

THE BHAGAVAD GÎTÂ

OR

THE LORD'S LAY

THE  
BHAGAVAD GÎTÂ  
OR  
THE LORD'S LAY

WITH  
COMMENTARY AND NOTES, AS WELL AS REFERENCES  
TO THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES

Translated from the Sanskrit  
FOR THE BENEFIT OF THOSE IN SEARCH OF SPIRITUAL LIGHT

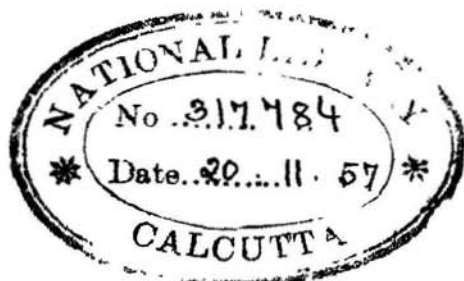
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## PREFACE.

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**I**N the following pages an attempt is made to present to the English-speaking people the pearl of price from the ocean of Brâhmanical Scriptures.

The Bhagavad Gîtâ, as a book, is well known in the Western World. In offering a Scripture to those in search of scriptural light, who rejoice in the things of the Spirit, the first duty is to be free from the mere human spirit. This end has been striven for by following the spiritual chief of modern India, the revered Sankarâchârya, in the translation of the text and in the comments and notes. The words of the teacher have been rendered into the English tongue, and his expressions adapted to the Western modes of thought as far as was possible while preserving their meaning. For the elucidation of some topics, however, a few supplementary observations have been added, in all humility.

The interpretations of the Bhagavad Gîtâ can be divided into three classes, according to the teacher whose authority is followed. Three great teachers make the points of a triangle on which Brâhmanical orthodoxy rests.

The earliest and greatest among them is Sankarâchârya, whose influence extends over all India. The others, in order of time, were Râmânujâchârya and Madhvâchârya. Their most important difference is regarding the relation between the Spirit of God and the real nature of the spirit of man. Sankarâchârya holds that the Spirit of God is the only reality; that this Spirit is the Self in all creatures, and is yet one and attributeless, — pure Consciousness, Bliss, and Beingness. These are not properties of the Spirit, but are the Spirit of God, as a thing is itself.

The apparent existence of many egos or spirits is due to the operation of a power called Falsehood. It is called a power because it depends necessarily upon the Spirit of God, which remains unchanged in the midst of the operations of this power. It is called Falsehood because it is not the Spirit of God, which is the only Reality; yet it is not altogether unreal, because it invests with seeming reality that which is nothing, since it is not the Spirit of God. In a sense it is not a negation, and yet is devoid of community of nature with the Spirit of God. For this reason it is called Falsehood, or Lie. A lie is not an utter negation, because it concerns some reality. This creative power is called Falsehood because it produces the appearance of many egos, whereas in reality the Spirit of God is the only ego.

The supreme end of existence is the change produced in man's nature by the power called Right Knowledge. This change shows the seeming independent reality of the Self within man to be due to the power called Falsehood. In truth, it is the shadow of the one and only reality, the Spirit of God, and has no more independence of being than a shadow can have. The shadow has no being independent of the substance; nor has the self in us a being independent of the true Self, which is the Spirit of God.

The shortest way of stating the relation is this: the spirit in the individual is really identical with the Spirit of God. It is eternally identical, and the statements in the Scriptures as to individuals *becoming* the Supreme Spirit are figurative. The essence of this system is the denial of real existence to the individual spirit, and the insistence upon its true identity with the Spirit of God.

Rāmānujāchārya teaches that the Spirit of God is the only reality, and shares community of nature with nothing. Conscious and unconscious nature are the two eternal powers of the Spirit. Consciousness, unconsciousness, and the Lord of both are the three eternal verities. He whose being is such that neither consciousness, nor unconsciousness, nor both, can

limit Him, is the Supreme Lord, who makes no effort to escape from limitation or to prevent change of condition. To know these three verities to be what they are said to be, is to attain liberation.

Madhvāchārya maintains that the relation between God and man is the relation between master and servant. Through evil and blindness, this relation — which is an eternal verity, and not one that comes into existence after previous non-existence — is not realized. The complete and full realization of this relation, consequent upon a change of nature by God's grace, is salvation.

These three teachers have explained the Scriptures from their several standpoints, and have each founded a complete system by which to lead the faithful to salvation. Monastic orders and other institutions established by them exist to the present day. Accepting the Bhagavad Gītā as authoritative, each teacher has left his commentary upon it. The faithful disciple of any one of this illustrious trio, while following in exclusive devotion the path pointed out to him, will yet believe that though the roads are different, the goal to which they lead is the same.

A dutiful study of the blessed Bhagavad Gītā in connection with the Holy Bible will, it is believed, show that the word of God does not change with the change of time. As it was in the beginning, so it is now, and will be to the end. In order to aid this study, frequent references to the Christian Scriptures are made beside the text of the following translation; not, indeed, for verbal similarities, but to establish some points in common in the two Scriptures, in order that the reader may superpose one upon the other, and thus demonstrate their agreement. These references are believed to be sufficient for the purpose intended, although by no means exhaustive.

A few words as to some surrounding circumstances will help to show the full significance of the two sets of Scriptures, which, though differing in nomenclature, embody the same Truth. Secular scholars agree that the Vedas are the earliest

known record of religious truths. It is not necessary to cite the teachings of Brâhmanical authorities on the subject of the Vedas ; but it should be remembered that the revered Sankarâchârya, the greatest Vedic teacher since the time of Vyâsa, calls the Bhagavad Gîtâ the collected essence of all the Vedas.

Hence it conclusively appears that the word of God, though often well-nigh forgotten by men, remained the same from the time of the Vedas to the time of the present Scripture. The word of God as given to the people of India in the earliest time, and preserved in all the Scriptures of the Brâhmanas, is to be found in the colloquy between the blessed Krishna and Arjuna. According to the sacred chronicles, Krishna lived one hundred and twenty-five years, and departed from the world in the year 3001 B. C.\*

If it be found that the Scriptures of the Brâhmanas and the Scriptures of the Jews and Christians, widely separated as they are by age and nationality, are but different names for one and the same Truth, who can then say that the Scriptures contradict one another? A careful and reverent collation of the two sets of Scriptures will show forth the conscious and intelligent design of revelation.

In the Bhagavad Gîtâ, consisting of 770 verses, the principal topic is the being of God ; while scarcely the same amount of exposition is given to it in the whole Bible. The explanation of this remarkable fact is found in the difference between the genius of the Hebrew and Brâhmanic races, and also in the fact that the teachings of Jesus Christ were addressed to the "common people." This one consideration carries the conviction to unprejudiced minds that although Truth is eternally the same, yet, as the nature of man undergoes change, new embodiments of Truth are required in order to reconcile men to the Truth.

By a dutiful study of the subject, comparing spiritual things with spiritual, the mind is uplifted and filled with wonder at the

\* See Bhâgavad Purâna, Book XI. Chap. vii. 20 ; and Vishnu Purâna, Book V. Chap. xxxviii. 2.

marvellous workings of the one Holy Spirit. If, on the contrary, in violation of the method of spiritual study, things of the Spirit are compared to things material, confusion can be the only result.

The question as to whether the Bhagavad Gîtâ and the New Testament have been in part copied one from the other, has vexed many minds; but it is apparent that the ground upon which the legitimacy of the issue is based is without scriptural support. The identity of Truth, or even of its expression, can furnish no such inference, unless it is demonstrated that all Scriptures are products of the human mind. No believer in revelation will admit this, nor, indeed, can it be maintained with reason; the supporter of this inference must adduce authority from his own Scriptures against the possible authenticity of all others. The question of priority, by itself, can have no bearing on the subject.

Fixing our attention upon the two sets of Scriptures with which we are concerned, the question is to be considered from the standpoints of the Brâhman and the Christian. From that of the first, it is not a bold statement to say that no such citation can be brought against the Christian Scriptures. On the contrary, there are abundant reasons for the opposite conclusion.

In one of the most important Brâhmanical Scriptures—Nârada Pancharâtra—a very significant epithet is bestowed upon Buddha. He is called *pâshanda çruti-gopaka*, or “the preserver of revelation for those outside of the Vedic authority.” When one such revealer is admitted, there can be no reason for excluding others; indeed, the Bhagavad Gîtâ puts this beyond doubt in Chapter IV. It is also clear, upon the authority of the Vedas, that the only thing necessary for salvation is the knowledge of the true God. “The knot of the heart becomes untied, all his doubts are dispersed, all his innate tendencies are exhausted, on seeing Him, the superior and inferior.” “Having known even Him, he attains to deathlessness; there is no other path.”

Put side by side with these Vedic texts the words of Jesus : " And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent ; " \* " No man cometh unto the Father, but by me," and it is not possible to doubt that the Brâhman and the Christian are fellow-voyagers. The Brâhmanical Scriptures are of one accord in teaching that when the heart (*chitta*, in Sanskrit) is purified, God is seen. Jesus Christ declares, " Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

The Brâhmanical sages have taught with great emphasis that the easiest road to perfect purity is love of God and love of His creatures. Does Christianity teach anything else? There is then no cause for the Christian to create antagonism between the two faiths.

The knowledge of Truth carries with itself an increased responsibility. The man who sees the wonderful workings of the Spirit of God among the nations of the earth, bringing each people to God by ways unknown to others, is thereby charged with a duty. To him, with terrible precision, applies the warning given by Gamaliel to the Pharisees : " Take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do, . . . lest ye be found to fight even against God " (Acts v. 35-39). If he be a Brâhman, let him reflect, when opposing the religion of Jesus, what it is that he fights. The truths of Christianity are the same as those upon which his own salvation depends. How can he be a lover of Truth, which is God, if he knows not his beloved under such a disguise? And if he does penetrate behind the veil, — which should tend only to increase the ardor of his love, — he cannot hate those who, in obedience to the same Truth, are

\* According to the belief of all Brâhmins the Vedas are the revelation of the Creator to Man when he first started into being. On account of coequality with the human race they cannot require faith in an especial incarnate Saviour ; while the Christian dispensation, founded as it is at a definite point of time upon the pre-existing Mosaic Law, cannot be separated from the Saviour Jesus. This is the explanation of the striking and often-noted difference between Brâhmanism and Christianity. There cannot be a Saviour for the Brâhmins unless he be a revealer of the Truth, eternally enshrined in the Vedas, though often ignored and forgotten by the heirs to that Sacred Wisdom.

preaching the gospel of Christ to all nations. Indeed, he ought to rejoice at his brother's devotion to the selfsame God, and see that he is rendering service to God by helping others to carry out the behests given to them by the Divine Master. If, on the other hand, he be a Christian, let him remember that while he is commanded to preach repentance and remission of sins in the name of the Saviour Jesus, he is also warned against the "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. xv. 9).

