will utter many unbecoming¹ sayings directed against thee. What can be more painful than this?

The next two verses sum up the section of the discourse commencing with verse 31.

37. If slain, thou shalt attain heaven; if victorious, thou shalt enjoy this earth; therefore arise, O Kunti's son, with resolve fixed on battle.²

Fight thou must; then listen as to what state of mind thou oughtest to fight in, so that thou mayest escape sin.

¹ "Unbecoming,"—not justly applicable.

² "Resolve fixed on battle." Because this is thy natural duty, and not because action extinguishes suffering.

38. Having made pleasure and pain equal,¹ as also gain and loss, victory and defeat, then engage in fight; thus thou shalt not incur sin.

Here commences a new section. What has been said hitherto is from the standpoint of pure spiritual philosophy, which would be quite sufficient for the wise man whom the world can ensnare no more. But so long as we have passions and the world has charms, the spirit may aspire to those serene heights, but the flesh will still be weak. For such men the Blessed Lord declares the path, which, though in reality the same, appears to be different, owing to the difference in the development of the aspirants. It must never be forgotten that the right performance of action is declared throughout to be of value only as the means of leading to the knowledge set forth in the seven verses, 12-18. Otherwise, no act of any kind leads to eternal life, or *Nirvāṇa*.

39. To thee has been declared² the knowledge regarding the pure spiritual philosophy; now listen to this [knowledge] regarding the philosophy of action:³ O son of Prithā, being united to this knowledge thou shalt escape the bondage of action.

The "knowledge regarding the purely spiritual philosophy" is the right knowledge of the supreme reality, — the absoluteness of the Ego, — which extinguishes conditioned existence in all phases and forms. It is called "purely spiritual," because those alone can comprehend it without any preliminary training who are entirely purified from all passions and thirst for life. This shows that the preceding verses are not intended to enjoin any course of action.

The "philosophy of action" is that of the means for attaining spiritual knowledge. It consists in performing the religious and moral duties pertaining to a man's station in life, free from liking or aversion by dedicating them to the Deity, and in removing the

¹ "Equal," that is, having purified thyself from attraction and repulsion. This is the secret by which the world is conquered.

² "Declared" — in verses 12-18.

³ "Action" comprehends all that can be related to the actor, — good and evil action as well as complete inaction.

germs of desire embedded in the super-conscious self by the practice of all-absorbing meditation on the mystery of the Spirit. That spiritual knowledge is the crown of righteousness, and hence of all existence, is the truth also taught by Jesus (John xvii. 3). Saint Paul explains it further in 1 Corinthians xiii. 9-12.

"Being united to this knowledge, thou shalt escape the bondage of action;" for although the knowledge of the philosophy of action does not by itself remove the "bondage of action," yet it renders the man pure enough to receive the knowledge of the Spirit which does cut asunder the knot of action. The knowledge of spiritual philosophy is one with the knowledge of the philosophy of action; for the means and the end can but form together one harmonious whole. The subject will be quite clear on reference to Chapter IV. verses 33-38.

40. In this¹ no initiation is lost,² nor are there any evil consequences,³ and even a little⁴ of this practice saves from the great danger.⁵

41. In this path the certainty-souled faith is one; but many-branched, infinite-fold are the faiths⁶ of those devoid of this faith of which the soul is certainty.

The "certainty-souled faith;" that is, the deep faith which excludes the infinity of possibilities. "I am certain that by devotion to God I shall attain Nirvāna through the illumination granted by His grace." The interior change in us represented by these words is the "one faith" which arises as the consummation of the anxious

¹ "In this," that is, path to liberation through the right performance of action.

² "No initiation is lost." Labor spent upon a field one season becomes exhausted after producing the crop; but not so in regard to the practice of the philosophy of action. Whatever is begun takes its character from the state of mind in which it is begun, and is independent of the end. The beginning is the end; the rest but an echo.

³ "Evil consequences," that is, failure to attain the end.

⁴ "Even a little," as seen by men. The character and amount of our work for the Deity are perfectly immaterial. If our natures change, then all is done, — all is gained.

⁵ "The great danger," that is, conditioned existence.

⁶ "Faith" is used in this and the following verses in the sense of "conviction as to the reality of anything sensuous or spiritual."

questionings and deep yearnings of our nature, and the unswerving search for the light veiled by the words of the Scriptures. When this faith produces spiritual illumination, the universe — which is but the infinite-fold modification of faith, in other words, infinite states of consciousness — merges in the glorified Ego that is absolutely identical with God, as energy merges in substance.

The term "many-branched" refers to the unstable character of desire and the transitoriness of that which is not spiritual. Faith in one absolutely perfect God — One without a second, either similar to or different from Him — extinguishes forever the impulse for creating hypotheses, while unending and infinite is the brood of Desire and Error; hence "infinite-fold" is false faith.

The three following verses explain why this "certainty-souled knowledge" is not found in every human heart.

42. The unwise¹ are lovers of the praise in the Vedas
 of the fruit of ceremonies prescribed therein,
 and are sayers of "there is nothing else,"²
 and repeaters of flowery shadows of speech

43. (Full of special ceremonies, — yielding birth as the fruit of action, and leading to power and objects of enjoyment), desire-souled and aspiring to celestial abodes as the supreme goal, —

44. Of these, devotedly attached to power and objects of enjoyment, and with hearts snatched away³ by such speech, the certainty-souled knowledge does not become fixed⁴ in casting away⁵ all things for the enjoyment of the Spirit.

The "lovers of praise in the Vedas" are those who through the darkness of desire cannot find in the Vedas the real truth, but rest satisfied with such sayings as "inexhaustible is the merit of him who performs the Chāturmāsya sacrifice."

¹ "Unwise," that is, devoid of right discrimination.

² "Nothing else" besides the objects of their cravings set forth in the Vedas.

³ "Hearts snatched away." This is the reason why they are unwise and devoid of faith.

⁴ "Certainty-souled knowledge... fixed;" that is, their faith is not established.

⁵ "Casting away," etc., that is, self-oblivion in the Deity.

"Shadows of speech" means mere *samblances* of speech, and nothing more. Thus the praise of ceremonials is to be taken merely as the inducement for their acceptance, and having no other value. For instance, the text in praise of the Châurmâsya sacrifice, cited above, does but mean that that sacrifice is to be performed.

The expression "yielding birth" signifies that all the ceremonies can do is to secure to the performer birth in heaven or in a royal family, and kindred benefits. The performance of ceremonies lusting after their fruits does not have the purifying effect which comes from their dedication to God. Therefore it is said, "leading to power," etc. The chief question is not what is done, but how it is done. If ceremonies are performed for love of God, the performer proceeds on the road to Nirvâna. Otherwise, as in the case of the "desire-souled unwise," the result is only as here set forth.

45. The Vedas have for their object only the assem-
 Rom III 20, blage of the three qualities; be free from
 IV 15, the three qualities, O Arjuna; free from the
 VII 1, 6 pairs of opposites, constant in the quality of *satva*, free from acquisitiveness and desire for the preservation of what is possessed already, and not dominated by any object of sense or mind.

"The assemblage of the three qualities" is the manifested universe, or conditioned existence. These qualities and their functions will be described in Chapter XIV. The entire universe may be considered as the modifications of the three qualities roughly to be spoken of as goodness, passion, and darkness or stupefaction. To be "free from these qualities" is to be purified from desires, and the method for accomplishing this is shown by the attributes that follow.

Satva is goodness, or that power in Nature which allows a man to transcend the limitations of his personal nature by embracing some absolute principle. In its perfection it is that power which preserves the eternal perfection of God, although He is the doer of all that is done.

The next verse shows how the performance of works for the sake of God alone is better than working for heavenly enjoyments and the other gains before mentioned.

46. As much benefit as there is in a limited expanse of water, so much is there in water stretching free on all sides:¹ similarly, as much benefit as there is in all the Vedic rites, so much is there for the truth-realizing Brāhman.²

"The truth-realizing Brāhman" is one who has consummated the knowledge of spiritual philosophy. That which is attained through inner illumination transcends every possible object of desire. For as the whole universe is nothing but illusions that simulate the One Reality which is the true Ego or God, so when this Reality is attained there cannot possibly remain any want for any object in the universe.

But then, O Lord, thinks Arjuna, why art thou inclining my mind to the philosophy of action, consisting in the dedication of all actions to God? Is it not better to enter upon the path of spiritual knowledge at once, since the immediate antecedent of liberation is knowledge? The next verse clears this doubt. No one can put his foot upon that path unless he goes through the path of right action first.

47. Thy right is only to action;³ let thy right be never to the result, nor may thou be the cause of the result of action,⁴ nor may there be in thee attachment to inaction!⁵

"Let thy right be never to the result" means, though thou must tread the path of action, do not enter into action with thirst for it. Do not thou deceive thyself into the thought that "I am obliged to be on the path of action, therefore it is right that

¹ "As much benefit . . . all sides." The usefulness of a limitless expanse of water includes the usefulness of a limited sheet

² *Brāhman* has no reference to caste here, but simply means an illuminated sage.

³ "Only to action," and not to actionless devotion to spiritual philosophy, owing to thy spiritual immaturity.

⁴ "Cause of the result of action." If thou shouldst engage in action, thirsting therefor, thou shalt surely be tied to the future experience of its results.

⁵ "Attachment to inaction." Do thou not think, Why should I do anything at all, when it is so difficult to pass through the fire unhurt?

I should engage in all action." Whoever thinks thus is sure to be entangled in useless actions through his passion for action. The right course is either to do only such works as are declared on scriptural authority to be acceptable to God; or if it be not possible to restrict one's acts to these alone, then perform whatever action is absolutely called for by the sense of duty until the change of heart comes. In either case dedicate the fruit of action to God, and do not impute to yourself the power to perform action rightly, as it is not comprised within the self-conscious being, — the man as known to himself. To this end is Romans viii. 26.

48. Firmly seated in yoga,¹ perform action, abandoning attachment,² O Dhananjaya,³ and being equal-minded towards success or ill success. Equal-mindedness is called yoga.

Luke xvii 7-10;
Job xxxv 6-8.

Success here means the spiritual illumination in the gift of God. For the complete purification of the inner nature it is necessary to resign even the desire for illumination and salvation.

49. O Dhananjaya, by far inferior is action to union with knowledge;⁴ seek refuge in knowledge; those who become causes of fruit of action⁵ are spiritually blind.⁷

Isa. i 11-17;
Matt. xxiii. 23,
Rom. iii. 28.

Now listen to what arises from the performance of acts of natural and scriptural duty in the state of union with knowledge or faith.

¹ *Yoga* is one-pointed devotion to God. The word generally has a larger acceptance, as, for instance, at the end of this verse. When the thinking principle is at rest and images the Ego in serenity, it is *yoga*.

² "Abandoning attachment." This is not a repetition of what is said in the preceding verse. It means the surrender of the desire that God may be pleased with the actor in consequence of his acts.

³ *Dhananjaya* literally means "conqueror of wealth." The epithet implies exhortation to rise superior to all desires.

⁴ "Union with knowledge," that is, *yoga*, the union with the realization of the equal-mindedness or peace before described. "Knowledge" is to be understood in its two aspects as related to action and philosophy.

⁵ "Causes of fruit of action," by acting under the impulse of desire.

⁷ "Spiritually blind," those who die without the knowledge of the Supreme Spirit, — who die in their sins (John viii. 21).

