

Bhagavad-Gita

Recension by William Quan Judge

Combined with his

Essays on the Gita

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Foreword

Nearly two hundred years ago the first English translation of the *Bhagavad-Gita* was issued in London. This work by the distinguished Orientalist, Sir Charles Wilkins, was published under the authority of the Court of Directors of the East India Company of which he was Senior Merchant, at the recommendation of Warren Hastings, then Governor General of India. The latter during his tenure of office was indefatigable in encouraging all public servants to master the native languages,

including Sanskrit, in order that they might better understand the sacred literature of the Hindus.

Subsequently, through a number of translations, chiefly in Latin, French and German, the *Gita* became known to the scholars of Europe and America. Transcendentalists on both sides of the Atlantic considered it a philosophical masterpiece. Valuable as these early publications were in introducing the Eastern philosophy to the West, they were for the most part limited to the few.

William Quan Judge, recognizing the need for a non-academic exposition of its doctrines, began a series of studies in his monthly magazine *The Path* -- not as a formal commentary on the scripture, but as a means of pursuing, with his readers, an inquiry into its philosophy. These articles, under the penname William Brehon, appeared during 1887-88 and 1895-96, and now for the first time are included with Judge's own Recension of the *Gita*, both of which are here faithfully reproduced except that obvious typographical errors have been corrected, Sanskrit spelling systematized and the few purely organizational references omitted.

The quotations from the *Gita* used in the articles do not conform verbally with the text of his Recension as Judge did not prepare the latter for publication until 1890. Thus he drew largely upon the available English translations, notably the Wilkins edition of 1785, the 1855 edition of J. Cockburn Thomson, and Sir Edwin Arnold's poetic rendering, "The Song Celestial." This should cause no real difficulty, however, for the merit of these studies lies in Judge's exceptional ability to interpret by the light of the "perennial philosophy" the many obscure passages that had defied most 19th century scholars.

The author's sound practical advice to students in search of a

broader spiritual perspective is perhaps of even greater value today than it was during his lifetime. While his death at the age of 44 left the work of commentary unfinished, chapter seven being the last covered, we can apply to it Judge's own statement about the *Bhagavad-Gita*, that if but "the first two chapters were preserved, and the others lost, we would still have enough."

JAMES A. LONG

Pasadena, California, June 21, 1969

Antecedent Words

The *Bhagavad-Gita* is an episode of the *Mahabharata*, which is said to have been written by Vyasa. Who this Vyasa is and when he lived is not known.

J. Cockburn Thomson, in his translation of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, says:

"The *Mahabharata*, as all students of Sanskrit well know, is the great epic of India, which, from its popularity and extent, would seem to correspond with the *Iliad* among the Greeks. The theme of the whole work is a certain war which was carried on between two branches of one tribe, the descendants of Kuru, for the sovereignty of Hastinapura, commonly supposed to be the same as the modern Delhi. The elder branch is called by the general name of the whole tribe, Kurus; the younger goes by the patronymic from Pandu, the father of its five principal leaders.

"This war between the Kurus and Pandavas occupies about twenty thousand slokas, or a quarter of the whole work, as we now possess it. . . . In order to understand the allusions there made [in the *Bhagavad-Gita*], a knowledge is requisite of the preceding history of the tribe, which will now be given as follows.

"Of the name Kuru we know but little, but that little is sufficient to prove that it is one of great importance. We have no means of deriving it from any Sanskrit root, nor has it, like too many of the old Indian names, the appearance of being explanatory of the peculiarities of the person or persons whom it designates. It is, therefore, in all probability, a name of considerable antiquity, brought by the Aryan race from their first seat in Central Asia. Its use in Sanskrit is fourfold. It is the name of the northern quarter, or Dwipa, of the world, and is described as lying between the most northern range of snowy mountains and the polar sea. It is, further, the name of the most northern of the nine *Varshas* of the known world. Among the long genealogies of the tribe itself, it is found as the name of an ancient king, to whom the foundation of the tribe is attributed. Lastly, it designates an Aryan tribe of sufficient importance to disturb the whole of northern India with its factions, and to make its battles the theme of the longest epic of olden time.

"Viewing these facts together, we should be inclined to draw the conclusion that the name was originally that of a race inhabiting Central Asia beyond the Himalaya, who emigrated with other races into the northwest of the Peninsula, and with them formed the great people who styled themselves unitedly *Arya*, or the Noble, to distinguish them from the aborigines whom they subdued, and on whose territories they eventually settled. . . .

"At the time when the plot of the *Mahabharata* was enacted, this tribe was situated in the plain of the Doab, and their particular region, lying between the *Junma* and *Sursooty* rivers, was called *Kurukshetra*, or the plain of the *Kurus*. The capital of this country was *Hastinapura*, and here reigned, at a period of which we cannot give the exact date, a king named *Vichitravirya*. He was the son of *Santanu* and *Satyavati*; and *Bhishma* and *Krishna Dwaipayana*, the *Vyasa*, were his half-brothers; the former being

his father's, the latter his mother's son. He married two sisters — Amba and Ambalika — but dying shortly after his marriage . . . he left no progeny; and his half-brother, the Vyasa, instigated by divine command, married his widows and begot two sons, Dhritarashtra and Pandu. The former had one hundred sons, the eldest of whom was Duryodhana. The latter married firstly Pritha, or Kunti, the daughter of Sura, and secondly Madri. The children of these wives were the five Pandava princes; but as their mortal father had been cursed by a deer while hunting to be childless all his life, these children were mystically begotten by different deities. Thus Yudhishtira, Bhima, and Arjuna, were the sons of Pritha by Dharmma, Vayu, and Indra, respectively. Nakula was the son of Madri by Nasatya the elder, and Sahadeva, by Dasra the younger of the twin Asvinau, the physicians of the gods. This story would seem to be a fiction, invented to give a divine origin to the five heroes of the poem: but, however this may be, Duryodhana and his brothers are the leaders of the Kuru, or elder branch of the tribe; and the five Pandava princes those of the Pandava or younger branch.