Considerations such as these have led to the present work, which is a kind of votive offering.

It only remains earnestly to pray to the merciful Father of Humanity to remove from all races of men every unbrotherly feeling in the sacred name of Religion, which is but one !  
Amen.

**MOHINI MOHUN CHATTERJEE**

**Boston, Mass., U. S. A.,**

**July 20, 1887.**

## PREFACE

### TO THE SECOND EDITION.

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**T**AKING occasion from the issue of a second edition, a few remarks are subjoined to exhibit clearly the teaching of the Bhagavad Gîtâ as to the true destiny of man and the means of consummating it. In diverse places it is declared with emphasis that the real end of man's existence is the attainment of the true knowledge or beatific vision of the Supreme Being. All religious rites, all mystical practices, all good works, all philosophical and scriptural studies are intended to be but means for that end. They have no value of their own, but are useful only as removing the difficulties that lie in the path ; nor are they the generators of the wished-for knowledge, because nothing can produce the knowledge of an object but the object itself. The attainment of right knowledge of the Supreme Being is the consummation of existence ; for whoever possesses it, obtains a nature as incomprehensibly perfect as the nature of that Being. Those who do not wish to acquire this knowledge remain bound to material existence, experiencing the good and bad consequences of their deeds in repeated births and deaths on this earth and in other regions. While those blessed beings who acquire the true knowledge of the Supreme are freed from all obligations, they are honored by all creatures, men and celestial intelligences, and are called identical with the Supreme Spirit.

But who is the Supreme Being the knowledge of whom is so indispensable for the highest well-being of man? He is the only *real* Being in the infinite range of existence; all others appear only to be real, but are not, in consequence of dependence upon Him. What and how He is cannot be perceived by the senses, nor conceived by the mind, nor explained by the words employed for the imparting of instruction about Him. But yet He is the one Creator, Regulator, and Destroyer of the universe and all it contains, as well as our most vital element called the Self or Spirit. He is the only Being that rules our outer and inner nature. Whoever knows this with as much certitude as he knows an object perceived by the senses is in absolute beatitude.

How is this knowledge to be acquired? First, by hearing about Him; that is to say, by acquiring a knowledge of the solemn declarations about the nature of the Supreme Being as contained in Scriptures whose authority is proved by the acceptance of wise and holy men. Secondly, by reflecting upon them until all doubts are removed. Thirdly, by seeking to approximate the Supreme Being, — contemplating His attributes according to those declarations. Fourthly, by approaching Him, — not forgetting that the One Reality is incomprehensible.

Success in this mode of seeking after the Supreme Being is governed by an incomprehensible law. No one knows the precise conditions of time and other circumstances under which any individual seeker actually gains his end, although it is beyond doubt that no one ever fails who perseveres in the search. It is also clear that since the Supreme Being is perfection, and free from the least trace of passion, the deferred success or failure of individuals must be attributed to their own nature and to nothing else; since the possibility of success and its reward are not the result of man's action but entirely independent of it, all that is connected with its attainment, including the desire to attain it, must be attributed, not to man's nature, but to the power or grace of the Supreme Being.

It is true, no doubt, that man's nature is also the power of the

Supreme Being ; therefore the above distinction may at first sight appear as meaningless. But it is not so in reality. For the failure in spiritual life is nothing more than the blind identification by an individual of himself with that portion of the Supreme's power which is called man's nature, and to which failure is to be attributed ; while success consists in the right perception of the truth that man's present nature as well as his beatific nature is equally the power of the Supreme Being, who is the true Self of the individual and independent of the conditions of both natures. It is only during the beatific vision that the distinction disappears ; at other times the truth is to be believed through faith. But this faith cannot be found by one who does not believe the Supreme Being to be the only true Self. The above-mentioned distinction is therefore purposeful, and cannot be ignored without evil consequences. Furthermore, it is certain that he who does not wish to depart from evil, and also he that is not willing to practise charity, will not adopt this method. True charity is based upon the truth that the relation between the Supreme Being and every individual is exactly the same, and consists in sharing with others what one feels to be truly good for one's self.

Can this mode of seeking after the Supreme Being be called His worship? Yes, this is the most perfect worship possible. Because by worship is meant words, thoughts, and deeds having for their purpose the generation of pleasure in the object worshipped. But all who believe in the Supreme Being will admit that as He is eternally perfect, nothing can be necessary for His pleasure. Consequently the only worship of Him that is truly consistent with reason is the contemplation of His nature in the way suggested, and the practice of charity toward all creatures ; the highest charity being the communication of spiritual instruction, as that alone can lead to the highest welfare of man. Every other mode of worship is founded upon an imperfect knowledge of this uniqueness of the nature of the Supreme Being, and therefore is not worthy of rational beings. Only such men are blameless in adopting other modes as

are unable to perceive this truth; for it is better that they should possess even an imperfect knowledge of the Author of their existence and their real Self than that they should remain in complete ignorance of Him. The true believer, while laboring for the improvement of the spiritual perception of others, must guard against destroying the imperfect knowledge of those who are unable or unwilling to advance.

As the Supreme Being is one and secondless, what is the true meaning of the statements which seem to imply that Krishna is the Supreme Being? Those statements are in conformity with the mode of spiritual instruction established by the Vedas and handed down by spiritual succession.<sup>1</sup> They are intended to convey to our minds the truth that the true Self—the innermost spirit within us—is no other than the Supreme Being; and that what we feel ourselves to be—the practical or false self—has no real being; it exists only in consequence of the self-existence which is the Supreme Being. Therefore every individual who abstracts his mind from all considerations of the false self can justly say, “I am the Supreme Being,” for such is his feeling. When this feeling becomes as firm as self-identity, it is said to be at-one-ment with the Supreme Being, or Nirvāṇa. This is the meaning of all such statements, which do not teach the worship of any particular being as the Secondless Supreme or in association with Him. The custom has prevailed among almost all races, of honoring those who impart to men the right knowledge of the Supreme Being, by bestowing on them the epithets which are given to the Supreme! The reason which lies at the foundation of these figurative expressions is the fact that the Supreme Being must be accepted as the true Self of the teacher in order that He may be perceived as the true Self of the pupil.

The epithet “Lord” (in Sanskrit, Bhagavât,) given to Krishna is explained by the revered Commentator to mean, “a being pos-

<sup>1</sup> This subject is clearly explained in the celebrated treatise of the revered Vyāsa on the harmony of the Vedānta, entitled “Brahmasūtra,” Book I., chap. I., apts. 29, 30.

nessed of control over the forces of nature, perfect bliss, unconquerable power, glory, beauty, and wisdom that gives perfect dispassion," and also as "one who knows the origin and end of creatures, their true and false goal, as well as what is the true knowledge of the Supreme Being and what is false."\* Citations show the unquestionable authority for the explanation. This being so, the Blessed Lord is entitled to the gratitude and honor that belongs to a spiritual father of men. It would be opposed to the wishes of all spiritual fathers to associate any particular being in the truly divine worship which has been described above.

The unreason of worshipping the Supreme through or in association with any particular being is palpable. If the particular being is the Supreme Being, there is no need for worshipping him; if he is distinct from the Supreme Being, to give him divine worship is idolatry.

May the unsearchable Author of all enlighten us with the truth that He should be worshipped alone, and in spirit and in truth; may He open our eyes to see that the thousand fratricidal wars, massacres, and persecutions carried on in His name are the fruits of that blindness which seeks to limit the Limitless by particular forms and modes of worship; may all the children of the Divine Father learn to claim the rights of their Sonship, and banish all unbrotherliness from earth! Amen.

MOHINI MOHUN CHATTERJEE

ROME, 1888.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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### I.

LET us pause and reflect before entering upon our work. Let us be sure of the spirit in our hearts before we enter the Temple of the Lord. For the truth as declared in the Scriptures is indeed the Temple of the Lord in which His Spirit dwells.

The Scriptures of the nations are the most glorious of all the temples that can enshrine that Spirit which is the life of our life, and the light that shineth in the darkness of our minds and hearts.

May we all feel that we come to worship, and not to read.

The reading of holy books is the fulfilling of the duty which we owe to Him whose name they whisper in our ears. Yes, they whisper His name in our ears as they proclaim Him to be beyond all names,—beyond both thought and speech.

In reading the Scriptures we touch the hem of the garments of those who have stood at the altar and have looked into the light of God and seen Him.

Yes, seen Him face to face, and—let us speak by silence, nay, let us shout it to the heavens, let it echo

back from hell, let it sweep over the broad bosom of the earth — found Him as the Self.

May we all feel that there is nothing which is our Self but God.

Let us lay down all our burdens at the Gate of the Temple and enter it clothed in the dignity of our humanity. Let us enter the Temple as men, unqualified by adjectives which degrade the manhood they pretend to elevate. It is easier for the son to be the father's father, than for adjectives to ennoble the substance, man; for all adjectives originate in the mind of man.

It is only thus that we can stand alone before the Master whose voice we are to hear.

Finally, let us never forget that no one has discharged his full duty until his heart responds to each word of the Master, who lives and must always live in His Word.

## II.

All Indian authorities agree in pronouncing the Bhagavad Gītā to be the essence of all sacred writings. They call it an Upanishad, — a term applied to the wisdom, as distinguished from the ceremonial, portion of the Vedas, and to no books less sacred.

In the book itself Krishna declares: "Whoever shall expound this most mysterious colloquy to those who have love for me shall without doubt come to me, having obtained unifying love for me. Than he there is no better performer of what is dear to me among men, nor shall there ever be on earth any one more beloved unto me. And whoever shall study this colloquy, which makes for righteousness, by him shall I be worshipped in the sacrifice through knowledge; this

is my mind. The man who shall listen to it in faith and without a cavilling spirit, even he, freed from sins, shall obtain the blessed abodes of those who work righteousness, liberated from evil."