50. On this earth he who is united to yoga¹ abandons both virtue and sin;² therefore aspire for yoga; yoga is the skill in action.³

How does it happen that the man who dedicates his acts to God escapes from the wheel of conditioned existence? Listen : —

51. Because, being united to knowledge, and abandoning action-born fruits, the sage of mature wisdom, freed from the bondage called birth, goes to the troubleless seat.⁴

In this and the two preceding verses "knowledge" may mean not the yoga, which is equal-mindedness or peace, but the spiritual knowledge that arises from the practice of the philosophy of action, or yoga through action. This interpretation is supported by the statement about its extinguishing virtue and sin (v. 50), which spiritual knowledge is alone competent to do.

When does the light of the Spirit dawn upon the heart purified through action performed in the above manner?

52. When the forest of delusion⁵ thy heart shall cross over,⁶ then shalt thou attain dispassion⁷ both as to what is heard⁸ and what is yet to hear.

¹ *Yoga*, — the interior state of peace produced by devotion or spiritual knowledge.

² "Both virtue and sin" One rises above the bondage of sin, and therefore of virtue also, by the spiritual light that illumines the perfectly pure heart.

³ "Skill in action." The secret of being in action and yet not bound to the wheel of conditioned existence which action would surely necessitate if not surrendered to God.

⁴ "Troubleless seat," that is, Nirvāṇa.

⁵ "Forest of delusion," in the midst of whose dark shadows thou hast lost the discrimination between thy real Self and that which is illusive, and in consequence thy heart is inclined towards objects of sense and mind.

⁶ "Crossed over," that is, when thy nature shall be exceedingly purified.

⁷ "Dispassion," that is, want of interest in them by perceiving their *ineffectuality* in thy search for Supreme light.

⁸ "What is heard . . . to hear." All books and discourses not connected with the way of the Spirit.

53. When thy heart, thoroughly confused¹ by all that
Col. iii. 9 is heard, shall attain unwavering rest in the
Supreme Spirit,² then shalt thou attain to the realization
of the Spirit.³

"Then" here means this state of unwavering rest in the Supreme Spirit. No man can ever come to God by mere lapse of time, but through various stages of illumination. All adverbs of time describing spiritual mysteries indicate the orderly comprehension of these states, and not the movement of heavenly bodies. Time refers to spiritual order, ascending and descending.

The chapter closes with a vision of the glorification of the spirit in man. Wishing to know of the blessed condition of those who attain to the supreme knowledge spoken of in the previous verse,

ARJUNA said:

54. How, O Keçava,⁴ does he whose power of cognition⁵ is at rest in the Supreme Spirit speak when spoken to? How does he, whose heart is at rest, speak himself? How does he remain, and how does he go?

In the preceding verses (39-53) the Blessed Lord has declared the steps that the self-conscious man can and does take in his progress Godward. The internal steps which the real man, the super-conscious self, takes, are super-ethical, and therefore inexpressible as injunctions, but can be apprehended in spirit through love of those who have gone beyond the cloudy peak. For that which is natural to them is the means or the steps which the inner man must take. From this point there is no help from any

¹ "Thoroughly confused," that is, when all that men say about the way to God is no longer of any interest, and the need of external knowledge — that is, knowledge that comes from words — has disappeared.

² "Supreme Spirit," the only and true Self

³ "Realization of the Spirit;" that is, the truth that sets us free; the knowledge of identity between the universal and individual spirit.

⁴ Keçava, that is, "he whose rays manifest themselves as omniscience." This epithet gives the reason for asking him such a question of divine and mysterious import.

⁵ "Power of cognition . . . Supreme Spirit," refers to the words of the preceding verse. The "power of cognition" is the "thoughts" which "shall be established" if thou "commit thy works unto the Lord" (Prov. xvi. 3).

other source than the divine love, or knowledge, as it is variously regarded by us who know not, but hear and believe.

The purpose of the rest of the chapter may be perceived from this, — that the illuminated sage, being one with God, really has no attributes. Fatal errors would arise if we take this part of the discourse as having any ethical value. Let no man apply this teaching about the obliteration of good and evil to himself. For the applying of it, or even the conscious tendency towards it, is an unmistakable proof that the necessity for action still exists; "thy right is only to action," consequently find out the best way of performing action, and strive not for the characteristics of the spiritually illuminated sage, which are not attainable by mere striving. They are in the gift of God, and none else; they do not pertain to the personality of man that thinks, acts, and wills. When the personality is so thoroughly renounced, or, in other words, when resignation to the mysterious and inscrutable will of God is so complete, as to extinguish all sense of effort, then these attributes become natural. If perfection is attained, there can be no need for further effort. effort is of value only because perfection is attainable. Efforts made by a man without regard to the final cessation of effort in perfection, which is rest, are without doubt misdirected and useless.

THE BLESSED LORD *spoke*:

55. When he completely casts out all desires¹ which are seated in the heart, and is content in the Self, through the Self,² then is he called one whose knowledge³ is at rest.

The meaning of "content" is, that identity with absolute bliss which is independence of everything. The outward signs of activity seen in a sage are like those in a madman or a child; no action on his part is preceded by the determination "I shall do it." To the question as to how he speaks when spoken to, the reply is,

¹ "All desires . . . the heart;" that is, the state where there is not even the desire to cast away desires. This at once shows that this state of illumination is beyond the reach of the personal will, and therefore of all injunction and restriction.

² "Self through the Self," — the realization of the Supreme Spirit as the Self.

³ "Knowledge," that is, heart, cognitive power, "thoughts."

Like a madman or a child. "We are fools for Christ's sake," says Saint Paul (1 Cor. iv. 10).

Whatever we perceive in one "whose heart is at rest in God" is just what we seek from him. He is merged in the Infinite, and has therefore all desires, and none; consequently what he gives us is exactly what we ask. "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient" (1 Cor. vi. 12). Hence it is certain that no external sign can ever prove the divinity within the divinely illuminated sage. When Peter declares the Christhood of Jesus, the Master says, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. xvi. 17). He spoke to the same effect on other occasions; for example, 'Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed' (John xx. 29).

56. Having mind unperturbed in pain¹ and devoid of craving in pleasure,² the man of renunciation, without attachment,³ fear, or anger, is said to be one whose knowledge is at rest.

57. Who in every condition⁴ is devoid of attachment, and in every condition receiving that which is favorable as well as that which is unfavorable, neither likes nor dislikes, — his knowledge is established in rest.

The question as to how he speaks is now answered; he speaks without any personal motive.

58. When he completely withdraws⁵ in every condition all his senses from their objects, after the manner

¹ "Pain" includes everything opposed to the Self, whether coming from things outside the body or from the body, as well as from acts of God, accidents, etc.

² "Craving in pleasure," that is, absence of desire for the perpetuation of any of the three kinds of pleasure, corresponding to the three kinds of pain, when it comes, and also absence of increase of appetite by what it feeds on.

³ "Attachment," the tendency to repeat a past experience on account of the enjoyment once derived from it. After an enjoyment is over it is never missed, nor is there the fear of losing it while it lasts, nor a desire to hurt another who possesses the enjoyment which the man of renunciation has not.

⁴ "Every condition," that is, in regard to the body, life, etc.

⁵ "Withdraws." This shows that the character of the senses is so changed that they can range over objects without being entangled in them.

of the limbs of the tortoise,¹ then is his knowledge established in rest.

This verse does not refer to the *real* condition of the sage, but only to his gaining a firm foothold on the path of knowledge, because the senses are said to be withdrawn, or rather indrawn, like the limbs of the tortoise, and not perfectly established in harmony of action; this is really the case with the illuminated sage who is so thoroughly independent of the flesh as to have no concern of any kind about the senses.

A misconception may here arise. In illness, distress, fatigue, anxiety, and other similar conditions, the senses become withdrawn, like tortoise-limbs; also in the case of the deluded ascetic, who by penance and austerities suppresses the outward activity of the senses, and is yet devoid of spiritual illumination. Wherein, then, lies the difference?

59. From a man who gathers not objects of sense, the objects fall back; but on seeing the Supreme, even the taste for objects falls back from him.

The necessary condition for inner illumination is the effacement of taste for things; in other words, the latent desires which enable us to attach pleasure or pain to experiences when they come. Things in themselves are neutral, neither pleasurable nor painful, as can easily be seen from the fact that they do not affect all men in the same manner, nor do they produce the same effect on the same man under different conditions. "Taste" here means the element which colors objects with pleasure or pain. This taste cannot be obliterated by any external effort, but only by *Samādhi*, or self-effacing rest in God, described in Chapter VI. All aspirations being gratified, no further impulse towards any object can remain. In the presence of fulness, how can hunger and thirst exist?

God is the plenitude of all enjoyment, and all the enjoyment of the universe can be but an atom of that. For as the Deity transcends the infinite universe and is also infinite, the derived infinity will have infinity beyond it. The same thing can be seen from a different standpoint. Nothing is pleasant nor unpleasant except in relation to the Ego; that which the Ego approves is pleasant. The

¹ "Limbs of the tortoise," withdrawn into its shell when it is frightened.

Deity is the true Ego, and therefore the essential reality, by a mysterious connection with which things can be either pleasant or unpleasant; the true Ego is the absolute bliss.

Although the germs of desire latent in the mind are the most important enemy of the seeker of liberation, yet active desires are not to be given way to. For eternal life or liberation is liberation from all desire, without limitation. The necessity for self-restraint is inculcated in the two following verses. Those who aspire for spiritual illumination must bring the senses under control at the outset, because, —

60. The turbulent senses and organs violently snatch away¹ the heart, even of the wise man striving after perfection.

"The wise man" is one who perceives the evil of conditioned existence and also the truth beyond. He has the feeling that one should not desire worldly objects because they are vain and the reality is beyond them. These two together form the dawn of spiritual perception. So long as they are not co-existent the religious life cannot be said to begin, although there may be a semblance of it. Therefore, —

61. He,² having controlled the senses³ and organs, remains at rest⁴ on me⁵ his true Self.⁶
Col. iii. 2-10. Whoever has the senses and organs under control,⁷ his knowledge is at rest.

¹ "Snatch away," that is, unsettle and drag towards worldly objects.

² "He," that is, "the man of renunciation," spoken of in verse 56.

³ Controlled the senses," that is, the senses are his, but he is not theirs; this is real control, and not merely the determination to stop the manifested activity of the senses. (Cf. Col. iii. 4, 5, Rom. viii. 13.)

⁴ "Remains at rest" This is in reply to the question, How does he remain? (v. 54.) "At rest" means without tendency to change in any direction whatever.

⁵ "On me," the one Ego of all, as his highest and truest Self. "This Ego of all, I am." Without this recognition there is no liberation.

⁶ "His true Self." That is, without any thought that "this is my own Ego, and this is the Ego of all."

⁷ "Under control," owing to absence of any inducement to work, the whole universe being undesirable; or, by reason of having broken their tendency to work by the rest attained through long communion with the Deity.

62. For the man contemplating objects is born appreciation¹ thereof; from appreciation arises desire; from desire² springs forth anger.

63. From anger comes delusion;³ from delusion, loss of memory; from loss of memory, loss of discrimination; and from loss of discrimination the man is destroyed.