"Dhritarashtra was blind, but although thus incapacitated for governing, he retained the throne, while his son Duryodhana really directed the affairs of the State. . . . he prevailed on his father to banish his cousins, the Pandava princes, from the country. After long wanderings and varied hardships, these princes collected their friends around them, formed by the help of many neighboring kings a vast army, and prepared to attack their unjust oppressor, who had, in like manner, assembled his forces.

"The hostile armies meet on the plain of the Kurus. Bhishma, the half-brother of Vichitravirya, being the oldest warrior among them, has the command of the Kuru faction; Bhima, the second son of Pandu, noted for his strength and prowess, is the general of

the other party [Arjuna's]. The scene of our poem now opens, and remains throughout the same — the field of battle. In order to introduce to the reader the names of the principal chieftains in each army, Duryodhana is made to approach Drona, his military preceptor, and name them one by one. The challenge is then suddenly given by Bhishma, the Kuru general, by blowing his conch; and he is seconded by all his followers. It is returned by Arjuna, who is in the same chariot with the god Krishna, who, in compassion for the persecution he suffered, had become his intimate friend, and was now acting the part of a charioteer to him. He is followed by all the generals of the Pandavas. The fight then begins with a volley of arrows from both sides; but when Arjuna perceives it, he begs Krishna to draw up the chariot in the space between the two armies, while he examines the lines of the enemy. The god does so, and points out in those lines the numerous relatives of his friend. Arjuna is horror-struck at the idea of committing fratricide by slaying his near relations, and throws down his bow and arrow, declaring that he would rather be killed without defending himself, than fight against them. Krishna replies with the arguments which form the didactic and philosophical doctrines of the work, and endeavors to persuade him that he is mistaken in forming such a resolution. Arjuna is eventually overruled. The fight goes on, and the Pandavas defeat their opponents. . . ."

This quotation from Thomson's edition gives the student a brief statement of what is more or less mythological and allegorical, but if the story of the *Mahabharata* be taken as that of Man in his evolutionary development, as I think it ought to be, the whole can be raised from the plane of fable, and the student will then have before him an account, to some extent, of that evolution.

Thus looking at it from the theosophical point of view, the king Dhritarashtra is the human body which is acquired by the

immortal monad in order to go through the evolutionary journey; the mortal envelope is brought into existence by means of Tanha, or thirst for life. He is blind because the body without the faculties within is merely senseless matter, and thus is "incapacitated for governing," and some other person is represented in the *Mahabharata* as being the governor of the state, the nominal king being the body — Dhritarashtra. As the theosophical scheme holds that there is a double line of evolution within us, we find that the Kurus spoken of in the poem represent the more material side of those two lines, and the Pandava princes, of whom Arjuna is one, stand for the spiritual side of the stream — that is, Arjuna represents the immortal Spark.

The learned Brahmin theosophist, Subba Row, says in his *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*:

Krishna was intended to represent the Logos, . . . and Arjuna, who was called Nara, was intended to represent the human monad. — *The Theosophist*, VIII, 299

Nara also means Man. The alleged celestial origin for the two branches of the family, the Kurus and Pandavas, is in perfect consonance with this, for the body, or Dhritarashtra, being solely material and the lower plane in which the development takes place, the Kurus and Pandavas are our inheritance from the celestial beings often referred to in Mme. Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*, the one tending towards materiality, the other being spiritual. The Kurus, then, the lower portion of our nature earliest developed, obtain the power on this plane for the time being, and one of them, Duryodhana, "prevails," so that the Pandavas, or the more spiritual parts of our nature, are banished temporarily from the country, that is, from governing Man. "The long wanderings and varied hardships" of the Pandavas are wanderings caused by the necessities of evolution before these better parts are able to

make a stand for the purpose of gaining the control in man's evolutionary struggle. This also has reference to the cyclic rise and fall of nations and the race.

The hostile armies, then, who meet on the plain of the Kurus are these two collections of the human faculties and powers, those on one side tending to drag us down, those on the other aspiring towards spiritual illumination. The battle refers not only to the great warfare that mankind as a whole carries on, but also to the struggle which is inevitable as soon as any one unit in the human family resolves to allow his higher nature to govern him in his life. Hence, bearing in mind the suggestion made by Subba Row, we see that Arjuna, called Nara, represents not only Man as a race, but also any individual who resolves upon the task of developing his better nature. What is described as happening in the poem to him will come to every such individual. Opposition from friends and from all the habits he has acquired, and also that which naturally arises from hereditary tendencies, will confront him, and then it will depend upon how he listens to Krishna, who is the Logos shining within and speaking within, whether he will succeed or fail.

With these suggestions the student will find that the mythology and allegory spoken of by Thomson and others are useful instead of being merely ornamental, or, as some think, superfluous and misleading.