Elsewhere it is said, "The Lord's Song being well sung, what use is there in other and voluminous Scriptures?"

The revered Sankarâchârya, in the beginning of his commentary, calls the sacred Gîtâ "the collected essence of all the Vedas."

The influence of this book upon the spiritual life of India can be estimated by the fact that within the last twelve hundred years no great teacher has lived who has not commented upon it. Frequent references are also found to earlier commentaries which are no longer available.

Beyond doubt the Bhagavad Gîtâ is the best book in existence for the study of the spiritually-minded; for it is suited to all conditions of men; it is short; it is complete and not ambiguous; it is direct, speaking as friend to friend or teacher to pupil, and thus is not coldly impersonal; the teaching is preserved in the very words of Krishna, the few introductory verses being the production of the sage Vyâsa.

The great author of the Gîtâ lays down a very wise rule as to its study:—

"This must never be declared by thee to one who does not perform penance, has no devotion,<sup>1</sup> and is unwilling to serve this spiritual superior;<sup>2</sup> and also not unto one who reviles me."<sup>3</sup>

May we therefore realize what He says:—

"With their hearts in me, and their faculties and

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiii. 10-16.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Thess. v. 12, 13.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xii. 31.

senses lost in me, enlightening one another and declaring me to one another, they are ever in peace and ever in rejoicing. To them, ever attached to me and worshipping me in love, I give that wisdom by which they come to me."<sup>1</sup>

### III.

Ye are the temples of God.<sup>2</sup> This is true in letter and spirit. The power of man to entertain the angel of Religion distinguishes him from the animal. His power to gaze at the sun which illumines the outstretched finger of religion enthrones him as the king of all that exist. We have heard, indeed, of the angels who dwell on glistening heights unconcerned with the ills of this mortal sphere and unconscious of the battles that rage in the human breast. But have we not also heard that the angels never have the ecstasy of hearing that shout of joy with which great Nature enthrones as her lord the liberated man in Nirvāna? Let us realize it again and again,—man is the lord of all that exist; his crown of thorns is his crown of glory.<sup>3</sup> That which elevates man above all other beings is his capacity for suffering, and the consequent power of asking for its extinction absolutely and forever. But Nature works in perfect symmetry; every unit in a crystal is a perfect crystal itself. The evolution of the embryo is a miniature reproduction of the progress of the ego through the various kingdoms; and the race of man presents a perfect picture of the different orders of beings. These types are eternal and not subject to evolution, although individuals evolve from one class to another.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. v. 11-12.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Psalms viii. 5-8.

There is the vegetable-like man who only responds to a few of the possibilities in him; like the tree, he can only assimilate food and perpetuate his species. Next is the animal-like man who can assimilate mental food called experience, and develop the quality of prudence. To the third class belongs the godlike man who is hospitable to Universals, — to the laws of morality which are absolute. This marks the turning-point in the life history of the ego; it is beginning to disentangle itself from the bonds of mere experience, and places its happiness in a region which no mortal eye can penetrate. He is learning to worship; in his breast the infant Faith is opening her meek eyes to gaze upon a mystery. But he has not yet grasped the meaning of his personality. The relation between the finite and the Infinite is perceptible to him, but it is still an awful mystery to be contemplated with fear and trembling; to be borne in mind in order that his personality may acquire possessions that he imagines will secure him happiness. He is a suitor before the throne of God, but not an adorer. His religion is one of reward and punishment, not of love and rejoicing; but yet he is religious.

Last of all is the divine man, — the lover and knower of God. He casts not a glance at the wonderfully varied powers of God; he will none of them; they are as ashes without their possessor, the God himself. In him is born that love which casteth out fear, and to him God is void of attributes, while to others he possesses the very infinitude of attributes.

"I but know that I love Thee," is the language of his spirit.

We have asked Thee again and again what is Thy name, and have laid our faces on the earth for an answer. Our question has come back from the whole

expanse of the universe, — from above, from below, from the middle regions, but no answer; in our hearts alone we have heard, — Silence is Thy name.

He who thinks that he knows Thee, by him Thou art not known. He who does not think that he knows Thee, knows Thee indeed. "I do not think that I know well, nor that I do not know." Whoever knows the meaning of this paradox knows well indeed.

But we know that He is Sweetness, and of this Sweetness the infinitude of creatures are enjoying but an atom. Who would have moved, who would have breathed, if this Sweetness had not pervaded all space?

To the true worshipper God is attributeless; it is indeed so. He is the sublime and supreme paradox. He possesses all attributes and yet is attributeless. This paradox is the language of the soul; its culmination is comprehension of Divine love.

Consider for a moment what it is to love. That baby whose infant form you have seen in the cradle, whose feeble cry you have soothed, grows to be a creeping babe, all smiles and tears. He catches the hem of your garment, and stands and falls, falls and stands. The same child becomes a man; he sways senates by his voice, armies tremble before his sword, and the world is submerged by the sky-defying billows of his fame. But where are all his attributes when, sitting by his side, you take his hand and look into the eyes of your own son?

As below, so above; God is infinite in attributes and yet devoid of attributes.<sup>1</sup> This is the God whom the *Bhagavad Gītā* proclaims; this the God whom the Scriptures of all nations proclaim, — the God who is the true and only Self in all creatures.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Job xl. 7; Rom. xi. 23, 34.

<sup>2</sup> John i. 3-p.

"I shall declare that which is to be known; knowing which a man attains deathlessness, — the Supreme Brahmā, having no beginning, and said to be neither subject to affirmation nor to negation" (because He is beyond all attributes).

"His hands and feet are everywhere; everywhere His eyes, heads, and mouths; His ears everywhere in the worlds; enveloping everything He dwells."<sup>1</sup>

"Manifested in the operations of all organs and faculties, yet devoid of organs and faculties. Unattached, He supports all. Though devoid of attributes, He is the experiencer of all attributes."<sup>2</sup>

"He is the within and without of all beings, moving and stationary.<sup>3</sup> Unrealizable on account of His subtlety; though afar, He is near"<sup>4</sup> (to the illuminated man who realizes Him as the true Self).

"Though undistributed, He appears to dwell as distributed in creatures; the same that which is to be known is the supporter of creatures, is the devourer and producer."<sup>5</sup>

"He is the light of lights, is said to be beyond darkness.<sup>6</sup> He is knowledge, that which is to be known and that which is the ultimate end of knowledge,<sup>7</sup> and is seated in the hearts of all." — CHAP. XIII. 12-17.

The relation between the finite and the Infinite is religion, in the true sense of the word. Its application to words and acts, in some way touching upon this relation, is a figure of speech. Every man who feels the need of God is religious. This need, however, can be felt in two ways: one may want God for the sake of the

<sup>1</sup> Psalms cxxxix. 7-17.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah xiv. 12, 13.

<sup>3</sup> Deut. iv. 39.

<sup>4</sup> Prov. xiii. 20-22; Col. ii. 2, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Job. x. 4-8; Prov. xv. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Psalms cxlv. 18.

<sup>7</sup> 1 John i. 5.

benefits He can confer; or he may want God purely for Himself, simply because God is Himself. We want Him because not to want Him is impossible. Those who feel the need of God in the first way are godlike men; those who hunger and thirst for Him in the other way, are divine.

According to the nature of these needs, religion has a twofold aspect, presenting the path of action and the path of cessation of action, or work and rest. Those who follow the first path live in the veiled light of God, ever working and ever having to work. The other path leads to the attainment of God, having obtained whom there is nothing else to attain; having become whom there is nothing else to be. The result yielded by the religion of rest is the acme of bliss, which to human imagination appears as the cessation of all suffering.

The nature of the path of action is easily understood. I want something for my personality, for the permanence of which I am also craving. A desire for anything in the future involves the desire for the continuance of personal identity. I cannot secure this end by any effort of my mind or my muscle; I therefore turn to superhuman means, — in short, I am not only worldly, but other-worldly. So far, it is clear, I am seeking happiness by changing the Infinite towards the finite, myself.

But what is the other path, — that which leads to God, Nirvāna, or Eternal Life?

In the supreme reality we are all absolutely identical with God and with one another. The difference which appears to us as real is but a seeming; in truth it is not so. For this reason the seeming reality is called illusion, error, disorder, disobedience, a mystery, in fact, —

a something which cannot be defined. If it could be, it would not have been false, but true. Being the will of God absolutely free and unconditioned, it cannot bear the limitation implied by saying "It is this."

The perception of this truth is the dawn of faith. One fact should ever be borne in mind, — that this mysterious power did not begin in time. For time itself requires variety for its existence, and variety cannot exist unless supported by this power. Hence it is plain that the mere lapse of time will not destroy this illusion. No one can attain Nirvāna by merely drifting on the stream of evolution.

Neither can action deliver us from bondage. Action can only lead to action, as animals can only reproduce their kind. The actor consisting only of the stuff called illusion, his action cannot transcend illusion. If the illusion can be supposed to be suspended for a moment, no action can take place, inasmuch as the actor, in so far as he is the actor, will disappear. It is clear that as bondage is a state of which we are conscious, some other state of consciousness alone can remove it. The state of consciousness called illusion, or false knowledge, will not exist in the state of consciousness called right knowledge.

"Those whose sins are washed away by knowledge attain to rest from conditioned existence."<sup>1</sup> — CHAP. V. 16.

The Buddhahood of Buddha consists in the Bodhi knowledge that arose in him under the Bo-tree. Christ says, "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Prov. viii. 33-35.

<sup>2</sup> John xvi. 3.

This knowledge is not an expansion of the intellect, but the annulment of the intellect. Saint Paul says, "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." It is an interior state of illumination as independent of us as is our present concept that "I am this."

Such being the case, we are compelled to ask, How are we to act (since act we must, whether inwardly or outwardly) so as to be in harmony with the goal of our life, the pole toward which the magnet of our soul ever turns, "to know even as we are known"? The answer is, that if all one's acts are performed with the full conviction that they are of no value to the actor, but are to be done simply because they have to be done, — in other words, because it is in our nature to act, — then the personality or egotism in us will grow weaker and weaker until it comes to rest, permitting the knowledge revealing the true Self to shine out in all its splendor. But this path of pure, spiritual knowledge is hard to tread. Those alone are therefore fit to enter upon the path of pure philosophy whose hearts are disentangled from the bonds of worldly attachment.<sup>1</sup>

"Greater is the suffering of those whose hearts are attached to the attributeless. Those having self-identifying consciousness of the body find devotion to the attributeless painful indeed." — CHAP. XII. 5.