When delusion exists loss of memory follows; for the truth may be recognized at one time, yet through anger there will be failure to recall it at the right moment. If this continues long enough, there comes the loss of discrimination, or the faculty of judgment. Not merely are erroneous conclusions formed, but the faculty itself is lost. This is the utmost annihilation that can come to the man.

The Ego is immortal, but the power of making judgments as to what is the nature of the Ego, and uniting such judgments into various centres, makes so many persons, or personal egos. If through a long course of bad judgments there comes at last the extinction of the faculty to judge, and an unquestioning submission to blind propensities of nature, the final result is that the personal Ego, or centre of judgment, becomes merged in the great Nature without recognizing the fact that the true Ego is independent of Nature. This recognition is the highest function of the faculty of judgment.

On the other hand, when through divine illumination judgment ceases as the culmination of a long course of wise judgments, there is the judgment that the Ego, being identical with the perfect God, does not want anything, and never did. The difference between the two is quite obvious; not to want because all that can be desired is obtained, and not to want because nothing can be obtained, are not the same.

The source of evil having been described, the next verse proceeds to show the way to liberation. If, as has been said, the thought of objects is so dangerous, and yet the forcible suppres-

¹ "Appreciation" includes an intellectual preference. By dwelling on things we notice peculiarities which distinguish them from similar things seen before. Obviously this is the beginning of desire.

² "From desire . . . anger;" that is, from opposition to desire comes anger.

³ "Delusion," that is, incapacity to use the power of judgment rightly. Wrong appears as right.

sion is condemned, what, then, is the path? Especially as some thought is necessary for the maintenance of the body, without which we are destitute of means for obtaining knowledge of the Supreme Spirit. The reply follows:—

64. He however who experiences objects¹ through the senses and organs, freed from attachment and repulsion,² and controlled by his heart, and his heart³ obedient to the will,⁴ attains to peace.⁵

65. Upon the attainment of peace arises the end of all his sufferings, and the knowledge of him whose heart is tranquil quickly comes to all-embracing rest.

"All sufferings" includes physical pain. When the aspirant's heart is at rest, he is free from bodily ailments, at all events is not conscious of pain, because the body requires pulsatory attention in order to be conscious of its workings. So, when the man is no longer subject to the present conditions of consciousness, he does not know of the existence of bodily pain.

This is one result of tranquillity of heart. The other is firmness or rest of the cognitive power, which in this case perfectly reflects the true Ego.

The "all-embracing rest" is the final consummation,—being as the perfect image of the Ego, which is formless. In every act of cognition the cognitive power assumes the form of the object cognized. When the true Ego is known,—in other words, when the objective universe is known as the non-ego, of which the Ego is independent,—the cognitive power is in absolute rest, because there is no object for it to cognize; the true Ego or consciousness it is satisfied is uncognizable; that which leads to this supreme satisfaction is the perfect image of the Ego, the "form of God" (Phil. ii. 6). The cognitive power is not the same as consciousness, which does not cognize, but renders cognition possible; just

¹ "Objects," that is, such as are necessary to the maintenance of the body.

² "Attachment and repulsion." The senses of the unregenerate act under the impulsion of these two powers. But not so of the man whose heart is purified by scriptural studies and other methods of spiritual training.

³ "Heart," that is, desires, feelings, judgment, etc.

⁴ "Will," that is, the spiritual will, or aspiration for the highest blessing; namely, realization of identity with the Deity.

⁵ "Peace." This answers the question, How does he go? (v. 54).

as sovereignty does not govern, but renders it possible for the sovereign to rule.

The next verse shows the value of the control of the senses in the attainment of this rest.

66. For one whose heart is not at rest there is no spiritual knowledge; for him whose heart is not at rest there is no joyous aspiration towards spiritual illumination; and not for the unaspiring is peace, and for one without peace where is happiness?

The faith that the Ego is absolute, the spiritual gift of hope, is the sense in which "aspiration" is here used. And the reason why there is no spiritual knowledge for one whose heart is not at rest is declared in the next verse.

67. The senses and organs being in activity, whichever the heart follows, the same snatches away his knowledge, as wind the boat on the water.

If there is a single sense out of control, the aspirant must fall. Let us, therefore, be warned against being lulled into a fancied security when the senses do not seem to be as turbulent as before. For this is very often entirely due to the fact that other senses are gaining strength, and not to any increase of purity in us. Frequently vices reassert themselves after long intervals of apparent death; so long as there is one unruly sense, we must not forget the teaching given here, as well as in Matthew v. 29, 30. It should also be borne in mind that the best remedy for evil is not the suppression but the elimination of desire; and this can best be accomplished by keeping the mind constantly steeped in things divine, as said in Chapter IX.; patient resistance is the only safeguard against the active onslaughts of desire.

In the "heart," spoken of as following the senses, is included the faculties of imagination and reflection. The knowledge of what is the true Ego and what is not, is snatched away by engaging the mind in brooding over or contemplating with pleasure the objects which correspond to the unruly sense. And as the wind drives the boat out of its proper direction, so the uncontrolled heart wrenches the cognitive faculty away from spiritual things and links it to matter. The topic commenced in verse 60 is summed up in the following verse.

68. Therefore, O thou mighty-armed, his knowledge is firmly established whose senses and organs are in every respect regulated in regard to their objects.

The manner in which the characteristics of the illuminated or beatified sage are here stated is noteworthy. The description opens with the statement that he is free from all desires and *knows* that the true Ego or the Supreme Spirit alone is happiness; all else is pain. Then it follows that he is free from attachment or repulsion towards whatever may befall him, and that he acts without determination. Lastly comes the subjugation of the senses, which is useless, and frequently injurious, as breeding hypocrisy and spiritual pride without the second; and that again is not of much value without the first. It is very important to keep this in mind. The teaching here is an expansion of the Vedic text: "He who does not abstain from unrighteous conduct, is not of peaceful mind, whose heart is not one-pointed and free from desire, never finds the true Ego."

69. What is night to all creatures¹ there is awake the man of restraint;² that in which³ all creatures are awake is viewed as night by the seeing sage.

"Viewed as night by the seeing sage" emphasizes the truth that the sage who has realized the identity of the Ego with the Supreme Spirit cannot have egoistic consciousness in regard to any object, whether the body appears to be awake or asleep. Therefore all scriptural injunctions as to specific works as well as ethical rules, so necessary for ordinary men, are to him perfectly meaningless. He has no wish either to violate or follow them; they relate to the false self-conscious life of the personality, which he knows to be illusive. Even the aspirant for the realization of the Truth must give up the ambition to be good; in other words, must feel spiritual poverty and devote himself entirely to the

¹ "Night to all creatures," that is, divine illumination.
² "Man of restraint." This does not mean the mere prevention of the senses and organs from wandering; but the elimination of the dispersive and enveloping powers — passion and ignorance — which constitute bondage.
³ "That in which . . . awake," that is, the delusion in which they appear to be awake, though really buried in the sleep of false knowledge; their state is comparable to dreaming.

increase of Faith, the consummation of which is Truth. In fact, every desire must vanish before Truth can be truly seen. For the innermost thing in us is Truth, and the only expedient necessary for its realization is the removal of falsehood, which is the warp and woof of the self-conscious life.

70. As waters enter the sea, fixed and changeless though ever filled, whom thus all desires enter,¹ he alone attains to peace, not he that cravings crave.

71. The man who, abandoning all longings, wanders² void of desire,³ and feels not himself to be the actor or possessor,⁴ attains to peace.

72. This is rest in the Supreme Spirit, O son of Prithâ, having obtained it the sage is deluded no more; established herein at the time of death, he attains Nirvâna in the Supreme Spirit.

Thus ends chapter the second, called the "RIGHT KNOWLEDGE OF THE SPIRIT," in the blessed BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ, the sacred lore, the divine wisdom, the book of divine union, the colloquy between the blessed KRISHNA and ARJUNA, and contained in the Bhîshma Parvan of the blessed MAHÂBHARATA, which is a collection of a hundred thousand verses by VYÂSA.

Salutation to Krishna, who by the declaration of this spiritual philosophy rescued his devotee Arjuna from the mire of grief and despair.

¹ "Whom thus all desires enter." As they enter, so they die; as fresh water entering the sea loses its own character without affecting the sea.

² "Wanders," for food necessary for the support of life.

³ "Desire," all but for maintenance of life.

⁴ "The actor," etc. But even then does not feel the effort made as made for himself or for the preservation of his life.

CHAPTER III.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF RIGHT ACTION.

In the preceding chapter it has been declared that the devotion of men is twofold; namely, that to pure spiritual knowledge, and that to right action. Then, from verse 55 to the end of the chapter it is shown that the sage, devoted to pure spiritual knowledge, and not bound to action of any kind, attains to Nirvāna (v. 72). Yet the Blessed Lord teaches Arjuna (v. 47), "Thy right is only to the act; . . . let not for thee be attachment to inaction." In other words, Arjuna is enjoined to perform action with the right knowledge of action; in consequence, perplexities arise in his breast. "When I pray to the Lord to be taught the best means for attaining supreme welfare, he replies that it is devotion to spiritual philosophy, and yet commands me to engage in action which can but mediately lead to the goal; how is this?" Thus confused,

ARJUNA said:

1. If, according to thy intention, O Giver of all men ask,¹ knowledge is superior to action,² then why, O Keçava,³ engagest thou me in acts of cruelty?

If it had been the intention of the Blessed Lord to teach the need of works for salvation, Arjuna would not have asked this question, unless he very grossly misunderstood the teaching. It will presently appear that there is no such misconception in his mind; and, indeed, this is quite clear from (II. 49), "By far action

¹ "O Giver of all men ask." In Sanskrit, Janārdana. "Thou givest all that men ask of thee, thou wilt also grant this prayer," so hopes Arjuna.

² "Action," as explained in note on Chapter II. verse 39.

³ Keçava, being lord of all, thou canst save me from the necessity for cruel deeds, if thou shouldst choose.

is inferior to knowledge," which throughout this book means real consciousness, and not acquirements of the intellect.

2. With words, as though confused, thou seemest to delude my reason. With certainty declare one method by which I may attain well-being.

THE BLESSED LORD *spoke*:

3. Two paths of devotion for the world were declared by me in the beginning,¹ O sinless one,² — devotion as wisdom of the spiritually wise,³ and devotion as action⁴ of the men of action.

The same man cannot be devoted to pure spiritual knowledge and also to action. This is the solution of all possible doubts. There is one stage in a man's life when work and forms are necessary for him, but subsequently they become unnecessary.

It is here taught that those only should renounce the world who are detached from it by absence of natural affinities for it, and not those who must wrench themselves away. The twofold character of devotion depends upon the purity or impurity of the nature of the devotee.

Then why not let Arjuna adopt the path of wisdom? Because,

4. A man does not attain to freedom from action by not engaging in action merely, nor is the goal gained by simple abandonment of action.

Action is not merely that which is technically called works by Brāhman theologians, but it also includes outward acts of divine worship. The spiritually wise man worships in spirit and truth by the realization of identity with the Supreme Spirit.

¹ "In the beginning," that is, at the foundation of the world.

² "O sinless one." This means that only those who are pure in heart can receive truth. Arjuna's fear on account of his confusion of mind is baseless, because he is pure, and therefore fit for the reception of truth.

³ "The spiritually wise," that is, those who from early life renounce the world by perceiving its vanity.

⁴ "Action," that is, duties enjoined by Scriptures.