The only cheap edition of the *Bhagavad-Gita* hitherto within the reach of theosophical students of limited means has been one which was published in Bombay by Brother Tookeram Tatya, F.T.S., whose efforts in that direction are entitled to the highest praise. But that one was simply a reprint of the first English translation made one hundred years ago by Wilkins. The great attention of late bestowed on the poem . . . in America has created

an imperative demand for an edition which shall be at least free from some of the glaring typographical mistakes and blind renderings so frequent in the Wilkins reprint. To meet this demand the present has been made up. It is the result of a careful comparison of all the English editions and of a complete retranslation from the original wherever any obscurity or omission was evident in the various renderings consulted.

The making of a commentary has not been essayed, because it is believed that the *Bhagavad-Gita* should stand on its own merits without comments, each student being left to himself to see deeper as he advances. The publisher of this edition holds that the poem can be read in many different ways, each depending on the viewpoint taken, *e.g.*, whether it is considered in its application to the individual, or to cosmogenesis, or to the evolution of the astral world, or the hierarchies in nature, or to the moral nature, and so on. To attach a commentary, except such an one as only a sage like Sankaracharya could write, would be audacious, and therefore the poem is given undisfigured.

The *Bhagavad-Gita* tends to impress upon the individual two things: first, selflessness, and second, action; the studying of and living by it will arouse the belief that there is but one Spirit and not several, that we cannot live for ourselves alone, but must come to realize that there is no such thing as separateness, and no possibility of escaping from the collective karma of the race to which one belongs, and then, that we must think and act in accordance with such belief.

The poem is held in the highest esteem by all sects in Hindustan except the Mohammedan and Christian. It has been translated into many languages, both Asiatic and European; it is being read today . . . in every part of the world. To those and to all others who truly love their fellowmen, and who aspire to learn and

teach the science of devotion, this edition of the *Bhagavad-Gita* is offered.

WILLIAM Q. JUDGE

New York, October, 1890

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Chapter I

THE DESPONDENCY OF ARJUNA

OM!

DHRITARASHTRA:

Tell me, O Sanjaya, what the people of my own party and those of Pandu, who are assembled at Kurukshetra resolved upon war, have been doing. (1)

SANJAYA:

King Duryodhana, having just beheld the army of the Pandus drawn up in battle array, went to his preceptor and spoke these words:

"Behold! O Master, the mighty army of the sons of Pandu drawn up by thy pupil, the clever son of Drupada. In it are warriors with great bows, equal to Bhima and Arjuna in battle, namely, Yuyudhana, and Virata, and Drupada on his great car; Dhrishtaketu, Chekitana, and the valiant king of Kasi, and Purujit, and Kuntibhoja, with Saibya, chief of men; Yudhamanyu the strong, and Uttamauja the brave; the son of Subhadra, and all the sons of Draupadi, too, in their huge chariots. Be acquainted also with the names of those of our party who are the most distinguished. I will mention a few of those who are amongst my generals, by way of example. There is thyself, my Preceptor, and Bhishma, Karna, and Kripa, the conqueror in battle, and Asvatthama, and Vikarna, and the son of Somadatta, with others in vast numbers, who for my service risk their life. They are all of them practiced in the use of arms, armed with divers weapons, and experienced in every mode of fight. This army of ours, which

is commanded by Bhishma, is not sufficient, while their forces, led by Bhima, are sufficient. Let all the generals, according to their respective divisions, stand at their posts, and one and all resolve Bhishma to support."

The ancient chief, brother of the grandsire of the Kurus, then, to raise the spirits of the Kuru chief, blew his shell, sounding like the lion's roar; and instantly innumerable shells and other warlike instruments were sounded on all sides, so that the clangor was excessive. At this time Krishna and Arjuna, standing in a splendid chariot drawn by white horses, also sounded their shells, which were of celestial form: the name of the one which Krishna blew was Panchajanya, and that of Arjuna was called Devadatta — "the gift of the Gods." Bhima, of terrific power, blew his capacious shell, Paundra; and Yudhishtira, the royal son of Kunti, sounded Ananta-Vijaya; Nakula and Sahadeva blew their shells also, the one called Sughosha, the other Manipushpaka. The prince of Kasi, of the mighty bow; Sikhandi, Dhrishtadyumna, Virata, Satyaki, of invincible arm; Drupada and the sons of his royal daughter; Krishna, with the son of Subhadra, and all the other chiefs and nobles, blew also their respective shells, so that their shrill-sounding voices pierced the hearts of the Kurus and re-echoed with a dreadful noise from heaven to earth.

Then Arjuna, whose crest was Hanuman, perceiving that the sons of Dhritarashtra stood ready to begin the fight, and that the flying of arrows had commenced, having raised his bow, addressed these words to Krishna:

ARJUNA:

"I pray thee, Krishna, cause my chariot to be placed between the two armies, that I may behold who are the men that stand ready, anxious to commence the battle; with whom it is I am to fight in this ready field; and who they are that are here assembled to

support the evil-minded son of Dhritarashtra in the battle."