"Among thousands of men, one perhaps strives after perfection; and even among those who strive after perfection perhaps but one knows me truly." <sup>2</sup> — CHAP. VII. 3.

But among the sons of men there are few indeed in whom all passions are dead, and whose awakened spirit

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings iii. 11, 12.

<sup>2</sup> Psalms liii. 2, 3.

usual perceptions have borne them beyond the sphere in which the majority of our race are wandering blindly, slaves to their passions, and with hearts bound to things of the earth earthy. What hope is there for such?

Will the majority of men perish in the valley of the shadow of death? Is there no hand to save us from the Slough of Despond, no light to illumine the stagnant gloom of our souls?

When the cry of the soul goes out in waves of agony to the God of mercy, Religion descends to us as the gentle companion and friend. We then perceive that God is the embodiment of infinite mercy, ever ready to dispense His grace. Have we not seen that the inspired and illuminated artist has dreamed of the Deity with the palm of His hand turned toward us as if in the act of giving? We also feel that the giver is not the same as the oppressor. The giver fills a want, but the oppressor gives without regard to the want of the receiver. We must therefore learn to ask of God. He is infinitely merciful, and will not inflict a flash of pain upon any soul in the universe. If you have a single wish other than the desire for God, He will not deny you that wish, but you will reap fruits such as will be impossible when once you become identical with God. Let every man learn to want God only for His own sake; when that is learned, there is no more to be known.

"Those, however, who worship me, having abandoned all actions in me, regarding me as the Supreme, and fixing their hearts upon me without clinging to anything beside, — whose hearts have entered into me, — for them I become before long the rescuer from the ocean of death and changeable existence."<sup>1</sup> — CHAP. XII. 6, 7.

This teaches us that we learn to ask only when our

<sup>1</sup> John v. 24; Isaiah xlv. 22.

souls are fixed upon God to the exclusion of all things that appear as separate from Him.

Away with all false asceticism; it is useless. All things are from God, and so must live. Our emotional longings are not to be crushed; but we must bend brain, heart, and muscle to secure their eternal gratification. We must be infinitely ambitious in desiring that beyond which there is nothing more, and in which is everything that can exist. If we crave for beauty, we must know that there can be no beautiful object which is not excelled in beauty by God. For how can that exist in a finite object which is not in the Infinite, — All, yet One? The entire beauty in the Universe is but the reflection of the absolutely beautiful God whom it obscures and hides; and so in regard to every other longing of our hearts.

If I take Infinity from Infinity, still Infinity remains. What exists in which I can so glory as I can in this, — that God is, and that He and I are one; and that all this wonderfully complex existence contains no other like me, or even unlike me, when I resign everything to God? Therefore I say that asceticism for its own sake is a delusion and a snare.

"The enjoyment that deluded men feel in objects that are transitory, — may that enjoyment never depart from my heart when my mind ceaselessly dwells on Thee." — VISHNU PURANA, PART II. CHAP. II. 17.

"He always sees himself, kingdom, wealth, as also wife and equipages, — all as of the Lord." — MAHĀBHĀRATA, BOOK X. CHAP. CCCXXXVII. 12718.

If God destroys me, my enjoyment will increase, since it is He who destroys me, and not another. I do not wish to know what is to happen either in the next moment or during millions of ages from now. It is the

will of God that is to be done. I do not wish Him to do anything for my sake that would not have been done did I not exist at all; I do not even wish to be saved; for from what am I to be saved? Is there anything in the universe outside of God?

It is true that this love is the supreme possession of the soul; it is also true that this love can only exist as a gift of the Holy Spirit. As mere men, we are not capable of receiving even a ray of it, however much we may long for it. We are poor in that calmness of spirit which alone is the fit habitation of God.

Faith must have grown to some extent before desire can turn inward; what then shall I do if my faith is weak, if external attractions are so strong as to prevent this turning inward for life and light? The cure of such a state cannot come to a man through his deluding himself into the belief that the inner citadel is won by a mere forcible repression of the outgoing tendencies.

"The man of deluded soul, who, having restrained the organs of action, remains dwelling upon objects of sense in his mind, is called a hypocrite."—CHAP. II. 6. "And the hypocrite's hope shall perish: whose hopes shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web."—JOB viii. 13, 14.

The right thing to do, then, is to work on, but to work with a different motive. I must no longer work for the gain of any benefit, temporal or spiritual, but to fulfil the law of being which is the righteous will of God,—to finish the day's work in order to acquire leisure for eternal communion of identity with God, who dwells in every human breast; that the Father in whom I live, move, and have my being may be in me as I am in Him.

Whatever there is to do has to be done, but not for the sake of enjoying the fruit of action. Let me work for God like a slave; not that He wants it of me, but because He has blessed me with the wish to serve Him. If I am not able thus to dedicate to God every thought and deed, let me at least do some specific things for Him; if I cannot give Him the twenty-four hours, at least let me give Him one. But let me not forget the lesson of the widow's mite.

Beings below this are not yet fit for religious life. They must look to morality as the highest ideal of existence, and follow its dictates until the birth-throes of a new life are felt within them; until they know that sublime discontent which distinguishes man from animals. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest," says the Master (Matt. xi. 28).

This, in brief, is the teaching of the Bhagavad Gītā, and indeed of all books that are holy. Beyond all doubt and cavilling, this is the truth declared to us by those in whose mouths there was no guile. In truth, this is the eternal revelation of God to man, the eternal oath that He has sworn. This truth requires no proof of its truthfulness; man cannot even touch it with falsehood, by observation or inference. Left to himself, man has not light enough to fabricate even a lie about God and the mystery of His relations with man.

#### IV.

As soon as I open the Bhagavad Gītā it seems to seize upon my very soul. I am face to face with antiquity. How many are the centuries that have passed since were uttered and written the words of eternal life I am about

to read! The remainder of my life on this earth will not be more than a mere fraction of that time. The truth that was enshrined in this book five thousand years ago is as necessary to me as it was to him who first heard it; perhaps more so. Do I need further proof that truth abides forever? Do I require to be told that there is a something in man that neither grows nor dies?

These words were uttered by him who is one with God, and so is God. He who first listened to it was foremost among the royal warriors who assembled on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. The prowess of his mighty arms was known alike to men, gods, and demons. Among more than two millions of men present in that festival of battle there was not one whose name and fame excelled those of Arjuna. His superiority was so undoubted that he thought it a religious duty to find foemen worthy of his steel. Taking a position between the hostile ranks, he beholds the flower of Indian chivalry drawn up in battle array; and what does he see?

He there beholds uncles and grand-uncles, sons and grandsons, brothers and friends, teachers and well-wishers prepared to fight, one with another, unto the very death. The claims of blood and friendship assert their sway over him. His heart is assailed by strange and conflicting emotions. His proud warrior heart quails under them, his courage kisses the ground before grief, and for the first time he knows fear. His limbs quake, his hair stands on end, his great bow drops from his hand, and his skin begins to burn.

The strong faith of the royal warrior in his duty to fight is shaken by his love of kindred and friend, and doubts divide his mind. Of what avail is the unshaken throne on earth, without the near and dear ones for

whose sake alone Prosperity has her charms? Far better feed upon the beggar's alms than enjoy blood-stained success. The sense of duty implanted in the warrior's breast by the traditions of a divine ancestry and the teaching of venerable sages still struggle for mastery, and scriptural texts are quoted to allay the qualms of a sensitive and educated conscience.

Alas! thus it always is with man. The source of evil is within us. Egotism deludes us with the feeling of possession where there is nothing to possess. This is the great enemy, — the *my-ness* in me. This is the giant weed whose roots lie deep in the human heart.

The Bhagavad Gītā is the epic which sings the death of this hydra-headed monster. It is a great poem, — a poem whose author must be both poet and prophet. It closes with the glorious vision of the victor standing firm in his glory: —

“O Thou unshaken one! by thy favor my delusion is destroyed. I have recognized myself; my doubts are gone. I am firm, and shall do Thy bidding.”

As I close the book the Vedic hymn reverberates through my innermost being: —

“Destroyed is the knot of the heart, removed are all doubts, extinct are all hidden longings of the man, on seeing Him, Supreme and not-Supreme!”

## V.

The machinery of the poem is deeply impressive. It is enshrined in the great Indian national epic, which has preserved for us the last rays of the Sun of India's ancient glory as he sank below the horizon.

Of all the royal families that flourished in India at that time, the suzerainty rested with the princes of the

**lunar dynasty.** The king of that family bore the proud title of Râja Chakravartin, — “the Emperor from sea to sea.” His capital was near the site of modern Delhi. Yes, when the stranger approaches this charmed spot in northern India, tongueless voices will call to him, —

“Stop ! for thy tread is on the dust of many empires ! Kurus and Pândavas, Rathors and Chohans, Pathans and Moguls have flourished on that spot and have then disappeared into the dark night of Time’s insatiable maw. Stop, friend ! and reflect on thyself, — thy hopes, thy disappointments, and thy hopes again renewed.”

“As we look our life fades away ;  
Youth decays as day follows day ;  
The days that go ne’er come again,  
And Time devours the Universe.  
Fortune flies as ripples break upon the sea ;  
We flash through life as lightning on the sky.”

*Translated from the Sanskrit.*

Forgetful of this truth, one line of the royal house of Hastinâpura — as Delhi then was called — sought to rob another of its rightful sovereignty, and a battle was fought at Kurukshetra, a place sanctified by the pious deeds of their common ancestor Kuru, whose Kshetra, or field, it was called. At the time of this battle the royal family was divided into two branches, descended from two brothers.

Dhritarâshtra, the elder brother, was born blind, and was still living. He and his hundred sons, of whom Duryodhana was the chief, were called Kauravas. The other branch consisted of the five sons of Pându, the younger brother, and their descendants; these were called Pândavas, from the name of their ancestor.

Although Dhritarâshtra was the elder, by the Brahmanical law he was not competent to sit upon the throne,

on account of his blindness; so Pāndu, and after him his eldest son Yudhishthira, ruled the country. The Kauravas, by fraud and other wicked means, forced the five Pāndavas to expatriate themselves in order to keep their pledged word, and then deprived them of their royal rights.