On the other hand, freedom from action is the interior illumination which puts an end to all interest in objects and renders action impossible by revealing the identity of the Ego and the Supreme Spirit. The abandoning of action from spiritual pride is not spiritual wisdom.

Why one does not gain wisdom by simply abandoning action is next declared.

5. Verily no one ¹ ever rests an instant without being a performer of action; all creatures are made to act without independence ² by nature-born qualities.

In regard to nature-born qualities it should be explained that the Indian sages teach that Nature is the totality of all qualities, and that which is not quality is the Ego. Conditioned existence is due to the acceptance of some group of qualities or conditions as the Ego. So long as this erroneous view of the Ego is entertained, the man feels himself drawn into endless series of changes. He cannot stop them by simple wishes, and certainly cannot even wish to stop them unless he hears and believes that some other state is possible and ought to be aspired to. Thus the mind of man is in perpetual rotation through the influence of the qualities that compose it.

These qualities, though infinitely divisible, fall under three classes : —

1. Goodness, enlightenment, and pleasure (in Sanskrit called *Satva*).

2. Badness, passion, and pain (*Rajas*).

3. Indifference, dulness, and darkness (*Tamas*).

These are perpetually active, and the bondage of man consists in the mistaken notion that he is a bundle of qualities.

The reason why every one not spiritually illuminated should engage in action is because, —

6. He who, restraining the organs of action and sensation remains dwelling upon objects of sense,

¹ "No one," that is, except the spiritually wise as described in the final verse of the preceding chapter.

² "Without independence." No man who is subject to desires is master of himself.

Mañ. xxiii.
55-57. is deluded in heart, and is called a hypocrite.

7. But he who, having restrained the organs by the mind engages in devotion through action, is superior.

"Superior" to the hypocrite, because by degrees he will attain to wisdom.

8. Perform thou proper action; action is superior to inaction. By inaction even thy bodily voyage cannot be accomplished.

Proper action is made up of religious and moral duties, and our bodily voyage is the fulfilment of the purpose of existence. Whoever attains to Nirvāna before death is in Nirvāna after death; but whoever departs this life without attaining that blessed goal does not attain it on account of death.

If one should think that action leads to action, and therefore it is best absolutely to desist from it, that would be an error; for, —

9. All actions performed, other than those for God's sake, make the actor bound by action. Perform action for His sake, O son of Kuntī, devoid of attachment.

Renunciation is not abstinence from action, but the doing of action for the sake of God; in other words, knowing that it is not done by thee or for thee, although with thy body and mind. It is not necessary to give up anything except desire. Further on, certain kinds of action, it is declared, are not necessarily to be given up even by the illuminated sage (Chap. XVIII. 3).

10. In the beginning, the lord of creatures, having produced creatures together with sacrifice,¹ said: With it multiply; may this be your milch-cow of desire!²

11. Nourish the gods with this; may those gods³

¹ "Sacrifice," that is, works prescribed by the Theocratic Code, by which the Brahmical people are governed.

² "Milch-cow of desire." The cow of plenty, whose milk takes the form of the object desired by the milker.

³ "Those gods," that is, thus nourished. The gods correspond to angels of the Lord.

nourish you; mutually nourishing, may ye both attain well-being!¹

12. The gods nourished by sacrifice will give you Prov. iii. 9, 10. wished-for enjoyment. He who enjoys their gifts without giving them is even as a thief.

All good things that come to us are from the gods, and it is the ordinance of the Creator that a portion of it should be used for nourishing the gods through sacrifices.

13. Being the eaters of the leavings after sacrifice, they become free from all sins. Those incarnate sins who cook for themselves eat sin.

Giving a wider significance to sacrifice than its mere technical import, we may interpret the first part of this verse thus: whoever performs duty and has no other enjoyment than what is gathered from its mere performance is beyond the reach of sin.

"Those incarnate sins" are men who receive this world's goods, which are the gifts of the gods, and offer no portion of them in sacrifice,—they are sins in the forms of human beings. They "eat sin," because the objects they enjoy are sins, being used in an unrighteous way.

Action is needed to keep in motion the wheel of cause and effect which forms the universe. The co-eternity of these two, as of tree and seed, is shown in the next verse.

14. From food come creatures; food comes from rain; rain comes from sacrifice; sacrifice is born of action.

15. Know action to be Veda-born, and Veda as born of the Exhaustless Spirit; therefore the all-pervading Spirit is ever established in action.

Religious duties derive their final authority from the Vedas. Although everything that takes place is owing to the power of the

¹ "Well-being," that is, prosperity on earth and at death liberation, or *shode* in any heavenly sphere that is desired.

Supreme, yet that power is especially revealed by religious rites, as all-pervasive light appears to be especially present in a transparent object.

16. The wheel thus set in motion, whoever does not turn according to ancient practice, he, O son of Prithā, of sinful life and sense-delighted, lives in vain.

This concludes the topic begun in verse 4. So long as a man must live in the world, let him live in accordance with the principles inculcated by his religion. But when he receives spiritual illumination and stands alone with his God, he becomes a law unto himself. This is the highest spiritual state, which but very few attain, though all ought to aspire for.

17. But he whose delight is in the Spirit, the man who is filled by the Spirit, who is contented with the Spirit, there is nothing necessary for him to do.

Those whose delight is in the Spirit find as much delight in spiritual things as is found in objects of sense by the carnally minded. Being filled by the Spirit and one with that Spirit, no desire for anything can exist. As a lighted lamp does not require another lamp in order to be seen, so the spiritually wise want nothing for their enjoyment beyond the Spirit, or the true Self, which is the very essence of delight.

18. In the world, verily, there is not for him any interest in what is done, nor even in what is not done. Nor for any object is his dependence on any creature.

But thou art not thus.

19. Therefore, unattached, always perform those acts that have to be performed. A man performing action without attachment attains to the Supreme.

He attains to the Supreme because he becomes fit for divine illumination through the purification of his nature.

20. Verily through action¹ Janaka and others attained the goal.² And even³ seeing the need of keeping men fixed to duty, thou oughtest to perform thy duties.

How men are kept faithful to religious and temporal duties is now explained.

21. Whatever is performed by the superior, the same is done by the inferior. Whatever he accepts as authority, even so does the world.

He cites his own case in illustration : —

22. O son of Prithâ, there is nothing for me to do in these three worlds, — nothing unattained that is possible to attain ; still I am present in action.

23. If for once I do not ceaselessly remain in action, all men will follow my way, O son of Prithâ.

The Holy One, thus speaking, can only be said to remain in action through the mysterious power of the Deity, who cannot be compelled to work by any extraneous power. Man's conception of himself changes with every new act ; but not so with the Deity, even though He be said to act or remain in action.

24. If I do not perform action these creatures will be lost⁴ and I shall become the author of confusion, and shall have slain all these creatures.

This being the case, the general rule is as follows : —

25. O son of Bharata, as the unwise one acts, being attached to the fruit of action, let the wise man, without

¹ "Through action," that is, obtained purity of nature through righteousness of life, and through that the real knowledge of the Supreme Spirit.

² "Goal," that is, spiritual wisdom. The phrase may also mean that Janaka, Açvapati, and other royal saints carried on their original work for the benefit of the world even after their spiritual illumination.

³ "Even," that is, even if thou considerest thyself free to enter the path of wisdom.

⁴ "Creatures will be lost," by the complete extinction of the sense of duty.

attachment, act in the same manner, striving for the world's fidelity to duty.

Further,

26. Let not the wise man create confusion in the minds of the unwise¹ who are attached to action, but being himself engaged,² engage them in all action.

The reason why the unwise become attached to action is explained.

27. All actions are performed by the qualities of Nature, but the heart deluded by egotism³ fancies that "I am the actor."

The reason why the wise are not attached is next given.

28. But, O mighty armed one, the truth-knower about the distinctness of the Ego from quality and action is not attached, being convinced that qualities⁴ only act upon qualities.⁵

29. Those deluded by the qualities of Nature become attached to the actions of qualities; them, of dim discrimination and devoid of complete knowledge, he of perfect knowledge must not unsettle.

The foregoing teachings can be summed up thus:—

1. Action is indispensable for all but the spiritually wise.
2. Even they may at their choice act for the benefit of the world.
3. The unwise are bound by the desire for the fruit of action.
4. The wise are freed by knowing that the Ego is distinct from quality and action.

¹ "Confusion in . . . unwise," not to disturb those who cannot act except for the sake of the fruit of action

² "Himself engaged," that is, through his example.

³ "Egotism" is the conviction that the body, its organs and the mental faculties taken together, form the real Ego

⁴ "Qualities," that is, organs and faculties.

⁵ "Upon qualities," that is, objects appertaining thereto.

30. Giving up all actions to me, and with heart fixed on the mysterious link¹ between man and the Deity, do battle without expectation, free from the feeling of my-ness and free from anguish.

31. Those men who always follow these my words with faith and without reviling, they also become liberated from action.

Faith is the conviction that things that are imperceptible and not inferable, are true upon the authority of the Scriptures and that of illuminated teachers. This is the path of gradual emancipation, and will be further described in Chapter VIII. verse 24.

32. But those who revile them and do not follow them, know them to be deluded in regard to all knowledge,² lost³ and void of discrimination.⁴

Why men still follow the wrong course is next declared.

33. Even the wise man acts in accordance with his character, all creatures follow nature; what can restraint do?

"Character" is the aggregate of the tendencies embodied in a creature, resulting from causes generated in the beginningless past.

"Nature" is the totality of the forces which form a conscious personal being by a mysterious relation to consciousness, which is the divine essence.

¹ "Mysterious link," etc. Knowing that existence simply as man is incomplete, there is another pole of being, the Spirit Reality or Being as itself is one, but it manifests in two poles, Spirit and Flesh. What man has to do, the Spirit causes to be done. If all acts are done with this knowledge, then the one-ness of Being is manifested as divine illumination, and man's suffering comes to an absolute end. (Cf. Luke xvi. 10)

² "All knowledge," that is, whether derived from sacred authority or from real illumination.

³ "Lost," that is, unfit by nature to be proper vessels for the reception of truth, and therefore liable to the danger alluded to in Chapter II. verse 63.

⁴ "Discrimination," spiritual perception.

This relation is called false knowledge, illusion, or simulation; because, although each creature seems to be a distinct centre of consciousness, yet in reality consciousness, not being an object, is not liable to partition.

The restraint referred to is that which teachers and Scriptures seek to impose. The idea is that a forcible alteration of the nature of any one — that is to say, to make a man into what is totally different from himself — is the same thing as to efface him from existence; for such a process involves a dissolution of continuity.

For this reason the Deity stands in the relation of a giver to man, granting what is asked; and not as a tyrant, imposing what is not solicited.

The final sentence, rendered "What can restraint do?" can also be thus translated "What can mere attempt to restrain the senses do?" That is, a mere desire for things of the Spirit and an external conformity to laws of righteousness, unaccompanied by the purification of nature (usually called heart), does not make a fit vessel for the spirit of Truth. Faith without good works is dead, but good works without faith are a mockery.

If all creatures work according to their nature, — and there are none who are entirely independent of nature, — what is the object of the ordinances of the Scriptures and the commandments?

The answer, in brief, is that nature's work is twofold; it causes creatures to recede from truth and it draws them to it. The relation between spiritual teaching and the latter mode of nature's operations is the same as that between the allurements of the world and the former mode. Those who are of the flock will hear the shepherd's voice.