SANJAYA:

Krishna being thus addressed by Arjuna, drove the chariot, and, having caused it to halt in the space between the two armies, bade Arjuna cast his eyes towards the ranks of the Kurus, and behold where stood the aged Bhishma, and Drona, with all the chief nobles of their party. Standing there Arjuna surveyed both the armies, and beheld, on either side, grandsires, uncles, cousins, tutors, sons, and brothers, near relations, or bosom friends; and when he had gazed for awhile and beheld all his kith and kin drawn up in battle array, he was moved by extreme pity, and, filled with despondency, he thus in sadness spoke:

ARJUNA:

"Now, O Krishna, that I have beheld my kindred thus standing anxious for the fight, my members fail me, my countenance withereth, the hair standeth on end upon my body, and all my frame trembleth with horror! Even Gandiva, my bow, slips from my hand, and my skin is parched and dried up. I am not able to stand; for my mind, as it were, whirlleth round, and I behold on all sides adverse omens. When I shall have destroyed my kindred, shall I longer look for happiness? I wish not for victory, Krishna; I want not pleasure; for what are dominion and the enjoyments of life, or even life itself, when those for whom dominion, pleasure, and enjoyment were to be coveted have abandoned life and fortune, and stand here in the field ready for the battle? Tutors, sons and fathers, grandsires and grandsons, uncles and nephews, cousins, kindred, and friends! Although they would kill me, I wish not to fight them: no, not even for the dominion of the three regions of the universe, much less for this little earth! Having killed the sons of Dhritarashtra, what pleasure, O thou who art prayed to by mortals, can we enjoy? Should we destroy them,

tyrants though they are, sin would take refuge with us. It therefore behooveth us not to kill such near relations as these. How, O Krishna, can we be happy hereafter, when we have been the murderers of our race? What if they, whose minds are depraved by the lust of power, see no sin in the extirpation of their race, no crime in the murder of their friends, is that a reason why we should not resolve to turn away from such a crime — we who abhor the sin of extirpating our own kindred? On the destruction of a tribe the ancient virtue of the tribe and family is lost; with the loss of virtue, vice and impiety overwhelm the whole of a race. From the influence of impiety the females of a family grow vicious; and from women that are become vicious are born the spurious caste called Varna-Sankara. Corruption of caste is a gate of hell, both for these destroyers of a tribe and for those who survive; and their forefathers, being deprived of the ceremonies of cakes and water offered to their manes, sink into the infernal regions. By the crimes of the destroyers of a tribe and by those who cause confusion of caste, the family virtue and the virtue of a whole tribe are forever done away with; and we have read in sacred writ, O Krishna, that a sojourn in hell awaits those mortals whose generation hath lost its virtue. Woe is me! What a great crime are we prepared to commit! Alas! that from the desire for sovereignty and pleasure we stand here ready to slay our own kin! I would rather patiently suffer that the sons of Dhritarashtra, with their weapons in their hands, should come upon me, and, unopposed, kill me unresisting in the field."

SANJAYA:

When Arjuna had ceased to speak, he sat down in the chariot between the two armies; and, having put away his bow and arrows, his heart was overwhelmed with despondency.

Thus in the *Upanishads*, called the holy *Bhagavad-Gita*, in the

science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the First Chapter, by name --

THE DESPONDENCY OF ARJUNA.

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FOOTNOTE:

1. The key for reading the *Bhagavad-Gita* is to be applied to this first verse. If we look at the poem in its application to a man aspiring to devotion, then the battlefield is the body acquired by Karma and Tanha, thirst for life, while the speaker and his party represent the lower self, and the Pandus the Higher Self. But if this and succeeding chapters are regarded from the cosmic standpoint, then the speaker, the plain of Kuru, the generals described in the first chapter, together with their instruments and weapons, are beings, forces, planes, and planets in the universe, of which it would be out of place to treat here. As applied to ourselves, the poem is of greater interest and importance: it opens with the battle inevitable between the higher and lower natures of man, and then, from this viewpoint, Krishna — who is the Higher Self — in order to encourage Arjuna, becomes his instructor in philosophy and right ethics, so that he may be fit to fight and conquer. ([return to text](#))

Chapter II

DEVOTION THROUGH APPLICATION TO THE SPECULATIVE DOCTRINES

SANJAYA:

Krishna, beholding him thus influenced by compunction, his eyes overflowing with a flood of tears, and his heart oppressed with deep affliction, addressed him in the following words:

KRISHNA:

"Whence, O Arjuna, cometh upon thee this dejection in matters of difficulty, so unworthy of the honorable, and leading neither to heaven nor to glory? It is disgraceful, contrary to duty, and the foundation of dishonor. Yield not thus to unmanliness, for it ill-becometh one like thee. Abandon, O tormenter of thy foes, this despicable weakness of thy heart, and stand up."

ARJUNA:

"How, O slayer of Madhu, shall I with my shafts contend in battle against such as Bhishma and Drona, who of all men are most worthy of my respect? For it were better to beg my bread about the world than be the murderer of my preceptors, to whom such awful reverence is due. Were I to destroy such friends as these, I should partake of possessions, wealth, and pleasures polluted with their blood. Nor can we tell whether it would be better that we should defeat them, or they us. For those drawn up, angrily confronting us — and after whose death, should they perish by my hand, I would not wish to live — are the sons and people of Dhritarashtra. As I am of a disposition which is affected by compassion and the fear of doing wrong, I ask thee which is it

better to do. Tell me that distinctly! I am thy disciple; wherefore instruct in my duty me who am under thy tuition; for my understanding is confounded by the dictates of my duty, and I see nothing that may assuage the grief which drieth up my faculties, although I were to obtain a kingdom without a rival upon earth, or dominion over the hosts of heaven."