After thirteen years of absence the Pāndavas returned, having dutifully fulfilled their promise. But the Kauravas refused to restore to them their kingdom without a battle. To avoid bloodshed, the five brothers were ready to give up their rights in exchange for five villages. But the Kaurava chief would not give them as much earth as could be raised on the point of a sharp needle, without a contest. Accordingly the chivalry of India, consisting of more than two millions of men, assembled on the field of Kurukshetra to pay the debt of duty in battle.

The blind king Dhritarāshtra was led, through parental love, to approve of wrong and wickedness. The great sage Vyāsa, the poet of the Mahābhārata, as well as other merciful men and well-wishers of the royal house, tried to awaken his conscience, but in vain. The sage then asked Dhritarāshtra if he desired sight in order to witness the carnival of slaughter about to take place on account of the wickedness of his sons. He declined the gift of sight promised by the holy man of wisdom, and begged that superhuman perception might be bestowed on his charioteer Sanjaya, who would acquaint him with all that came to pass.

**INDIVIDUAL SPIRIT.**

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# THE BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ;

OR,

## THE LORD'S LAY.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### SURVEY OF ARMY.

##### DHRITARĀSHTRA *spoke*:

1. WHAT, O Sanjaya, do my sons and Pāndu's, assembled battle-bent, on the field of Kuru, the sacred plain?

##### SANJAYA *said*:

2. King Duryodhana, having but beheld<sup>1</sup> the hosts of Pāndu's sons drawn up in battle array, and then having approached the preceptor, said these words:—

3. Survey, O Preceptor, the vast army of the sons of Pāndu, guarded by thy wise pupil, Drupada's son.

Duryodhana, Dhritarāshtra's wicked son, is the very incarnation of pride, injustice, and jealousy. Evil-doers must repeatedly fortify themselves by the approval of the intellect, or they lose heart. The king praises the hostile warriors in order to rouse the martial pride of the preceptor, Drona by name, who instructed the sons of Dhritarāshtra and Pāndu in the science and art of war.

4. There are heroes of mighty bows, the compeers of Bhīma and Arjuna in fight; Yuyudhāna, Virāta, and Drupada, each a master of great car;<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "But beheld." The Sanskrit here implies fear on the part of Duryodhana.

<sup>2</sup> "Master of great car" is an epithet bestowed upon a warrior who is able to fight, single-handed, 10,000 bowmen, and is thoroughly skilled in the use of weapons of offence and defence.

5. Valorous Dhristaketu, Chekitāna, and Kāci's lord, Purujit, Kuntibhoja, and Saivya, chiefs among men;

6. Mighty Yudhāmanyu and valorous Uttamaujā, as well as the son of Subhadra and the sons of Draupadī, all masters of great car.

If the enemy is so powerful, the best course is not to persist in evil and fight. It is best to abandon evil from prudence if it is not done for the sake of righteousness. Anticipating this reply from the wise preceptor, and thinking how uncertain is the triumph of good over evil, he enumerates the warriors on his own side.

7. But, O best of Brāhmanas, know those who are the flower of our side. Of the leaders of my army I shall name the select to you for your full understanding.

I am reflecting only on the principal expedients at my command; a hundred other devices will suggest themselves as occasions arise. These are but the "flower of our side." There is no reason for losing heart.

8. Thyself, Bhīshma, Karna, Kripa, — all conquerors of assembled hosts, as also Asatthama, Vikarna, the son of Somadatta, Jayadratha,

9. And many other brave warriors determined to lose their lives for my sake; all possessed of many weapons to strike and ward, and well skilled in the art of war.

"If you are so confident of success I need say nothing more, — then fight." Such a reply from the preceptor would frustrate the purpose of his speech. So Duryodhana again shows fear.

10. This our army, guarded by Bhīshma, seems insufficient, while the army of those guarded by Bhīma seems sufficient.

Bhīshma, the grandsire (grandfather's step-brother) of both the Kauravas and the Pāndavas, is the most experienced of all the assembled warriors; on him Duryodhana chiefly relies. Evil must

always support itself by experience, while good rests upon universal principles. Evil must rely on the power of the evil-doer, while good derives strength from faith in the absolute character of the law of righteousness. Evil is personal and good is universal; the good man feels himself to be upheld by something beyond him; he knows that the principles upon which he stands will abide, come what may. The evil-doer has no such confidence, because he seeks some definite object, and does not concern himself as to whether the laws of evil are absolute or not. For that knowledge can bring him no consolation if he loses that which he desires. Here Bhīshma, the most experienced general, is opposed to Bhīma, the most rash and reckless among the Pāṇḍava leaders. It is significant that Bhīma is named here, and not the son of Drupada, as in the third verse. The chief incitement to evil is the past experience of its success. Therefore it is that Duryodhana is so anxious for the safety of Bhīshma, whose "lion-roar" inspires him with confidence. This is expressed in the two following stanzas:

11. Let all of you, occupying properly distributed positions, guard Bhīshma at every point.

In the case of evil the inner voice can only speak from experience. Bhīshma, in whom Duryodhana declares such confidence, in return for this favor gives the king the needed encouragement, and,

12. Producing joy in him, the powerful grandsire, the most ancient among Kuru's sons, blew his conch, loudly roaring the lion-roar.

13. Then of a sudden sounded conchs and trumpets, and drums and tabors; and tumultuous grew the din thereof.

This was answered from the opposing ranks.

14. Then Mādhava<sup>1</sup> and the son of Pāṇḍu,<sup>2</sup> seated in

<sup>1</sup> *Mādhava* is an epithet of Krishna implying his lordly power over Nature.

<sup>2</sup> The "son of Pāṇḍu" is here Arjuna, who is also the son of Prithā, whose other name was Kuntī. Bharata was the common ancestor of the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas.

the great car yoked to white horses, loudly blew their celestial conchs.

15. Hrishīkeṣa<sup>1</sup> blew his conch, called Pāñchajanya, Dhananjaya<sup>2</sup> blew Devadatta, and Vrikodara,<sup>3</sup> of terror-inspiring deeds, blew the great conch Paundra.

16. King Yudhisthira, the son of Kuntī, blew Ananta-vijaya; Nakula and Sahadeva blew Sughosha and Manipushpaka.<sup>4</sup>

17. Possessed of excellent bows, the king of Kāçi, Çikhandī the master of great car, Dhristadyumna,<sup>5</sup> Virāta, unconquered Sātyaki,<sup>6</sup>

18. Drupada and the sons of Draupadī, the son of Subhadra, O Lord of earth, all blew their respective conchs.

19. That terrible uproar, filling heaven and earth with sound, shivered the hearts of Dhritarāshtra's sons.

20. After that, then, as missiles were about to fall, O Lord of earth, the son of Pāndu, of the ape-crested car, with his bow raised, spoke this sentence to Hrishīkeṣa:

ARJUNA spoke:

21. O Fall-less one, place the car between the two armies,

22. For so long that I may see these battle-desiring warriors here present, and find with whom I ought to fight in this impending battle;

23. I must survey these combatants here assembled, desiring in fight to work good to the evil-minded son of Dhritarāshtra.

<sup>1</sup> *Hrishīkeṣa*, the lord of senses and faculties, who dwells in us as "lord of the bosom," not only the searcher but also the designer of the workings of our hearts.

<sup>2</sup> *Dhananjaya* is Arjuna, "the conqueror of wealth."

<sup>3</sup> *Vrikodara* is Bhīma.

<sup>4</sup> These conchs were blown by the five sons of Pāndu.

<sup>5</sup> *Dhristadyumna* is the son of Drupada, mentioned in the third verse.

<sup>6</sup> *Sātyaki*, the same as Yuyudhāna in the fourth verse.

Krishna, as the charioteer of Arjuna, shows that the Supreme God can be conquered, but by love only; at the same time the epithet "Fall-less one" shows that God is ever the same; no change of state can come to Him, although the changes in our own hearts produce apparent changes in the Deity.

Arjuna here wishes to know who among the hostile chiefs are fit antagonists for him. The strong should fight with the strong only.

SANJAYA spoke:

24. O son of Bharata; Hrishîkeṣa, thus addressed by Gûdakeṣa, placed the best of cars between the two armies, and

25. Said this: O son of Prithâ, see Bhîshma and Drona in front of all the kings assembled on the Kaurava side.

That is, Bhîshma and Drona are worthy antagonists for you, O Arjuna.

26. The son of Prithâ then saw there present in the two armies, sires, grandsires, preceptors, uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons, fathers, and also fiends, fathers-in-law, and kindred.

27. He, the son of Kuntî, seeing all his kith and kin present, overcome with great pity, despondent, said thus:

ARJUNA spoke:

28. Seeing, O Krishna, these kindred, assembled battle-bent, my limbs wither and my mouth becomes parched.

These are indications of grief.

29. There is trembling in my body and my hair stands on end; the Gândîva<sup>1</sup> drops from my hand, and my skin burns fiercely.

These are symptoms of fear.

<sup>1</sup> Gândîva is the name of Arjuna's bow.

30. I am not able to remain firm seated; my mind also seems to wander; and, O Keçava, I also perceive omens of evil.

This shows lack of endurance. Whenever a man loses faith, these three evils, grief, fear, and weakness, attack him, and he begins to delude himself into the belief that it is fruitless to persevere on the upward path. Whenever we ask ourselves, "Is the goal worth attaining?" we must know that we are falling, — losing ground. Such obstacles are presented to every one, and it is of the utmost importance not to lose confidence. The most effective weapon with which we can contend against the internal enemy is found in the study of what the sacred books have said about the successful traveller who has passed through the narrow gate. The dutiful student of the holy books may find the admonitions of some beloved teacher which may prove the very balm he needs. Meditation on the lives of spiritual heroes, the conquerors of the serpent of egotism, is also of great value.

31. Truly I do not perceive any benefit from killing kindred in battle. I long not for victory, O Krishna, nor for kingdom, nor for pleasures.

32. What, O Govinda,<sup>1</sup> are for us kingdoms, enjoyments, or even life? Those for whose sake kingdoms, enjoyments, and pleasures are desired

33. Are these here present in battle, abandoning desire of life and possessions, — preceptors, sires, sons, grandsires,

34. Uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law, and also other kinsmen, O slayer of Madhu,<sup>2</sup> — I do not wish to slay them even though I be slain<sup>3</sup> myself.