34. In the objects of every sense are established relish and distaste. Do not be subject to them; they are the enemies of man.

The perception of objects as pleasant or unpleasant is imprisonment in flesh. It is true that nature is irresistible, yet this nature can only be set in motion by the feeling of relish or distaste in objects of sense. If worldly desires are resisted through faith in spiritual truth, nature, through want of incentive, is finally vanquished.

35. Better is one's own proper duty, even though not fully performed, than the duty of another perfectly accomplished. It is better to perish in one's own duty; the duty of another is full of danger.

Even if one cannot fully perform one's own proper duty, it is better to attempt it than to do what is the lawful duty of another—that is to say, duties not pertaining to one's own station in life—in a flawless manner. Because the question is to do one's duty, and not any particular act or acts. Righteousness consists in obedience to divine commands or spiritual truth, and not in what results from such obedience.

ARJUNA said:

36. Now then, by whom led, does a man, O descendant of Vrishni,¹ practise sinfulness, as though unwilling and impressed by force?

THE BLESSED LORD spoke:

37. This is lust, this is anger,² born of the quality of rajas.³ Know this to be a great devourer,⁴ great sin,⁵ and the enemy⁶ on earth

38. As by smoke fire is enveloped, and the looking-glass by rust,⁷ as the womb envelops the fœtus, so by this⁸ it⁹ is enveloped.

39. By this—the eternal enemy of the wise man,¹⁰

¹ "Descendant of Vrishni" is Krishna.

² "Lust and anger" are really one, for every desire opposed becomes anger.

³ *Rajas*, the driving power of Nature

⁴ "Great devourer," that is, knows no satiety

⁵ "Great sin" is the root of all sin

⁶ "Enemy," because this is the cause of this life of suffering

⁷ "Rust," because the native Indian mirror is made of burnished metal.

⁸ "This," that is, lust and anger

⁹ "It" is discriminating knowledge

¹⁰ "Eternal . . . wise man" Because he knows the root of all evil to be desire, and therefore regards it as the enemy, while the unwise man, thirsting for enjoyment, can never recognize the true character of desire, and so regards it as a friend.

desire-formed,¹ hard to be filled, insatiate — discrimination is enveloped.

40. The senses and organs, the thinking faculty, as well as the faculty of judgment, are said to be its seat. It — enveloping the discriminative faculty with these — deludes the lord of the body.

The "lord of the body" is the Ego in apparent connection with the body. It should always be borne in mind that in reality the lord of the body *is* and *not becomes* one with the Lord of all; it is God, and not *crude* God. A man while thinking of what he ought to do, or of the results of his acts, has in reality nothing whatsoever to do with the true Ego, which *is* the same as the Deity, for whom there is no thinking or "may-be." The Deity and Ego are one to that man alone in whom self-consciousness is extinct. The man for whom necessity for action has any meaning is in ignorance, and will always remain so if he does not completely obey the law of righteousness and aspire to true spiritual knowledge.

41. Therefore thou, O best of the descendants of Bharata, at the very outset, restraining the senses, conquer this sin, which is really destructive of communicated knowledge, as well as its realization.

42. Great are the senses and organs said to be; greater² than senses and organs is the thinking self; greater than the thinking self is the principle of judgment; and that which³ is greater than the principle of judgment is He.⁴

It is spiritual death to invest with divinity anything that is connected with self-consciousness. It is not possible to obtain any specific knowledge of things spiritual except when self-consciousness

¹ "Desire-formed," that is, able to assume any form at will. This refers to the chameleon-like character of desire.

² "Greater," on account of greater subtlety than belongs to gross objects. The classification ascends in the order of subtlety.

³ "That which . . . than . . . judgment," that is, the ego in the body.

⁴ "Is He" that is, the Supreme Spirit; that which is the true Ego in relation to the body is identical with the Supreme.

—which includes the sense of egoistic existence of every kind—is obliterated, and the sense of within and without is entirely effaced.

The beginning of all spiritual life must lie in the recognition of truths which at the time of recognition leave no doubt of their origin outside of the recognizer. This is to say that spiritual truths are only representable by words that can never be connected with any object of normal experience. Therefore spiritual life begins with submission to some authority in the belief that it is absolute. At the same time it must be seen that such a submission becomes the most degrading superstition, unless the authority itself rejects everything that is of practical benefit to the being conditioned by experience, and embodies the annulment of self-consciousness. (Cf. John v 18.)

No authority can be spiritual if it does not uphold, as ultimate truth, the falsehood of that being with whom the idea of will, action, or knowledge can in any way be associated. He who does not teach the perfect renunciation of will, action, and knowledge can never be a true prophet. Every other thing must be subordinate to this ideal. In other words, no promise of eternal life can be valid which does not stand upon the ashes of the present life.

The doctrine of the identity of God and the Ego is liable to be misunderstood with the most frightfully evil consequences, and this is why the injunction against "throwing pearls before swine" is so strict and universal. God is, and the Ego is, and they are one, being Consciousness; this is not the same as the denial of God and the investiture of self-conscious being with the glory of God; on the contrary, it is a denial of the reality of self-consciousness. This doctrine does not enthrone experience as the supreme authority; it denies the validity of experience altogether. Materialism and worldliness are the lawful offspring of the authority of experience, and spiritual truth represented by the doctrine presented is its implacable foe. Nothing that is not God can ever be the Ego in reality; to imagine that the Ego is anything else is spiritual death.

43. Thus realizing¹ that which is greater than the faculty of judgment, and bringing the self to rest by

¹ "Thus realizing," that is, being convinced of the identity of the Ego with the Supreme Spirit.

the self,¹ O thou of mighty arms, conquer the enemy, desire-formed and difficult to seize.

It is to be noted that throughout this chapter the internal faculties are taken to be three, namely : —

1. MANAS, or the thinking self, which manifests itself as the power of making hypotheses, — “is it this,” or “is it that?”

2. BUDDHI, or the principle of judgment which selects one out of the endless possibilities conjured up by the manas by investing it with the conviction of certainty, — “it is this.”

3. AHANKĀRA, or egotism; that within us which says, “I am the actor; for my benefit all this is being done.”

This analysis of the inner faculties is the same as that of the Sāṅkhya philosophers. The orthodox Brahmanical system, the Vedānta, adds to these three a fourth, CHITTA, the principle of desire, or the power of searching for things agreeable to the ahankāra.

Thus ends chapter the third, called the “RIGHT KNOWLEDGE OF ACTION,” in the blessed BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ, the sacred lore, the divine wisdom, the book of divine union, the colloquy between the blessed KRISHNA and ARJUNA, and contained in the Bhīshma Parvan of the blessed MAHĀBHĀRATA, which is a collection of a hundred thousand verses by VYĀSA.

Salutation to Krishna, who has taught mankind to attain salvation through worship of the Supreme Spirit by the selfless performance of duties pertaining to the station of life in which a man is born.

¹ “Self to rest by the self,” that is, the restless mind by the purified mind, which is the conviction mentioned above.

CHAPTER IV.

RIGHT KNOWLEDGE OF DEDICATION OF ACTION
LEADING TO SPIRITUAL WISDOM.

THE two previous chapters show that there are apparently different paths through which the striver for salvation reaches Nirvāna. For those completely purified from worldly attachments there is nothing left but devotion to pure spiritual knowledge; while for those who, though struggling to be free, are yet tied to the world by desires there is no other way than by all-absorbing meditations on the mystery of the Supreme Spirit, preceded by the fulfilment of the duties pertaining to the station of life in which they are born, and the pure-hearted performance of good works for the sake of the Deity alone. In this chapter is declared the eternal permanence of this law, which is preserved for men by spiritual succession and the mystery of divine incarnations.

THE BLESSED LORD *spoke*:

1. This exhaustless,¹ eternal, spiritual truth² I declared unto Vivasvat;³ Vivasvat declared it unto Manu,⁴ and Manu declared it unto Ikshvāku.⁵

¹ "Exhaustless," because leading to Nirvāna

² "This . . . spiritual truth;" the right performance of action which by purification of the nature of man renders him fit for the reception of spiritual illumination.

³ *Vivasvat* literally means "the Sun," it here signifies the first manifestation of divine wisdom at the season of creation

⁴ *Manu* is the spirit of the sensuous universe

⁵ *Ikshvāku*, the son of Manu, was the first king and the founder of the solar dynasty of Indian history.

2. Thus successively transmitted, this the royal sages knew. By this great lapse of time that spiritual truth was lost,¹ O harasser of thy foes.²

3. That same secret,³ eternal, excellent truth is this declared unto thee to-day by me, because
Prov. viii 25 thou art my devotee⁴ and friend.⁵

This doctrine, herein unfolded, is the truth declared at the foundation of the world, and all who have entered the eternal life have travelled by this path and no other.

ARJUNA said:

4. Later thy birth, earlier the birth of Vivasvat — how
John viii 58 is this to be realized that thou wert the declarer in the beginning?⁶

The mystery of the divine incarnation is next declared. The Spirit never is born but by the inscrutable power of the Deity; a human being is made, not for his own benefit but for the spiritual well-being of the world, to manifest Divine grace, wisdom, and power unto men. None of the Christs of God are to be known after the manner of the flesh; it is only through the power of the Spirit that there can be recognition. There can be no change in the Divine Substance

Whether the mystery as declared here is or is not properly apprehended in its positive aspect, its negative aspect is perfectly clear. God is one and indivisible. Millions upon millions of men may realize their identity with the Deity; innumerable may be the number of "divine incarnations," yet their identity is with the One God.

¹ "Lost." Owing to want of fit recipients of truth the succession was broken. The unfitness consisted in submission to passions which are the implacable enemies of man.

² "O harasser of thy foes," thou art a fit recipient because thou hast these foes under control.

³ "Secret," that is, it must not be communicated to unfit persons, and the Blessed Lord therefore declares it only unto His

⁴ "Devotee," or one whose heart rests in peace by depending on another.

⁵ "Friend," that is, one of about the same age who is an affectionate fellow-worker.

⁶ "In the beginning," that is, at the foundation of the world.

If the numerous children of a man separately call him "Father," his personality is not multiplied into the number of his children. Of all spiritual sins the belief in a plurality of gods is the most deadly.

It is not difficult to perceive the position of beings whose perfection is not in any sense the product of evolution, in the harmony of the universe. Individuals evolve from one form into another, but the archetypes of these forms are not produced by evolution. Otherwise the determination of evolution into the forms it actually does take, out of the infinite number of possibilities, remains unexplained. If it is believed that perfect knowledge of the Deity is possible for man, — to know even as he is known, — the archetype of such perfection must be a reality, and an eternal reality.

In order to remove from the minds of carnal men the doubt of the divine incarnation and the omniscience of Krishna,

THE BLESSED LORD *spoke*:

5. Many births have passed of mine, and also of thine, O Arjuna. I know them all; thou knowest not, O harasser of thy foes.

"I know," because my power of wisdom is unconditioned and I am of nature eternally pure, illuminated, liberated, and true, while thou art conditioned by the consciousness of some things being peculiarly thine.

How can there then be birth for the Divine Spirit, since it is not limited by any cause?

6. Being even birthless, exhaustless in essence, and being even the lord of all creatures, I am
John i 33, 34. born through my inscrutable power and controlling nature.