SANJAYA:

Arjuna having thus spoken to Krishna, became silent, saying: "I shall not fight, O Govinda." Krishna, tenderly smiling, addressed these words to the prince thus standing downcast between the two armies:

KRISHNA:

"Thou grievest for those that may not be lamented, whilst thy sentiments are those of the expounders of the letter of the law. Those who are wise in spiritual things grieve neither for the dead nor for the living. I myself never was not, nor thou, nor all the princes of the earth; nor shall we ever hereafter cease to be. As the lord of this mortal frame experienceth therein infancy, youth, and old age, so in future incarnations will it meet the same. One who is confirmed in this belief is not disturbed by anything that may come to pass. The senses, moving toward their appropriate objects, are producers of heat and cold, pleasure and pain, which come and go and are brief and changeable; these do thou endure, O son of Bharata! For the wise man, whom these disturb not and to whom pain and pleasure are the same, is fitted for immortality. There is no existence for that which does not exist, nor is there any non-existence for what exists. By those who see the truth and look into the principles of things, the ultimate characteristic of these both is seen. Learn that He by whom all things were formed is incorruptible, and that no one is able to effect the destruction of IT which is inexhaustible. These finite bodies, which envelop the

souls inhabiting them, are said to belong to Him, the eternal, the indestructible, unprovable Spirit, who is in the body: wherefore, O Arjuna, resolve to fight. The man who believeth that it is this Spirit which killeth, and he who thinketh that it may be destroyed, are both alike deceived; for it neither killeth nor is it killed. It is not a thing of which a man may say, 'It hath been, it is about to be, or is to be hereafter'; for it is without birth and meeteth not death; it is ancient, constant, and eternal, and is not slain when this its mortal frame is destroyed. How can the man who believeth that it is incorruptible, eternal, inexhaustible, and without birth, think that it can either kill or cause to be killed? As a man throweth away old garments and putteth on new, even so the dweller in the body, having quitted its old mortal frames, entereth into others which are new. The weapon divideth it not, the fire burneth it not, the water corrupteth it not, the wind drieth it not away; for it is indivisible, inconsumable, incorruptible, and is not to be dried away: it is eternal, universal, permanent, immovable; it is invisible, inconceivable, and unalterable; therefore, knowing it to be thus, thou shouldst not grieve. But whether thou believest it to be of eternal birth and duration, or that it dieth with the body, still thou hast no cause to lament it. Death is certain to all things which are born, and rebirth to all mortals; wherefore it doth not behoove thee to grieve about the inevitable. The antenatal state of beings is unknown; the middle state is evident; and their state after death is not to be discovered. What in this is there to lament? Some regard the indwelling spirit as a wonder, whilst some speak and others hear of it with astonishment; but no one realizes it, although he may have heard it described. This spirit can never be destroyed in the mortal frame which it inhabiteth, hence it is unworthy for thee to be troubled for all these mortals. Cast but thine eyes towards the duties of thy particular tribe, and it will ill become thee to tremble. A soldier of the Kshatriya (1) tribe hath

no duty superior to lawful war, and just to thy wish the door of heaven is found open before thee, through this glorious unsought fight which only fortune's favored soldiers may obtain. But if thou wilt not perform the duty of thy calling and fight out the field, thou wilt abandon thy natural duty and thy honor, and be guilty of a crime. Mankind will speak of thy ill fame as infinite, and for one who hath been respected in the world ill fame is worse than death. The generals of the armies will think that thy retirement from the field arose from fear, and even amongst those by whom thou wert wont to be thought great of soul thou shalt become despicable. Thine enemies will speak of thee in words which are unworthy to be spoken, depreciating thy courage and abilities; what can be more dreadful than this! If thou art slain thou shalt attain heaven; if victorious, the world shall be thy reward; wherefore, son of Kunti, arise with determination fixed for the battle. Make pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, the same to thee, and then prepare for battle, for thus and thus alone shalt thou in action still be free from sin.

"Thus before thee has been set the opinion in accordance with the Sankhya doctrine, speculatively; now hear what it is in the practical, devotional one, by means of which, if fully imbued therewith, thou shalt forever burst the bonds of Karma and rise above them. In this system of Yoga no effort is wasted, nor are there any evil consequences, and even a little of this practice delivereth a man from great risk. In this path there is only one single object, and this of a steady, constant nature; but widely-branched is the faith and infinite are the objects of those who follow not this system.

"The unwise, delighting in the controversies of the Vedas, tainted with worldly lusts, and preferring a transient enjoyment of heaven to eternal absorption, whilst they declare there is no other reward, pronounce, for the attainment of worldly riches and

enjoyments, flowery sentences which promise rewards in future births for present action, ordaining also many special ceremonies the fruit of which is merit leading to power and objects of enjoyment. But those who thus desire riches and enjoyment have no certainty of soul and least hold on meditation. The subject of the Vedas is the assemblage of the three qualities. Be thou free from these qualities, O Arjuna! Be free from the 'pairs of opposites' and constant in the quality of Sattva, free from worldly anxiety and the desire to preserve present possessions, self-centered and uncontrolled by objects of mind or sense. As many benefits as there are in a tank stretching free on all sides, so many are there for a truth-realizing Brahman in all the Vedic rites.

"Let, then, the motive for action be in the action itself, and not in the event. Do not be incited to actions by the hope of their reward, nor let thy life be spent in inaction. Firmly persisting, in Yoga, perform thy duty, O Dhananjaya (2), and laying aside all desire for any benefit to thyself from action, make the event equal to thee, whether it be success or failure. Equal-mindedness is called Yoga.