35. O Janârdana,<sup>3</sup> what satisfaction can there be for us in slaying the sons of Dhritarâshtra, even for the

<sup>1</sup> *Govinda*, — Krishna, who knows all that is done by our senses and organs.

<sup>2</sup> "Slayer of Madhu," — the demon of darkness

<sup>3</sup> *Janârdana*, — the giver of all men ask of him.

sake of the sovereignty of the three worlds?<sup>1</sup> What then of the earth?

When the doubter begins to reason as to the nature of his gain in attaining eternal life, naturally he perceives nothing; all appears like dark and cold negation, for so it is to thought and sense. Only "the pure in heart can see God."

36. Sin indeed will cling to us for killing these, though open foes. Therefore we are not justified in slaying the sons of Dhritarâshtra together with their friends. How can we be happy in killing our own kindred, O Mâdhava?

"Open foes" is a technical term, which includes an incendiary, a poisoner, one with weapon raised ready to kill, or a robber of goods, lands, or wife. Although it is allowable to kill them, yet all violation of the supreme injunction against the taking of life is sinful. In the case of Arjuna this rule does not apply, as his duty to fight rests upon the divine command which established the system of castes.

37. If these, with hearts deluded by grief, do not perceive the sin caused by destruction of one's own family and by hostility against friends,

38. Why, O Janârdana, by us who perceive the wrong produced by the destruction of family should this not be rightly viewed as reason for desisting from this sin?

39. Upon the extinction of the family, the eternal rites of piety of the family being extinct, impiety overcomes the whole family.

By the theocratic law of the Brâhmans it is enjoined upon every householder to labor for the perpetuation of the good qualities of his ancestors. If he allows the family to die out, he has to answer for the impoverishment of the race consequent thereupon. The

<sup>1</sup> "The three worlds," — the habitations of men, gods, and semi-divine beings.

home is sacred, and to fulfil the duties of home is an act of worship. There is no one in the world superior to the righteous householder; for all others—the spiritual mendicant and all—are dependent upon him. Therefore whoever looks upon the state of a householder as a sacred duty, and not a privilege, is blessed indeed.

40. From the domination of impiety, O Krishna, the women of the family become corrupt. By the corruption of women confusion of castes is produced.

41. Confusion of castes [thus] causes the abiding in hell of the family of those who destroy the family. Their ancestors fall into hell owing to the cessation of the offering of funeral cake and water.

When the principal members of a family are destroyed, the survivors follow the path of lawlessness; and owing to the absence of fit persons to perform the funeral ceremonies required for the peace of the manes of the ancestors, these last lose their celestial estate.

42. By these wrongs, productive of the confusion of castes, the eternal, pious rites of the family, and of the caste of those who destroy their families are extinguished.

The institution of castes secures to a man the knowledge of what he must do to inherit eternal life. The family and caste duties being well known and rigorously fixed, an ego is born in a particular family and caste in accordance with its needs. Thus a man has not to search blindly and waveringly for a full knowledge of his duty, but starts with it in life's great journey. Hence to create a confusion of castes is a greater moral wrong than to remove the sea-marks which guide the mariners in their course.

43. For those men, O Janārdana, whose family piety becomes extinguished there is continued abiding in hell; this we have heard.

44. Alas! we are bent upon committing a deadly sin,

since we are ready through greed of empire and enjoyment to slay our own kindred.

45. If me, unresisting and weaponless, the weapon-handed sons of Dhritarâshtra slay in fight,—that for me will be better.

SANJAYA *spoke*:

46. Having said this, Arjuna, shaken in heart by grief, in the midst of battle's ranks sat down on the car, abandoning his bow<sup>1</sup> together with the arrows.

This ends chapter the first, called the "SURVEY OF ARMY," 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.

<sup>1</sup> "Abandoning his bow," etc., as a sign of his resolve to adopt the life of a religious mendicant.

## CHAPTER II.

## RIGHT KNOWLEDGE OF THE SPIRIT.

IN this chapter, as well as in those succeeding, it is taught that the only reality is Consciousness, or the Supreme Spirit, which, being absolute, has no relation to any object or action. But there is a mysterious power, which though really non-existent, except in identity with the Supreme Spirit, yet appears as if possessed of a co-ordinate being. This seemingly real power presents two poles, namely, the perfect and ruling, and the reverse; each of these appears as though conscious, owing to a mysterious connection between the power and consciousness. The one pole is the personal God, called the "Son of God" in the Christian Scriptures; the other, man. As consciousness—that is to say, in reality—they are identical. Conditioned existence ceases for him who realizes this identity, but not for others. The only right course for those bound by conditions, and therefore under the necessity for action, is to follow scriptural commands in perfect faith that the power to act, as well as the results that ensue, belongs to the Supreme God,—even the Father,—who is eternally free from all conditions as well as from all attributes that are given to the personal God,—the first among all the sons of God.

SANJAYA *said*:

1. Then the Slayer of Madhu said these words to him, thus overcome with pity, despondent, and with eyes full of perplexity and tears:—

THE BLESSED LORD *spoke*:

2. Whence, in this place of danger, is come to thee<sup>1</sup> this sinful darkness, shunned of the worthy,<sup>2</sup> heaven-marring, and unmaker of name and fame?<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Thee," who art the best of warriors.

<sup>2</sup> "Worthy," that is, versed in holy lore.

<sup>3</sup> "Name and fame." It was a religious duty for the warriors to keep these unsullied.

3. Fall not into eunuch-hood,<sup>1</sup> O son of Kuntī;<sup>2</sup> this is not worthy of thee. Arise, O harasser of thy foes,<sup>3</sup> casting aside this degrading faintness of heart.

ARJUNA said:

4. How shall I, O Slayer of Madhu, in battle with arrows contend<sup>4</sup> against Bhīshma and Drona, worthy to be adored, O Slayer of thy foes?

This last epithet, "Slayer of thy foes," is used here to show that all that can possibly be done is eternally accomplished by the Blessed Lord. Arjuna is only the harasser, Krishna is the Slayer. The one is trying to do what the other has already and forever done, — eternally accomplished. The Deity, as absolute and perfect, can have nothing to attain. The moment that we conceive that He has anything to gain, we also perceive that He is possessed of the same from all time and forever. The Blessed Lord, being one with the Deity, reveals to mankind the Supreme Spiritual nature.

5. Better in this world<sup>5</sup> to eat even the beggar's bread, without slaying the great-souled, adorable ones, than by slaughtering those worthy to be worshipped, to enjoy on this earth alone<sup>6</sup> blood-stained pleasures, lusted after by those desiring possessions.<sup>7</sup>

6. We know not this, — which for us is preferable, that we should conquer, or that they should conquer us. Those, whom slaying, we wish not for life, are present before us, — Dhritarāshtra's sons.

<sup>1</sup> "Eunuch-hood," that is, want of firmness.

<sup>2</sup> "Son of Kuntī." This epithet is intended to make Arjuna feel that he is a man, and

<sup>3</sup> "Harasser of thy foes" is meant to remind him that he is a hero.

<sup>4</sup> "With arrows contend," when I ought not to contend even with words.

<sup>5</sup> "Better in this world," as opposed to spiritual welfare in the world to come.

<sup>6</sup> "On this earth alone." The enjoyments are blood-stained, and only obtained by forgetting heaven

<sup>7</sup> "Those desiring possessions." The natural man striving to perpetuate the enjoyment of worldly objects.

7. Thee I ask, with nature defiled by blindness to Spirit<sup>1</sup> and heart, in delusion about the Supporter,<sup>2</sup> tell me that which is truly best. I am thy pupil;<sup>3</sup> instruct me, who in thee have refuge sought.

I seek for Nirvāna because

8. I do not perceive that which can remove the grief that withers my senses and organs and mind, even on obtaining foeless empire on earth and also the sovereignty over gods.

SANJAYA spoke:

9. Gūḍakeṣa, the harasser of foes, after thus speaking to Hrishīkeṣa, became silent, saying, "I shall not fight, O Govinda."<sup>4</sup>

10. O son of Bharata, to him, despondent in the midst of the two armies, Hrishīkeṣa, as if in mockery,<sup>5</sup> said these words: —

The despondency of Arjuna offers the most suitable opportunity for the Blessed Lord to proclaim the truth to the world and point out the way of the Spirit. It is clearly shown that without perception of the Spirit, which is the true Ego, power, virtue, and learning are useless. The feeling of *my-ness* is the real enemy which shrouds knowledge with ignorance and severs man from the path of duty. The only effective remedy against this spiritual evil is the recognition of the truth that as the personal ego is beginningless in time, its work throughout past eternity has not

<sup>1</sup> "Blindness to Spirit." The state of one who departs this life not knowing "this indestructible God," the truest Self.

<sup>2</sup> "Supporter." The Supreme Spirit, comprehending all, — both what is caused and what causes.

<sup>3</sup> "I am thy pupil." The mysteries of the Spirit should only be revealed to a son or pupil, — such is the injunction of the ages. Cf. Matt. iv. 21.

<sup>4</sup> *Govinda*, he who knows the workings of our senses and faculties. Arjuna, unable to express all that is in his mind, relies upon Divine Omniscience; hence this epithet.

<sup>5</sup> "As if in mockery." To impress him with the folly that prompted his thought, word, and deed.

ended its suffering, and no work is therefore capable of securing "surcease of sorrow" during the future eternity. Without a just motive, a man must not abandon his duty although its performance is of no use in reaching the desired goal, — the peace that is eternal life or Nirvāna. The delusion that induces an abandonment of duty because it offers no positive benefit is the great stumbling-block. True spiritual knowledge dawns upon no man who does not selflessly perform his duty, although the mere performance of duty does not necessarily result in illumination which depends on Divine grace. This is the gist of the teaching of Krishna.

The Blessed Lord proceeds to show that egotism is the cause of grief, suffering, and violation of duty.

#### THE BLESSED LORD *spoke* :

11. Thou mournest those who ought not to be mourned, though thou speakest words of learning.<sup>1</sup> Those wise in things spiritual mourn not the living or dead.

The reason why he says "ought not to be mourned" is, that as the true Ego of all is the Deity, death is not a reality; it is also evident that in so far as they *are in reality* they cannot become *naught* by operation of cause or lapse of time.

The "wise in things spiritual" are those who have realized the identity of the Deity and the Ego. "Although thou speakest words of learning, yet thy behavior discloses thy ignorance of spiritual truth."