All that men can know of the Deity by observing the history of any divine incarnation is not the Deity himself, but his unsearchable, mysterious power. Be it always remembered that God is one, and forever the same. He is Krishna, and yet Himself, and Krishna knew that the consciousness within him was the Deity; therefore it is true that the human being was not Krishna the Supreme Spirit. To be a man is to know one's self to be a man, and not to

know the Self to be the Deity. The Deity being one, eternal and secondless, to know the Self as the Deity is the same thing as not to know one's self as being one among the many and transitory.

The truth therefore is that a man who thinks himself to be the assemblage of the body and the inner faculties may believe the body with which the name Krishna was associated to be God; but Krishna never thought so himself. Within himself there was no personality accepted as the Deity, who was the only Self that Krishna knew himself to be. The Deity is the true Self of all creatures, but they do not know it. Krishna knew it, and consequently all the incidents of his life emanated from a full knowledge of divine identity unstained by the human personality which in the case of an "incarnation" is perfectly pure and in absolute accord with the Divine will. Owing to this reason the glory, power, and truth of the Supreme God manifest themselves in their fulness through the "Word made flesh," as sunlight is transmitted, in its perfect form, through an absolutely transparent medium.

The words here translated "inscrutable power" are usually rendered "illusive power," but the present form is preferable because it clearly conveys the idea that it can only be known as the unknowable. No one is to think that this unknowableness is due to defective perception on the part of the knower; for he knows it perfectly when he knows it as the unknowable. It is no defect in him that the thing is unknowable. In other words, it is only that which we should call unknowableness, and to know it as such is to comprehend it fully.

"Nature" is that which we know a thing to be. Coldness is the nature of ice. The nature of God is that by which He is known to us; and He is known to us only through His power, which appears to us in three aspects, namely:—

1. Power of producing change.
2. Power of exercising all power; in other words, absolute free-will.
3. Power of knowing the power of will and action.

The only way in which these three powers can be spoken of as a whole is as the absoluteness of the Deity. But if we regard the power as power, it is not the Deity, because it is imperfect and requires the idea of the powerful, the lord of the power, to give the mind that rest we call completeness. But when that completeness is obtained we do not find any power as separate from the Deity.

The term, however, is here to be understood in a restricted sense, for reasons that are obvious. As the nature of the Deity includes knowledge of truth, and this knowledge is the agent which sets a man free from bondage, then it is clear that this element must be wanting in what produces birth, which from the point of view of the Deity is illusory. "My nature" is the nature of which the Deity is the Master, and therefore not His *real* nature which is Himself. Here is meant the power which is the substance of the objective universe and the cause of that blindness by the working of which a man does not know that he is identical with God.

To sum up: This verse denies the possibility of the Deity's ever being born; and declares that such an apparent (real from man's point of view) incarnation is produced by the inscrutable power of the Deity.

The times of divine incarnations are next declared.

7. O son of Bharata,¹ whenever there is decline of righteousness² and uprising of unrighteousness, then I project myself into creation.

Rom 1:16-32

The purpose of divine incarnations is next declared.

8. For the protection of the righteous and the destruction of the evil-doer, and for the proper establishment of the law of righteousness, I appear from age to age.

The purpose of divine incarnation is to judge mankind and bring peace to the world. To know the divine mystery of such incarnations is to inherit the everlasting life.

9. Whoever knows in truth³ my divine birth and works, he, abandoning the body, does not incur re-birth, O Arjuna, he comes to me.

John v. 24.

The true knowledge of "my divine birth and works" is the spiritual perception of this, that I am never really born, although

¹ "Son of Bharata," being a descendant of so just a king, thou shouldst not permit the decline of the law of righteousness.

² "Righteousness." If the law of righteousness is preserved inviolate, all creatures will have prosperity on earth, and at death final rest in the Deity. If it be completely extinct, the race of man will also become extinct.

³ "Knows in truth," that is, realizes it as it is, and is not blindly attached to mere outward appearance, thinking that the Father of the universe is a conditioned being.

appearing to be so; that I have nothing to achieve for personal gain, but yet I work for the establishment of truth and righteousness in the hearts of men, and thus I protect them. The Blessed Lord also means that whoever works for the same purpose really works for Him. The supreme duty for us all, then, is to recognize through faith that we are nothing but incarnations of the Deity, unborn and eternal, for the same purpose as is shown forth here. Thus we shall attain the life that is hidden in God.

The path of liberation as herein pointed out is not new, but eternally founded upon truth.

10. Many, devoid of attachment, fear, and anger, filled with me,¹ depending on me alone,² through penance of
Isa. lvi 15 wisdom³ purified, have attained my estate.

The question may arise as to why the Deity, devoid, as he is, of personal preferences, gives His own estate — the life that the Father has in Himself (John v. 26) — to those alone who are free from attachment and are possessed of the other qualities. If He is a merciful God, why does He not grant Nirvāna to all?

11. Whoever approaches me in any form,⁴ in the
Ps. lxxviii. 29, same form do I approach him. In every
Cxl. 15. case and condition⁵ men follow but my path,
O son of Prithā.

Righteousness and unrighteousness are both ordained by the Supreme Power. Those who follow the path of righteousness find eternal life; the others remain immersed in darkness, — this is also His ordinance.

The reason why all men do not wish for liberation is next declared.

¹ "Filled with me," that is, recognizing identity with the Deity in the way hereafter explained.

² "Depending on me alone," that is, following the path by devotion as knowledge (Chap. II 55 *et seq.*).

³ "Penance of wisdom" refers to the purifying effect of wisdom.

⁴ "In any form," that is, with whatever object one approaches me, the same object is granted to him by me.

⁵ "In every case and condition" This is universal. There is no single case in which I do not grant the prayer of all creatures as expressed in their wishes. The Divine Author bestows free-will on all His creatures to approach Him or not.

12. Those desirous of success through action¹ worship gods² on this earth. Action-born success comes quickly in the world of men.³

Rom. vii. 1.
Thus is shown how all men follow his path, and it is also specifically stated that only in the world of men are religious injunctions concerning forms and ceremonies operative.

13. According to the classification of action and qualities the four castes are created by me. Know me, non-actor and changeless,⁴ as even the author of this.

1 Cor. xii. 4-27

"Classification" here refers to caste. The Brāhman caste has a preponderance of the quality of *Satva* (goodness, joy, and enlightenment), and its effect is mental and bodily tranquillity, penance, etc. The warrior caste has a greater proportion of the quality of passion mixed with goodness, and its effect is heroism, etc. The commercial and agricultural caste has a preponderance of the quality of passion over the quality of darkness, ignorance, and the like, and its effect is trade and agriculture. The Çudra, or lowest caste, has the quality of darkness dominant over the other qualities, and its effect is subordination to the other castes.

The paradox of the eternal Deity engaging in action is further amplified.

14. Acts do not touch me,⁵ nor in me is relish⁶ for

¹ "Success through action," that is, promise of heavenly enjoyments attached to the performance of religious ceremonials

² "Gods," that is, other than the true God. The Vedic injunction against idolatry is very strict and explicit "Whoever worships another god, thinking 'This god is one, and I am another,' he knows not, like a domestic beast is he to the gods."

³ "The world of men" In other worlds the divine ordinances as to religious and moral duties do not exist. All creatures other than man never aspire to higher conditions, and live in stagnant satisfaction with that which they have.

⁴ "Non-actor and changeless" The action is done by divine power, and not by the Deity Himself.

⁵ "Do not touch me," because I have no egotism or personality

⁶ "Relish," etc. When action is performed by me I do not feel as if I have gained something I did not possess before.

Isa. xlv 5-24; the fruit of acts. Whoever knows me thus is
 Amos iii. 6, 7. not bound by acts.¹

From reference to Krishna apparently as to a person this might be mistaken for a new doctrine and produce confusion. Therefore it is said :—

15. By previous aspirants for liberation action has been performed; knowing this, therefore, perform thou action performed by the ancients² in ancient times.

This closes the section.

The authority of the ancients extended only to the bare performance of action, and does not apply to the nature of the action. Therefore it is said :—

16. Even the wise are in delusion in regard to what is action and what is not action³ Therefore I shall declare to thee what is action, knowing which thou shalt be liberated from evil.

17. Enjoined acts are to be known, as also acts forbidden, and also inaction. The path of action
 Heb. v. 14. is difficult to discern.

The highest benefit derivable from ethics is the comprehension of these three classes of action.

18. Whoever sees inaction in action, whoever in inaction action, he, among men, is possessed of spiritual illumination; is the man of right action and the doer of all action.

These paradoxes mean that the Supreme Spirit being in reality absolute is actionless; the Ego, being in reality identical with the

¹ "Bound by acts." For such a man the acts observed as done by his body do not touch the Spirit, which is unconditioned.

² "Ancients." Work for the purification of thy nature if thou art unwise; otherwise, for the good of the world. The instance of Janaka is here especially meant. He was a king remarkable for wisdom and sanctity.

³ "Action . . . not action" It is not to be understood that "action" means all movements of body or mind, and "not action" its opposite. It means what is, and what is not to be done, — right action.

Supreme Spirit, is therefore also actionless. Yet the existence of suffering shows that embodied egos are not independent of action. To be entirely disconnected from action is to realize identity with the Supreme Spirit, and thus to completely lose the consciousness of being one among many egos. To act and to suppress the impulse towards action are both forms of action, which is connected with the true Ego or Supreme Spirit only through error or false attribution.

Whoever realizes that action belongs to the assemblage of body and mind and is only attributed to the Ego through error, and also realizes that abstinence from action through indolence is in truth action, and therefore charged with all its properties, is one with the Supreme Spirit. This realization is the same as spiritual illumination and perfect independence of the law of cause and effect; it is the accomplishment of all that can be done, because there remains nothing to be done when the eternal life is attained.

Sometimes this verse is erroneously interpreted to mean that a man ought to abandon the sense of right and wrong and act according to his impulses, thinking all the time that he, being one with the Supreme Spirit, cannot act; and in this manner it is imagined that inaction is perceived in action. It is easy to see that if the principle of this verse is rightly applied, thinking is to be regarded as action. No thinking can in consequence make wrong right. Furthermore, how can a man who is conscious of egoistic impulses, and for whom there is therefore action still to be done, be called "the doer of all action"? With the cessation of these impulses such thinking becomes meaningless.

In fact, what is here stated has no ethical bearing, and is merely the declaration of the want of relation between action and the true Ego, which is absolute. This is quite clear from the succeeding verse which commends the knowledge, by which is meant a new consciousness.

19. The spiritually discriminating call him wise whose initiatives are devoid of desire and determination, and whose action is burned up by the fire of knowledge.¹

The man described above — "whose initiatives . . . determination" — is one who not only feels no interest in the fruit of action,

¹ "Fire of knowledge," described in the previous verse.

but is also unconcerned as to the nature of that fruit, owing to his want of determination or motive in relation to action. Some difficulty arises as to how such a man can act at all. But it must not be forgotten that such wise men, from want of a motive to put an end to life, will perform the action necessary for the maintenance of life, and their existence on earth leads to the establishment of the law of righteousness among men.

20. Abandoning attachment to the fruit of action, ever satisfied, on nothing dependent,¹ he does nothing, even though engaged in action.²

21. Devoid of expectation, with mind and body tranquil,³ having abandoned submission⁴ to enjoyment of objects in any form, doing only acts of the body,⁵ he does not incur re-birth.