"Yet the performance of works is by far inferior to mental devotion, O despiser of wealth. Seek an asylum, then, in this mental devotion, which is knowledge; for the miserable and unhappy are those whose impulse to action is found in its reward. But he who by means of Yoga is mentally devoted dismisses alike successful and unsuccessful results, being beyond them; Yoga is skill in the performance of actions: therefore do thou aspire to this devotion. For those who are thus united to knowledge and devoted, who have renounced all reward for their actions, meet no rebirth in this life, and go to that eternal blissful abode which is free from all disease and untouched by troubles.

"When thy heart shall have worked through the snares of

delusion, then thou wilt attain to high indifference as to those doctrines which are already taught or which are yet to be taught. When thy mind once liberated from the Vedas shall be fixed immovably in contemplation, then shalt thou attain to devotion."

ARJUNA:

"What, O Kesava (3), is the description of that wise and devoted man who is fixed in contemplation and confirmed in spiritual knowledge? What may such a sage declare? Where may he dwell? Does he move and act like other men?"

KRISHNA:

"A man is said to be confirmed in spiritual knowledge when he forsaketh every desire which entereth into his heart, and of himself is happy and content in the Self through the Self. His mind is undisturbed in adversity; he is happy and contented in prosperity, and he is a stranger to anxiety, fear, and anger. Such a man is called a Muni (4). When in every condition he receives each event, whether favorable or unfavorable, with an equal mind which neither likes nor dislikes, his wisdom is established, and, having met good or evil, neither rejoiceth at the one nor is cast down by the other. He is confirmed in spiritual knowledge, when, like the tortoise, he can draw in all his senses and restrain them from their wonted purposes. The hungry man loseth sight of every other object but the gratification of his appetite, and when he is become acquainted with the Supreme, he loseth all taste for objects of whatever kind. The tumultuous senses and organs hurry away by force the heart even of the wise man who striveth after perfection. Let a man, restraining all these, remain in devotion at rest in me, his true self; for he who hath his senses and organs in control possesses spiritual knowledge.

"He who attendeth to the inclinations of the senses, in them hath

a concern; from this concern is created passion, from passion anger, from anger is produced delusion, from delusion a loss of the memory, from the loss of memory loss of discrimination, and from loss of discrimination loss of all! But he who, free from attachment or repulsion for objects, experienceth them through the senses and organs, with his heart obedient to his will, attains to tranquillity of thought. And this tranquil state attained, therefrom shall soon result a separation from all troubles; and his mind being thus at ease, fixed upon one object, it embraceth wisdom from all sides. The man whose heart and mind are not at rest is without wisdom or the power of contemplation; who doth not practice reflection, hath no calm; and how can a man without calm obtain happiness? The uncontrolled heart, following the dictates of the moving passions, snatcheth away his spiritual knowledge, as the storm the bark upon the raging ocean. Therefore, O great-armed one, he is possessed of spiritual knowledge whose senses are withheld from objects of sense. What is night to those who are unenlightened is as day to his gaze; what seems as day is known to him as night, the night of ignorance. Such is the self-governed Sage!

"The man whose desires enter his heart, as waters run into the unswelling passive ocean, which, though ever full, yet does not quit its bed, obtaineth happiness; not he who lusteth in his lusts.

"The man who, having abandoned all desires, acts without covetousness, selfishness, or pride, deeming himself neither actor nor possessor, attains to rest. This, O son of Pritha, is dependence upon the Supreme Spirit, and he who possesseth it goeth no more astray; having obtained it, if therein established at the hour of death, he passeth on to Nirvana in the Supreme."

Thus in the *Upanishads*, called the holy *Bhagavad-Gita*, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the

colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Second Chapter, by name --

DEVOTION THROUGH APPLICATION TO THE SANKHYA DOCTRINE.

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FOOTNOTES:

1. Kshatriya is the second or military caste of India. ([return to text](#))
2. Dhananijaya — despiser of wealth. ([return to text](#))
3. Kesava — he whose rays manifest themselves as omniscience — a name of Krishna. ([return to text](#))
4. Muni — a wise man. ([return to text](#))

Chapter III

DEVOTION THROUGH THE RIGHT PERFORMANCE OF ACTION

ARJUNA:

"If according to thy opinion, O giver of all that men ask, knowledge is superior to the practice of deeds, why then dost thou urge me to engage in an undertaking so dreadful as this? Thou, as it were with doubtful speech, confusest my reason; wherefore choose one method amongst them by which I may obtain happiness and explain it unto me."

KRISHNA:

"It hath before been declared by me, O sinless one, that in this world there are two modes of devotion: that of those who follow the Sankhya, or speculative science, which is the exercise of reason in contemplation; and that of the followers of the Yoga school, which is devotion in the performance of action.