12. Verily it is not so that ever I *was not*, nor thou, nor these lords of men: nor is it that we, every one, shall hereafter<sup>2</sup> *be not*.

The idea of plurality of egos, as suggested by "I," "thou," and "lords of men," refers only to the body. The true identity of all egos with one another and with the Deity is the supreme truth here declared as the basis of the immortality of all individuals.

<sup>1</sup> "Words of learning." See Chapter I verse 38 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> "Hereafter;" that is, after the dissolution of the body.

13. As for the lord of the body, there are in this body childhood, youth, and decay; so is there the attaining of another body; by this the man of wisdom is not deluded.

Arjuna reasons within himself that though there is no reason to grieve for the true self, or the spirit, which is immortal, yet the present feeling of the "pair of opposites," heat and cold, pleasure and pain, is a sufficient cause of grief. To remove this it is said :—

14. O son of Kuntī, the senses and their objects are producers of heat and cold, pleasure and pain. They are transitory, appearing and ending; abandon them, O son of Bharata.

"The senses and their objects." The original Sanskrit phrase can also be rendered as "the contact of the senses with their appropriate objects." It is here shown that the pair of opposites are the only things known to human beings; pleasure and pain in reality include heat and cold.

In the beginning of the verse, where the nature of heat and cold is declared, Arjuna is addressed as the son of his mother, — Kuntī; but when he is exhorted to abandon pleasure and pain, he is reminded of his heroic ancestor Bharata, from whom India is called by her people "the land of Bharata."

The command to "abandon them" means to be above the senses by realizing the truth that the Ego is independent of them. What follows superiority over the pair of opposites is next declared.

15. O best of men, the man who is equal in pleasure and pain, is undisturbed by them, and is possessed of wisdom, is fit for immortality.

This mode of addressing Arjuna is intended to imply that he ought to aspire for immortality, the eternal life of Nirvāna, which is attainable by any man who is free from the influence of the pair of opposites and possessed of wisdom.

Further reasons to show the necessity or dispensation :—

16. For the Naught no aughtness can there be, nor naughtness can there be for Aught. By the truth-seeing<sup>1</sup> the ultimate characteristic of these both<sup>2</sup> has indeed been seen.

"Naught" signifies those things that have a cause; for example, *heat* and *cold*, which are really non-existent because they are not conceivable without their cause. With the eye an earthen pot is seen, but if the earth be absent the eye cannot at all perceive the pot; nor was the pot seen before it was made nor will it be seen after it is destroyed. The perception of the pot therefore shows nothing but itself; in other words, does not demonstrate its own reality but manifests the reality of its cause. It may at first appear that to proceed in this manner is to accept a *regressus in infinitum* and maintain universal negation. But it is not so. For whatever happens, the perception of reality—that something *is*—never can be absent.

Every fact of consciousness involves in itself two elements; namely, substance and quality, noun and adjective, subject and predicate. When we speak of different substances we really mean qualities; among which without any logical reason one is assumed to be the substance.

In the term "black horse" it is usually assumed that "horse" is the substance and "black" the attribute. In reality it is not so. For no one can represent to his mind a horse without a color. Hence in dealing with "horse" divested of attributes, as the substance, we are really dealing with an abstraction or attribute,—with *horseness*, in fact. This is strengthened by the consideration that if the word "horse" is spoken before a number of people, each one figures to himself a different horse. Which of them is the horse corresponding to the word "horse"? In the absence of any reason for specialization it is clear that the word "horse" is the power to indicate all the individual horses in existence. The word "black"

<sup>1</sup> "The truth-seeing." The word translated "truth" is "that"ness. Being the name applicable to all and everything, "that" is taken to mean the substance of the universe. Hence "thatness" implies the essential reality of "that," or Supreme Brahman.

<sup>2</sup> "The ultimate characteristic of these both;" that is, Naught is Naught and Aught is Aught. Relying upon this, feel convinced that so far as these creatures are real they will forever remain real, there being no power to alter that. In so far as they are unreal they do not exist even now. So there is no occasion for grief.

restricts the operation of that power by the operation of another power, namely, *blackness*. The mutual relation between these two powers, as shown by the position of the words, is that their area of operation is identical. It is clear from this that neither of them is the substance, or both are. The necessity for excluding one of them from the category of substance shows that there *is* a substance independent of them in which they both inhere as attributes or powers. Therefore the existence of an attributeless substance, and the insubstantiality, and in that sense non-existence, of attributes, cannot be denied.

It is also clear that everything observable or inferable is included in the class of attributes. By themselves, separated from the substance, the attributes are non-existent; but in relation to the substance they are identical with it. For otherwise they would be *absolute* negation, which is evidently not the case from their power of simulating the substance. Now, what is the substance?

To determine this we must consider what is the peculiar characteristic of the substance. If all that is observable and inferable is attribute, the only thing that *is* and yet cannot be the object of a probative operation must be the substance. It is clear that the ego alone fulfils these requirements; for there can be no probative operation that is not preceded by a doubt, and no doubt can exist without the existence of the doubter, or ego.

The substance is the Self, and the not-Self, embracing the whole universe, is its power. In this power is contained the power of perceiving the power separated from the Powerful; but this separating power is power, and not the Powerful, — in other words, is an adjective and not a noun, and hence by the above reasoning has no substantiality except in identity with the substance. This is the reason why the power of viewing the power as separate from the Powerful is called illusion, — neither real nor unreal; in fact, indescribable.

The argument set forth above may lead to this inference: Granted the omnipresence of substance and quality, it does not necessarily follow that the Ego is immortal or real. For obviously substance and quality are mutually convertible expressions. Hence it is clear that the Ego is only a quality of the non-ego, and as such is unreal, except in identity with it. In so far as Nature is the Ego, the Ego has existence: otherwise it is a figment of the imagination. This reasoning is false.

The question is whether the Ego is the power or quality of the non-ego, or the reverse. It is evident that nothing is except Ego and non-ego. Now, let us suppose that the Ego is the property of the non-ego. This would mean that the Ego knows itself to be non-existent except as a property of the non-ego, and therefore in identity with it. But the Ego cannot know itself, except through some objective medium, and consequently cannot under any circumstances be really identical with the non-ego.

Therefore the other alternative must be true. Ego is the substance, and non-ego the power or quality. The Ego is immortal, for how can power destroy the Powerful, who alone can exercise it? One power can destroy another power, but not the powerful, without whom the power cannot exist. Evidently the power cannot do what it could only do if it did not exist. A thing cannot do what its negation can do. This is declared in the following verse:—

17. And<sup>1</sup> know him as indestructible by whom all this is pervaded.<sup>2</sup> Of him who remains unchanged nothing can produce destruction.

Next is declared what is Naught from the standpoint of *supreme truth*, in other words, what is and is yet not real in its being.

18. These bodies, subject to dissolution, are said<sup>3</sup> to belong to him, the eternal,<sup>4</sup> indestructible,<sup>5</sup> unprovable,<sup>6</sup> who is in the body; therefore fight, O son of Bharata.

The word "fight" in this verse is not used as an injunction, but a statement of Arjuna's mental state, which has been temporarily clouded by doubts. Wisdom does not require the co-operation of any act whatever to compass the supreme end of existence, and the Bhagavad Gītā is not meant for enjoining any course of action, but for the extinction of conditioned existence, which consists of

<sup>1</sup> "And." This conjunction is to show that the "Naught" in the preceding verse is the immortal Self.

<sup>2</sup> "By whom all this is pervaded." Without the Ego nothing can exist; therefore space is nothing but the pervasive power of the Ego.

<sup>3</sup> "Said," that is, by the unwise.

<sup>4</sup> "Eternal," that is, is not liable to be annihilated.

<sup>5</sup> "Indestructible," that is, not subject to change of character.

<sup>6</sup> "Unprovable," that is, self-evident.

grief and delusion. To strengthen this impression the Blessed Lord cites the two following Vedic texts. The first is intended to disabuse Arjuna of the idea that he is acting or is to act in the ensuing battle, the whole thing is but the baseless fabric of a dream.

19. He who knows it as the slayer, and also he who knows it as the slain, they both know not rightly: it kills not, nor is killed.

Next it is declared that the Ego is not subject to change. In regard to the true Self the six classes of change are denied in detail

20. Never is this<sup>1</sup> born, nor does it die, nor having been does it ever cease to be; unborn,<sup>2</sup> eternal,<sup>3</sup> undecaying,<sup>4</sup> ancient;<sup>5</sup> this is not disintegrated by the disintegration<sup>6</sup> of the body.

"Nor having been does it ever cease to be," requires some thought for its right understanding. No object can be conceived of by the mind as continuing to exist, except in relation to its beginning and end. That which having been does not cease to be, does not also persist in existence. All objects which come into existence at any definite point of time cannot cease to be at that very moment, nor can it be conceived of as remaining absolutely the same as at the moment of its appearance. The idea of a beginning, an end, and an interval separating them invariably accompanies the conception of all objects that are non-eternal. This is here denied of the Ego.

The proposition laid down in verse 19 is proved by the Vedic text forming verse 20, and is now being repeated as proved.

21. Whoever knows this<sup>7</sup> unborn and changeless, as

<sup>1</sup> "This." The real identity of the Self with the divine Self is implied.

<sup>2</sup> "Unborn," that is, not subject to the change called birth.

<sup>3</sup> "Eternal," denies death.

<sup>4</sup> "Undecaying," denies decay.

<sup>5</sup> "Ancient," denies growth; the same that was, is now.

<sup>6</sup> "Disintegration" denies change of substance

<sup>7</sup> "This," that is, the Ego, mentioned in the foregoing verse.

undying<sup>1</sup> and eternal,<sup>2</sup> O son of Prithâ, whom does he, the Spirit,<sup>3</sup> kill or cause to be killed?

In the preceding verse all kinds of action are generally negated in regard to the Spirit, or true Ego; here the identity of the illuminated sage with the Spirit is declared, and the class of action called killing is set forth to strengthen the general truth by application to the case of Arjuna. But how is this identity to be understood? The actionlessness of the *âtma* or true Ego being granted, how does that apply to him who knows the *âtma*?

The illuminated sage, in so far as he is the illuminated sage, is *not* *âtma*, and therefore is not actionless. To this the reply is that the illuminated sage, in so far as he is the illuminated sage, is *really* non-existent, and what is said here does not apply to him, as it is addressed to one who is not illuminated. The aspirant will understand what is meant by the identity of the sage and the Spirit only when he becomes himself what others would call a sage. In the mean time he can but try to understand it.