22. Contented with what is obtained without effort,⁶ beyond the pairs of opposites,⁷ free from hostility⁸ against any creature, equal in success and ill-success, even though performing action he becomes not bound.⁹

Having thus lauded spiritual illumination, which sets a man free from the bondage of action, he proceeds to show how the bondage

¹ "On nothing dependent" Free of the consciousness of the existence of any such objects as means.

² "Even though engaged in action," which was commenced before the time of his illumination. Since the body is non-existent for the sage who knows himself to be really pure consciousness, and as such is identical with the Supreme, there is no motive for stopping the wheel already in motion.

³ "Tranquil," that is, perfectly harmonious in all their relations.

⁴ "Abandoned submission," that is, having no consciousness of enjoyment in any action.

⁵ "Acts of the body," that is, such acts as the body does for its own maintenance.

⁶ "Obtained without effort," that is, even for the barest necessity for maintaining the body he is contented with what comes without effort, and even if this is denied it is the same to him as if obtained, because his egotism is quite dead.

⁷ "Pairs of opposites," that is, heat and cold, pleasure and pain.

⁸ "Free from hostility," that is, in speech, act, or thought, disconnected from the suffering of any creature.

⁹ "Becomes not bound," that is, is not liable to experience pleasure or pain in the future in consequence of action so performed.

does not continue, even though, owing to previous causes, outward action may go on.

The thread dropped with verse 20 is now resumed.

23. Of him, devoid of attachment, freed from bondage,¹ and with heart resting in knowledge, all actions, being performed for the sake of the Supreme,² become destroyed.

The reason for the destruction of such action is set forth because no one can attain Nirvâna so long as there is any earthly tendency which has to exhaust its effect.

24. The Supreme Spirit is the act of offering, the Supreme Spirit is sacrificial butter offered by the sacrificer, who is the Supreme Spirit, into the fire which is the Supreme Spirit, even the Supreme Spirit is the goal for him who is merged in action which is the Supreme Spirit.

Because for the illuminated sage nothing exists which is not really the Supreme Spirit, consequently the result of his acts is also the same.

Having thus imaged the supreme knowledge as a sacrifice, he proceeds to show the merits of the various forms of sacrifice, and then concludes by crowning knowledge as the highest of all.

25. Some men of right action perform sacrifice to gods; others offer as sacrifice the individual ego in the fire that is the Supreme Spirit.

"Sacrifice" here means all things that prepare us for the final emancipation. Therefore two most important forms of sacrifice are mentioned. First, sacrifice through pure philosophical studies and through symbolical worship, herein referred to as "sacrifice to gods;" secondly, the "individual ego" is consciousness in mysterious connection with the body and mind; the Supreme Spirit is the

¹ "Bondage," of the personality

² "Sake of the Supreme," it is not possible for him to act otherwise.

attributeless, absolute consciousness; and the sacrifice is the perception of their identity by rejecting as utterly non-existent the sense of within and without.

26. Others sacrifice the senses, beginning with hearing, in the fire of restraint. Others sacrifice sound, and other objects of sense, in the fire of sense.

The senses, considered as including the organs of action, are the ear, eye, tongue, nose, and skin; speech, hands, feet, and the organs of generation and excretion. The senses are not the various limbs of the body, but super-sensuous powers, which, pervading the whole body, are localized in special parts.

"Restraint" is the unification of these various powers in the mind. He who perceives that all senses are really one, and as one are related to the mind, is the man of restraint. It is not an act, but a certain interior perception or power.

The "sacrifice of sound . . . in the fire of sense" consists in applying the senses to their appropriate objects only, as sanctioned by the law of righteousness.

27. Others again, illuminated by knowledge, sacrifice in the fire of firm rest in Self¹ all functions of sense and vitality.

28. Others again perform sacrifice through objects,² also sacrifices through austerities,³ and also sacrifices through mystical practices. Aspirants quite firm in their vows also perform sacrifices of knowledge through study.

29. Others again sacrifice the upward life-breath in the downward life-breath,⁴ or the downward life-breath in the upward life-breath;⁵ others become fixed in the

¹ "Fire of . . . Self," that is, all thought and action are extinguished by all-absorbing meditation from the Supreme, which gives rise to spiritual wisdom.

² "Sacrifice through objects," that is, by giving alms, etc.

³ "Through austerities," that is, practising austerities as given in Chapter XVII. verses 14-17, regarding it as a sacrifice for the sake of attaining supreme liberation.

⁴ "The upward . . . life-breath," that is, breathing in without holding the air within the body, or breathing it out.

⁵ "Downward . . . life-breath," that is, the reverse process.

regulation of breathing by stopping¹ the movements of both the upward and downward life-breath; others, regulated in food, sacrifice life-breaths in life-breaths.²

These practices pertain to a branch of mysticism which requires special study for its proper comprehension.

30. All these, knowers of sacrifice, with sins exhausted through sacrifice, eating according to rule after performance of sacrifice,³ go to the Eternal Spirit.⁴

31. O best of Kuru's sons,⁵ not even this world is for him who is without sacrifice; what then about the other?

Who does not perform any of these sacrifices is not fit even for this life, much less for the life to come.

32. Thus many kinds of sacrifice are spread out in the mouth of the Vedas;⁶ know them all to be action-born.⁷

33. O harasser of thy foes, superior to sacrifice through objects is sacrifice through knowledge: the whole universe of action, O son of Prithâ, is comprehended in spiritual knowledge.

Spiritual knowledge is the greatest of all things that be,— the most precious possession, therefore strive for it. The "sacrifice through knowledge" (v. 24) is "superior" because it is the im-

¹ "Stopping, etc.," retention of the breath within the body

² "Life-breaths in life-breaths," that is, obtaining mastery over the vital functions.

³ "Eating . . . sacrifice," that is, partaking of food only after performing sacrifice.

⁴ "Go to the eternal Spirit," by spiritual knowledge acquired after purification in this manner.

⁵ "O best of Kuru's sons." Being the best of the descendants of so righteous a king as Kuru, it is easy for thee to perform the necessary sacrifice.

⁶ "Mouth of the Vedas," that is, declared authoritatively by the Vedas.

⁷ "Action born," that is, not done by the true Ego which is perfect and, therefore, not under the necessity for action; this being known, salvation is attained.

mediate antecedent of liberation, whereas action can only lead to liberation through knowledge.

So long as a thing is not fully comprehended there remains some interest in it, but to comprehend it is the same as to realize all that can possibly be done with it. In this sense spiritual knowledge comprehends the whole universe of action; in the purified mind of the illuminated sage all possible relations of objects are realized. When final emancipation is reached no want remains.

How then is this knowledge to be acquired?

34. Seek to know it by prostration,¹ by question,² and by service;³ the truth-seeing wise will communicate this knowledge to thee.

It is next declared what this knowledge is.

35. Knowing which, O son of Pāndu, thou shalt never fall into delusion like this, by which the infinity of creatures thou shalt see in thyself and then in me.⁴

The glory of the knowledge is such that

36. Even if thou wert the greatest evil-doer⁵ among all the unrighteous, thou shalt cross over all sins even by the bark knowledge.

How knowledge does this the following verse explains.

37. O Arjuna, as blazing fire reduces fuel to ashes, so the fire of knowledge turns all action into ashes.

¹ "Prostration." By humility before the teacher, without this sentiment one can never learn.

² "Question," for example, as to the nature of knowledge, liberation, individual and universal spirit.

³ "Service." By constant service to the teacher the pupil comes into the necessary harmony with him.

⁴ "In thyself and then in me," that is, the result of such knowledge is the perception of the identity between the individual and the universal spirit.

⁵ "Evil-doer;" religious works and ceremonies performed otherwise than for the love of God are here included in evil.

The "fire of knowledge" destroys ignorance, which produces the idea that "I am the actor." Consequently in the absence of the consciousness of being the actor no action can take place, nor can effects of past actions persist after their basis is thus removed. This is how knowledge removes sins, which cannot exist disconnected with the agent, the personality.

That this knowledge is the highest of all things is repeated.

38. There is nothing on earth which is as sacred as knowledge; this the man befitted by right performance of action himself realizes within himself in course of time.¹

Having said (v 34) what the aspirant for knowledge must do in order to gain his end, the Blessed Lord here declares what inherent qualities, such as are not dependent upon mere personal exertion, are essential for the reception of the spiritual knowledge which leads to Nirvāna

39. The man possessed of faith,² and devotion to his Master, with senses and organs restrained, gains knowledge; having gained knowledge he quickly attains to the supreme peace.³

Why doubt is dangerous.

40. The ignorant man, the man devoid of faith, the doubt-souled,⁴ are destroyed. For the doubt-souled man there is happiness neither in this world, nor the next, nor in any other.

How doubts are removed.

41. O conqueror of wealth, actions do not bind⁵ him

¹ "Course of time," the long time that is required to render one fit for perfect knowledge

² "Possessed of faith," that is, believing firmly in the truth of the teaching of the Scriptures, as well as of teachers. This faith is not subject to conscious determination in the individual, it has a compelling power.

³ "Supreme peace," that is, Nirvāna.

⁴ "Doubt-souled," that is, the man who has no faith of any kind; he suffers, not only in the next world, but here also, through unending anxieties concerning his own worldly affairs.

⁵ "Actions do not bind," being either for the benefit of the world, or merely natural

whose actions are renounced in consequence of having obtained spiritual discrimination, and whose doubts are cut asunder by the knowledge of identity with the Supreme, and who is not heedless.¹

John in. 8. "Spiritual discrimination," as the result of the right performance of action, has been explained. In brief, it is said a man must always try to gain certainty, faith, etc., through the right performance of action and the study of spiritual philosophy.

42. Therefore having cut asunder with the sword of knowledge ignorance-born doubt, seated in thine own heart,² engage in right performance of action;³ arise,⁴ O son of Bharata.

Having removed all doubts as to the divine authority of the blessed exponent, it is declared that all who do not enter upon either the path of right performance of action or of knowledge are in danger of great suffering.

Thus ends chapter the fourth, called "RIGHT KNOWLEDGE OF DEDICATION OF ACTION LEADING TO SPIRITUAL WISDOM," in the blessed BHAGAVAD GÎTÂ, the sacred lore, the divine wisdom, the book of divine union, the colloquy between the blessed KRISHNA and ARJUNA, and contained in the Bhîshma Parvan of the blessed MAHÂBHÂRATA, which is a collection of a hundred thousand verses by VYÂSA.

Salutation to the remover of all doubts, the blessed Krishna, by whom has been declared the twofold path of faith, action and knowledge, applicable to men according to their condition.

¹ "Heedless," forgetful of the identity of Self with the Supreme.

² "Own heart," therefore none but thyself can remove it.

³ "Right performance of action," dedicating all fruit of action to the Deity.

⁴ "Arise," since that is the right action for thee.

CHAPTER V.

RIGHT KNOWLEDGE OF THE RENUNCIATION OF ACTION.

THE praise bestowed in the previous chapter (vv. 18-41) upon renunciation of action, that is to say, works of merit prescribed by the Brāhmanical law, gives the idea of its superiority over action. But the chapter closes with exhortation to action (v 42). This makes it difficult to understand the real intention of the Teacher. The declaration in the third chapter (v 3) shows that the paths are different for different men, — "the right knowledge of things spiritual, of the illuminated sages, and the right knowledge of action of the men of action ;" but not so in this instance. Nor is there anything to suggest two different stages in the great journey, — first to perform works, and then to renounce them ; no limit of time being mentioned as to when works are to be abandoned.