"A man enjoyeth not freedom from action from the non-commencement of that which he hath to do; nor doth he obtain happiness from a total abandonment of action. No one ever resteth a moment inactive. Every man is involuntarily urged to act by the qualities which spring from nature. He who remains inert, restraining the senses and organs, yet pondering with his heart upon objects of sense, is called a false pietist of bewildered soul. But he who having subdued all his passions performeth with his active faculties all the duties of life, unconcerned as to their result, is to be esteemed. Do thou perform the proper actions: action is superior to inaction. The journey of thy mortal frame cannot be accomplished by inaction. All actions performed other

than as sacrifice unto God make the actor bound by action. Abandon, then, O son of Kunti, all selfish motives, and in action perform thy duty for him alone. When in ancient times the lord of creatures had formed mankind, and at the same time appointed his worship, he spoke and said: 'With this worship, pray for increase, and let it be for you Kamadhuk, the cow of plenty, on which ye shall depend for the accomplishment of all your wishes. With this nourish the Gods, that the Gods may nourish you; thus mutually nourishing ye shall obtain the highest felicity. The Gods being nourished by worship with sacrifice, will grant you the enjoyment of your wishes. He who enjoyeth what hath been given unto him by them, and offereth not a portion unto them, is even as a thief. But those who eat not but what is left of the offerings shall be purified of all their transgressions. Those who dress their meat but for themselves eat the bread of sin, being themselves sin incarnate. Beings are nourished by food, food is produced by rain, rain comes from sacrifice, and sacrifice is performed by action. Know that action comes from the Supreme Spirit who is one; wherefore the all-pervading Spirit is at all times present in the sacrifice.

"He who, sinfully delighting in the gratification of his passions, doth not cause this wheel thus already set in motion to continue revolving, liveth in vain, O son of Pritha.

"But the man who only taketh delight in the Self within, is satisfied with that and content with that alone, hath no selfish interest in action. He hath no interest either in that which is done or that which is not done; and there is not, in all things which have been created, any object on which he may place dependence. Therefore perform thou that which thou hast to do, at all times unmindful of the event; for the man who doeth that which he hath to do, without attachment to the result, obtaineth the Supreme. Even by action Janaka and others attained

perfection. Even if the good of mankind only is considered by thee, the performance of thy duty will be plain; for whatever is practiced by the most excellent men, that is also practiced by others. The world follows whatever example they set. There is nothing, O son of Pritha, in the three regions of the universe which it is necessary for me to perform, nor anything possible to obtain which I have not obtained; and yet I am constantly in action. If I were not indefatigable in action, all men would presently follow my example, O son of Pritha. If I did not perform actions these creatures would perish; I should be the cause of confusion of castes, and should have slain all these creatures. O son of Bharata, as the ignorant perform the duties of life from the hope of reward, so the wise man, from the wish to bring the world to duty and benefit mankind, should perform his actions without motives of interest. He should not create confusion in the understandings of the ignorant, who are inclined to outward works, but by being himself engaged in action should cause them to act also. All actions are effected by the qualities of nature. The man deluded by ignorance thinks, 'I am the actor.' But he, O strong-armed one! who is acquainted with the nature of the two distinctions of cause and effect, knowing that the qualities act only in the qualities, and that the Self is distinct from them, is not attached in action.

"Those who have not this knowledge are interested in the actions thus brought about by the qualities; and he who is perfectly enlightened should not unsettle those whose discrimination is weak and knowledge incomplete, nor cause them to relax from their duty.

"Throwing every deed on me, and with thy meditation fixed upon the Higher Self, resolve to fight, without expectation, devoid of egotism and free from anguish.

"Those men who constantly follow this my doctrine without reviling it, and with a firm faith, shall be emancipated even by actions; but they who revile it and do not follow it are bewildered in regard to all knowledge, and perish, being devoid of discrimination.

"But the wise man also seeketh for that which is homogeneous with his own nature. All creatures act according to their natures; what, then, will restraint effect? In every purpose of the senses are fixed affection and dislike. A wise man should not fall in the power of these two passions, for they are the enemies of man. It is better to do one's own duty, even though it be devoid of excellence, than to perform another's duty well. It is better to perish in the performance of one's own duty; the duty of another is full of danger."

ARJUNA:

"By what, O descendant of Vrishni, is man propelled to commit offenses; seemingly against his will and as if constrained by some secret force?"

KRISHNA:

"It is lust which instigates him. It is passion, sprung from the quality of *rajas* (1); insatiable, and full of sin. Know this to be the enemy of man on earth. As the flame is surrounded by smoke, and a mirror by rust (2), and as the womb envelops the foetus, so is the universe surrounded by this passion. By this — the constant enemy of the wise man, formed from desire which rageth like fire and is never to be appeased — is discriminative knowledge surrounded. Its empire is over the senses and organs, the thinking principle and the discriminating faculty also; by means of these it cloudeth discrimination and deludeth the Lord of the body. Therefore, O best of the descendants of Bharata, at the very outset

restraining thy senses, thou shouldst conquer this sin which is the destroyer of knowledge and of spiritual discernment.

"The senses and organs are esteemed great, but the thinking self is greater than they. The discriminating principle (3) is greater than the thinking self, and that which is greater than the discriminating principle is He. (4) Thus knowing what is greater than the discriminating principle and strengthening the lower by the Higher Self, do thou of mighty arms slay this foe which is formed from desire and is difficult to seize."

Thus in the *Upanishads*, called the holy *Bhagavad-Gita*, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Third Chapter, by name --

DEVOTION THROUGH THE RIGHT PERFORMANCE OF ACTION.

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FOOTNOTES:

1. *Rajas* is one of the three great qualities; the driving power of nature; active and bad. ([return to text](#))
2. The burnished metal mirrors are here referred to. ([return to text](#))
3. The discriminating principle is *Buddhi*. ([return to text](#))
4. "He," the Supreme Spirit, the true Ego. ([return to text](#))

Chapter IV

DEVOTION THROUGH SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE

KRISHNA:

"This exhaustless doctrine of Yoga I formerly taught unto Vivasvat (1); Vivasvat communicated it to Manu (2) and Manu made it known unto Ikshvaku (3); and being thus transmitted from one unto another it was studied by the Rajarshis (4), until at length in the course of time the mighty art was lost, O harasser of thy foes! It is even the same exhaustless, secret, eternal doctrine I have this day communicated unto thee because thou art my devotee and my friend."