Another question also arises. If the *âtma* is actionless it cannot be known, for that would connect it with action as its object. Not only the actor is in delusion, but also the one who is acted upon; they both know me not rightly, says the text (v. 19). This is perfectly true. The Vedas teach, "That by which everything is known by what is that to be known." "Not he is the Supreme Spirit who is worshipped here."

How can there be a spiritual philosophy if this is the case? If the Spirit is utterly unknown, how can any one teach or learn anything about it? In supreme reality there is no one to teach or to be taught. And yet there is a false knowledge about the *âtma*, — a groundless belief that it is known, this false knowledge is what every man calls "himself," the centre of all that is done and experienced. Spiritual philosophy teaches the nature of this self, and shows it to be the misconception of the *âtma*, and no reality

<sup>1</sup> "Undying," that is, supremely unmodifying.

<sup>2</sup> "Eternal," that is, never appearing as of a different substance. These two attributes declare the supreme independence of the Ego. They show that the Ego undergoes no change either in form or substance.

<sup>3</sup> "He, the Spirit." The possessor of this knowledge is the same as the Supreme Spirit. The truth is here stated in the form of a question, to show that although *Atma* may appear to move and mind to think, there is no egotism claiming their ownership.

except in so far as the misconception is identical with the thing about which it is a misconception; as is seen in the case of the rope which is mistaken for a serpent. The misconception called the serpent is nothing but the rope. When this is seen, the process of inquiry about the serpent and its nature comes to an end. In order that this illustration may be fully understood, it must be borne in mind that if the serpent is the personal self, then on the removal of the misconception there can be no one to say, "I am the self that was," for I never was the self spoken of; nor that "I am the ātmā," for he who can be supposed to say this is really a misconception, and therefore on being realized as such can say nothing. The wisdom implied by realization ceases to exist on realization, for it has nothing to realize; and further, it has realized nothing, for that which it is said to have realized is a misconception and not a thing. Spiritual philosophy cannot manifest the Spirit that is self-manifest, but what it is not; and when that is realized, the Spirit, which is the true Self, is, by a figure of speech, said to be known owing to its self-manifestness. In reality the Spirit and the knower cannot exist together as co-ordinate realities.

What is meant here by the illuminated sage is the ātmā, — both by him who asks and him who is asked. In so far as any other answer is expected, the expectation is no reality. Being no reality itself, it can have no real answer. The questioner and replier are both *really* an illusion. The answer is also an illusion, yet it is capable of removing the other illusion, namely, the existence of the questioner and replier, and the necessity for their act; and when the truth declared by it is understood, the sufferings of conditioned life cease.

If anywhere reality is assumed, — for instance, if it is imagined that either the questioner or he who replies is real, — the identity of the sage with the Spirit is real, and ought to be accepted as such; that is to say, will be accepted as such if this is the only illusion requiring consideration; in other words, if the only desire is that of knowing the truth. Hence it is that all spiritual teachers lay so much stress upon the moral purity of the pupil. "To know the doctrine one must live the life;" "the man without faith comes to destruction."

In order to show that the Ego is unchangeable, and thus to remove the grief lingering in the thought that the change of body is itself a great calamity, it is said: —

22. As, abandoning clothes that are decayed, a man takes other clothes that are new, so the dweller in the body, abandoning bodies that are decayed, goes into other bodies that are new.

23. Not this<sup>1</sup> the weapons pierce; not this does fire burn, nor this does water wet, nor the wind dry up.

The *âtma* is beyond the four elements, earth (weapons), fire, water, and wind. This is the negative aspect.

24. This is called unpierceable, unburnable, also unwettable and undriable; eternal,<sup>2</sup> all-pervading, constant this,—changeless, ever the same;<sup>3</sup> unmanifest<sup>4</sup> this, uncognizable<sup>5</sup> this, and unvarying<sup>6</sup>

The "this" is all-pervading, because if there was any place from which it was absent, it could only be so through the presence of something else. The cognition of this something else would exclude the presence of "this" for a time, and prevent its being eternal. This epithet is also meant to deny that the Ego is an atom; therefore it is constant, and therefore unchanging, which is not the same thing as constant, for a thing may be constant in changing. Nor is it to be understood that the unchangeableness of the Ego is here inferred from its being constant; it rests upon all the attributes taken together. Yet again it is not to be forgotten that these epithets are meant to facilitate the realization of the objective universe as not-Self, and intended to describe what the Ego really is, — "unmanifest," unthinkable.

25. Therefore, knowing this to be such, thou oughtest not to be able to mourn.<sup>7</sup>

This completes the topic commenced in verse 11, and forms one unit in the harmonious whole.

<sup>1</sup> "This," that is, the Ego, the dweller in the body through the power of illusion.

<sup>2</sup> "Eternal," that is, not subject to the conditions of time.

<sup>3</sup> "Ever the same," that is, is uncaused.

<sup>4</sup> "Unmanifest," that is, irresponsible to sense and mind.

<sup>5</sup> "Uncognizable," that is, not answering any faculty in us.

<sup>6</sup> "Unvarying," that is, not subject to change, even such as milk turning into cream or curds.

<sup>7</sup> "Not to be able to mourn," not merely to abstain from so doing.

26. Again, if thou considerest this to be constantly born and constantly dying, still thou, O mighty armed one, oughtest not to be able thus to mourn.

Even if thou shouldst adopt the opinions of the worldly-minded, and conclude that with the birth of every body a new and separate ego is born, and dies with its death, even then, being a mighty armed hero, thou oughtest to be above grief. For in that case it follows : —

27. Of that which is born death is certain, and certain also is the re-birth of the dead. Therefore, owing to its unavoidableness, thou oughtest not to be able to mourn.

28. Unperceived<sup>1</sup> is the origin<sup>2</sup> of creatures and unperceived is their end;<sup>3</sup> only their middle, O son of Bharata, is perceived; what is there in it to lament?

This being the case, how can you lament and feel attachment to those about whom you know so little? Like logs of wood floating on the ocean current we meet on earth for a moment, and then we part, each following his own path. Therefore such thoughts as "I am theirs" and "They are mine" are merely a delusion.

The next verse seeks to encourage Arjuna by showing him that his want of right perception of the Ego is due to the inherent difficulties of the process, and not to any extraordinary defect on his part.

29. Some consider<sup>4</sup> the *âtma* as a marvel; others again speak<sup>5</sup> of it as a marvel; and still others hear<sup>6</sup> of it in wonder; and even having heard, not one realizes it.

<sup>1</sup> "Unperceived," that is, by physical senses.

<sup>2</sup> "Origin," that is, ante-natal condition.

<sup>3</sup> "End," that is, state succeeding death.

<sup>4</sup> "Consider," etc., that is, do not realize that it is the innermost Self.

<sup>5</sup> "Speak," etc. Many who repeat what the sages say of it still wonder if those sayings are true.

<sup>6</sup> "Hear," etc., shows the increasing difficulty of the various stages of spiritual perception.

**30. The indwelling spirit that is in every body is indestructible, being eternal. Therefore thou oughtest not to be able to mourn any creature.**

The indwelling spirit, or the dweller in the body, is the One Spirit viewed in relation to a variety of bodies. The Spirit, though one, appears as separated, owing to the separateness of bodies; like light from one and the same source appearing as varied, owing to differences in the reflecting surfaces. This is the "I" which every creature takes as his own.

This gathers together all the units of crystals in the teachings of the Blessed Lord and combines them in one great crystal. The idea introduced in verse 11, having been clearly shown forth more than once, is here fully completed.

This section of the present chapter makes the folly of grief manifest from a purely philosophical point of view. With the following verse begin other considerations leading to the same result. The teaching slowly descends from the height of spiritual philosophy, and by degrees comes home to the hearts of all kinds and classes of men.

Having spoken of the final goal and the ultimate reality, the Blessed Lord puts forth other considerations, — not to strengthen the truth, for that requires no support, but to increase the receptive powers of the hearer, to help his unbelief. The method of all divine teachers is, first of all to declare unto us the ultimate truth, the final goal, and then to remove all obstacles which stand in the way of our receiving the truth. "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake" (John xiv. 11). These auxiliary means of strengthening faith when received as final in themselves and out of connection with the whole produce blindness and bigotry. The reference to Arjuna's caste morality in the ensuing verse is to be taken as auxiliary teaching.

**31. Because for a Kshatriya nothing exists which is superior to lawful fighting, therefore viewing this as natural duty thou oughtest not to waver.**

Kshatriya is the second or military caste of India. The caste duties are the natural proclivities of the man as shown by his birth

in a particular caste. Arjuna's duty is to fight, and not to hesitate to kill when lawful occasion for it arises.

The meaning of this verse is that nothing on earth is absolutely perfect; the wisest thing, therefore, is to follow one's nature. But this is impracticable for those who do not understand their natures nor their own final good. Ethical codes are intended to guide us in acquiring this knowledge. If a man has nothing in him to respond to ethical laws, all teachings would be of no value to him. Whenever we accept an ethical principle, it is only because we recognize its meaning as a part of our nature. The relation of ethics to spiritual life is most beautifully explained by Saint Paul (Romans vii.).

The true duty of a man is the true need of his nature. There can be no duty which is not a natural need viewed in the light of the complete destiny of man. The majority of mankind, not knowing the destiny of man, are blind to duty. The code of ethics which is associated with religion is an invaluable aid to us in the recognition of our duties; but owing to its high spiritual standpoint it requires to be supplemented. For the understanding of our real, as opposed to our conventional, duty the following are necessary: —

1. A dutiful study of religious ethics.
2. Diligent observation of the practice of the faithful followers of spiritual ethics
3. Right understanding of the practical morality of one's own people as shown in the ethical foundation of the social and political institutions
4. Study of the tendencies of one's own nature; that is to say, listening to the still, small voice of conscience. No one of these singly can be the infallible guide in all possible situations in life, but all of them must be harmoniously combined for the purpose.

32. Only fortunate Kshatriyas, O son of Prithā, obtain such a fight as this, which has come unsolicited, like the gates of heaven unclosed.

The general injunction against taking life is here pushed aside by the special injunction which makes it the indispensable duty of the warrior caste to fight. One of this caste who fights as a matter of religious duty, and looks upon slaying and being slain as of no