Furthermore, the illuminated sage who has realized identity with the Supreme Spirit cannot possibly perform action, therefore it would be useless to enjoin upon him any rules of conduct. Hence it is clear that the intention here is that the two injunctions — about works and abandonment of works — are capable of being applied to the same person at the same time. In other words, two alternatives are here put before the devotee for election.

He who sincerely aspires for the life eternal may renounce all action if he chooses, or may engage in right performance of action if he thinks best. That Arjuna understood Krishna to mean this appears from his question.

ARJUNA said :

1. Renunciation of actions,¹ and again their right performance, thou praisest, O Krishna. Of these two which is better,² declare unto me with certainty.

¹ "Actions," that is, both religious and other works of merit.

² "Better;" this implies comparison and selection.

The Blessed Lord's reply shows that Arjuna rightly apprehended His meaning.

THE BLESSED LORD *spoke* :

2. Renunciation and right performance of action are both producers¹ of the supreme good,² but of these two, better³ is the right performance of action than renunciation.

It is "better" for the mere aspirant that he should rightly perform religious and human duties in the world than that he should, abandoning them, retire into solitude; for the hardship of the ascetic life is greater, its observances stricter. As a means for the proper assimilation of truth a life of right action is invaluable. Only a few are so constituted as to be fitted for the life of renunciation.

3. He is to be known as always a man of renunciation who neither dislikes nor likes, being truly beyond the pair of opposites, O thou of mighty arms; with ease he escapes from bondage.

Although action forges fresh links in the chain of conditioned existence, yet when performed in the right manner it frees from bondage. Thus action rightly performed produces the same result as renunciation, but without the same hardship.

It is further explained that renunciation and right action, though not practicable by the same individual, are identical in their results.

4. Fools say, and not the wise, that renunciation and right performance of action are different. He who practises one perfectly, receives the fruit of both.⁴

5. The seat⁵ that is obtained by practisers of renun-

¹ "Producers," not indeed directly, but in being instruments fitting one for the reception of spiritual knowledge, which leads to the

² "Supreme good," or Nirvāna.

³ "Better," this implies comparison and selection.

⁴ "Fruit of both," because either one of these paths leads to spiritual knowledge, culminating in Nirvāna.

⁵ "The seat," that is, Nirvāna.

ciation, the same is obtained by men of right action.¹ He who sees renunciation and the right performance of action as one,² sees rightly.

If the same result is produced by renunciation as by right performance of action, how is the preference of the latter to the former to be understood? The answer is that renunciation is of two kinds, — one accompanying true spiritual knowledge, and the other without such knowledge. It is the last named that is inferior to right performance of action.

6. O thou of mighty arms, it is difficult to attain true renunciation³ without right performance of action; the devotee, rightly performing action, attains to true renunciation before long.
John xvii 15.

The heart of man is never purified except through right performance of action and that one-pointed devotion to the unsearchable Supreme Spirit. He that retires from the world with the purpose of seeking the Deity undergoes needless suffering.

Although the right performance of action, as before explained, is superior to solitary meditation, yet it is not to be imagined that he who follows the other path incurs any sin on account of his abandonment of action. For the specific nature of the act is not the purifying agent, but the inner feeling that accompanies the act.

The interior state from which action springs being the same, the question of right and wrong does not arise in this matter; that which is here involved is the minor consideration of expediency.

7. Steadfastly devoted to the means for the attainment⁴ of spiritual knowledge, pure in heart,
Prov. ii 1-5,

¹ "Right action," that is, action of which the fruit is given up to the Supreme Spirit.

² "As one," that is, as leading to the same goal, which is Nirvāna.

³ "True renunciation" is the same as the Supreme Spirit. A Vedic text says, "Renunciation is the Supreme Spirit."

⁴ "Means for the attainment," etc. Through faith the heart is purified from passion and folly, from that comes mastery over the body, and, last of all, subjugation of the senses.

Matt. v 8; with the body conquered¹ and the senses
 1 Cor ix 25- subdued, for whom the only Self is the Self
 27; of all creatures, is untouched, though per-
 John i. 4 forming action.

8. Absorbed in right knowledge, the knower of truth
 feels, "I am doing nothing," while seeing,
 1 Cor. xv 10. hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving,
 sleeping, breathing.

9. Even while speaking, giving up, taking, opening the
 eyes and shutting them, he feels only that "the senses
 and organs are in relation to their objects."

The reason why he is not touched, even though performing
 action, is, that owing to absence of egotism he is not conscious of
 action. The devotee who retires from the world through the study
 of spiritual philosophy, meditation, and the instruction of sages,
 becomes emancipated from egotism, and that cuts asunder all ties
 to action and its consequences. The man who is not free from
 egotism must devote himself to the right performance of action in
 the way now to be described.

10. Whoever performs actions, dedicating them to
 the Supreme Spirit and abandoning all at-
 Prov xvi. 3. tachment,² is not touched by sin,³ as the
 lotus-leaf is not wetted by water.

11. Those possessed of right knowledge of action,
 abandoning all attachment, perform action
 2 Cor v. 6, 8. with mind, judgment, and the bare senses⁴
 for the purification of the heart.

¹ "Body conquered" Body means the desires seated in the body; namely, hunger, thirst, movements, sleep, generative and excretory functions. Conquered, not suppressed

² "All attachment," including the desire for salvation or Nirvāna,—not having even that as the object. For Nirvāna not being an object that can be possessed, to desire its possession can be due only to blindness.

³ "Sin" here comprehends both virtue and vice, in so far as they are considered as attributes of the Spirit within us, which is essentially identical with the Deity. In fact, the difference between the innermost Spirit and the Supreme Spirit is merely one of nomenclature.

⁴ "Bare senses," that is, unaccompanied with longings.

Because thou hast the right to action, therefore thou shouldst follow the principle declared in the ensuing verse.

12. The right performer¹ of action, abandoning fruit of action, attains to rest² through devotion;³ the wrong performer of action, attached to fruit thereof on account of desire, remains bound.

Luke vi 35;
Matt. vii. 21-23.

13. The conqueror,⁴ having by right knowledge renounced all action, dwells in peace in the city of nine gates,⁵ neither performing action nor causing it to be performed.

Romans viii.
9: 15-17.

14. The Spirit creates not for the world actorship⁶ nor acts,⁷ nor even the bond⁸ between action and its results; but Nature⁹ works on.

15. The Lord receives not any man's sins nor deeds of merit. By untruth truth is shrouded; by this creatures are deluded.

Job xxxv 6-13

There are two aspects of the mysterious, inscrutable power of the Supreme Spirit, namely, Truth and Untruth,—real and false knowledge. The meaning of the universe is the being of this

¹ "Right performer," that is, performer for the sake of the Deity.

² "Rest," that is, liberation, Nirvāna.

³ "Through devotion," that is, by degrees, through purification of heart comes spiritual knowledge, from knowledge renunciation, and then rest in Nirvāna.

⁴ "Conqueror," that is, he who has no consciousness of effort, peaceful at heart, wanting nothing outside of the Self. The sage does not die on attaining illumination, for then the world would be soulless and mankind teacherless.

⁵ "City of nine gates," that is, the body; as an ordinary man sits on a seat, knowing it to be an external thing, so a liberated man remains in the body for the benefit of the world.

⁶ "Actorship," the universal principle of action.

⁷ "Acts," such as are the results of the action of special actors.

⁸ "Bond," that is, the sequence of events.

⁹ "Nature," that is, the Divine creative energy, further elucidated in Chapter VII. verse 14. In the teaching of the Blessed Lord the independent existence of Nature is never asserted. It is taught here that the Supreme Spirit, being changeless, is not able to create; but the divine creative energy is the cause of all things, though it is itself nothing independently of the Supreme Spirit.

power in its twofold aspect and the real identity of the power and the Powerful. This mystery is more fully declared in Chapters VII.—XII.

16. Those creatures in regard to whom this Untruth becomes deprived of being by Truth, to them knowledge, sun-like, reveals that Supreme.¹

17. Those whose self-conscious principles² have entered into the Supreme,³ whose Self the Supreme is,⁴ whose devotion the Supreme is,⁵ and whose goal that is,⁶ attain non-evolution,⁷ having their taints⁸ washed away by Truth.

In what manner do such sages view the Supreme Truth?

18. The sages are equal-sighted⁹ in regard to a Brāhman¹⁰ versed in Vedic lore, in letter and spirit, and devoid of egotism, a cow,¹¹ an elephant,¹² a dog, and an outcast.

19. By those whose minds are fixed in equality heaven has been attained even here, because the stainless equality is the Supreme; therefore they are at rest in the Supreme Spirit.

¹ "Supreme," that is, Absolute Reality.

² "Self-conscious principles," usually called souls.

³ "Entered into the Supreme," by receiving that spiritual power called divine illumination, the Holy Ghost.

⁴ "Self the Supreme is," by realization of identity.

⁵ "Devotion the Supreme is," that is, those who have gone through the various degrees of devotion — right performance of action and renunciation — as before described.

⁶ "Whose goal," that is, men of renunciation.

⁷ "Non-evolution," that is, freedom from bondage, Nirvāna.

⁸ "Taints," that is, separation from the Deity, desires and their mode of manifestation, — the causes of bondage.

⁹ "Equal-sighted," that is, in all such creatures the sage perceives nothing but the Supreme Spirit. The sage's independence of all the qualities of Nature is thus shown.

¹⁰ "Brāhman" represents satva quality.

¹¹ "Cow" represents rajās.

¹² "Elephant" represents tamās. These qualities are explained in Chapter XIV.

The question arises as to whether the ignoring of such palpable differences as those mentioned does not involve a penalty. The answer is in the negative, because the ignoring them is not the result of an effort of will, but comes through the realization of the Supreme Spirit, in whom all things are comprehended and are thus equal.

The absence of the idea of difference in the perception of those who have become merged in the One Consciousness leads to the same absence of difference in their action. The remainder of this chapter declares this truth.

20. The knower of the Supreme Spirit, with heart¹ perfectly at rest, not deluded,² and fixed in the Supreme Spirit,³ does not rejoice at obtaining what is pleasant, nor is he troubled by obtaining what is unpleasant.

21. He whose heart is not attached to objects of sense which are external finds that within himself which is bliss; he, resting in identity with the Supreme Spirit, enjoys bliss eternal.

The sage does not feel external pleasure and pain, because he enjoys the bliss within himself which is the peace that passeth understanding. He enjoys Nirvâna, which is eternal bliss; but no one who is conscious of any pleasure outside of himself can rest in the Deity even for an instant. Therefore it is right constantly to recognize the unsatisfactory character of existence.

22. Pain-wombed are the enjoyments, born of the contact of senses and organs with objects, and have beginning and end; the sage, O son of Kuntî, does not find relish in them.

Worldly pleasures are but pain in their origin, because they begin by putting an end to a previous state of things and then end themselves. If pleasure were not pain-wombed it would not

¹ "Heart," that is, the thinking Self.

² "Not deluded," that is, not accepting any object as the Supreme Spirit.

³ "Fixed in the Supreme Spirit," that is, having attained to perfect renunciation of action in the Deity.