ARJUNA:

"Seeing that thy birth is posterior to the life of Ikshvaku, how am I to understand that thou wert in the beginning the teacher of this doctrine?"

KRISHNA:

"Both I and thou have passed through many births, O harasser of thy foes! Mine are known unto me, but thou knowest not of thine.

"Even though myself unborn, of changeless essence, and the lord of all existence, yet in presiding over nature — which is mine — I am born but through my own *maya* (5), the mystic power of self-ideation, the eternal thought in the eternal mind. (6) I produce myself among creatures, O son of Bharata, whenever there is a decline of virtue and an insurrection of vice and injustice in the world; and thus I incarnate from age to age for the preservation of the just, the destruction of the wicked, and the establishment of

righteousness. Whoever, O Arjuna, knoweth my divine birth and actions to be even so doth not upon quitting his mortal frame enter into another, for he entereth into me. Many who were free from craving, fear, and anger, filled with my spirit, and who depended upon me, having been purified by the ascetic fire of knowledge, have entered into my being. In whatever way men approach me, in that way do I assist them; but whatever the path taken by mankind, that path is mine, O son of Pritha. Those who wish for success to their works in this life sacrifice to the gods; and in this world success from their actions soon cometh to pass.

"Mankind was created by me of four castes distinct in their principles and in their duties according to the natural distribution of the actions and qualities. (7) Know me, then, although changeless and not acting, to be the author of this. Actions affect me not, nor have I any expectations from the fruits of actions. He who comprehendeth me to be thus is not held by the bonds of action to rebirth. The ancients who longed for eternal salvation, having discovered this, still performed works. Wherefore perform thou works even as they were performed by the ancients in former times.

"Even sages have been deluded as to what is action and what inaction; therefore I shall explain to thee what is action by a knowledge of which thou shalt be liberated from evil. One must learn well what is action to be performed, what is not to be, and what is inaction. The path of action is obscure. That man who sees inaction in action and action in inaction is wise among men; he is a true devotee and a perfect performer of all action.

"Those who have spiritual discrimination call him wise whose undertakings are all free from desire, for his actions are consumed in the fire of knowledge. He abandoneth the desire to see a reward for his actions, is free, contented, and upon nothing

dependeth, and although engaged in action he really doeth nothing; he is not solicitous of results, with mind and body subdued and being above enjoyment from objects, doing with the body alone the acts of the body, he does not subject himself to rebirth. He is contented with whatever he receives fortuitously, is free from the influence of the 'pairs of opposites' and from envy, the same in success and failure; even though he act he is not bound by the bonds of action. All the actions of such a man who is free from self-interest, who is devoted, with heart set upon spiritual knowledge, and whose acts are sacrifices for the sake of the Supreme, are dissolved and left without effect on him. The Supreme Spirit is the act of offering, the Supreme Spirit is the sacrificial butter offered in the fire which is the Supreme Spirit, and unto the Supreme Spirit goeth he who maketh the Supreme Spirit the object of his meditation in performing his actions.

"Some devotees give sacrifice to the Gods, while others, lighting the subtler fire of the Supreme Spirit, offer up themselves; still others make sacrifice with the senses, beginning with hearing, in the fire of self-restraint, and some give up all sense-delighting sounds, and others again, illuminated by spiritual knowledge, sacrifice all the functions of the senses and vitality in the fire of devotion through self-constraint. There are also those who perform sacrifice by wealth given in alms, by mortification, by devotion, and by silent study. Some sacrifice the up-breathing in the down-breathing and the down-breathing in the up-breathing by blocking up the channels of inspiration and expiration; and others by stopping the movements of both the life breaths; still others by abstaining from food sacrifice life in their life.

"All these different kinds of worshipers are by their sacrifices purified from their sins; but they who partake of the perfection of spiritual knowledge arising from such sacrifices pass into the eternal Supreme Spirit. But for him who maketh no sacrifices

there is no part nor lot in this world; how then shall he share in the other, O best of the Kurus?

"All these sacrifices of so many kinds are displayed in the sight of God; know that they all spring from action, and, comprehending this, thou shalt obtain an eternal release. O harasser of thy foes, the sacrifice through spiritual knowledge is superior to sacrifice made with material things; every action without exception is comprehended in spiritual knowledge, O son of Pritha. Seek this wisdom by doing service, by strong search, by questions, and by humility; the wise who see the truth will communicate it unto thee, and knowing which thou shalt never again fall into error, O son of Bharata. By this knowledge thou shalt see all things and creatures whatsoever in thyself and then in me. Even if thou wert the greatest of all sinners, thou shalt be able to cross over all sins in the bark of spiritual knowledge. As the natural fire, O Arjuna, reduceth fuel to ashes, so does the fire of knowledge reduce all actions to ashes. There is no purifier in this world to be compared to spiritual knowledge; and he who is perfected in devotion findeth spiritual knowledge springing up spontaneously in himself in the progress of time. The man who restraineth the senses and organs and hath faith obtaineth spiritual knowledge, and having obtained it he soon reacheth supreme tranquillity; but the ignorant, those full of doubt and without faith, are lost. The man of doubtful mind hath no happiness either in this world or in the next or in any other. No actions bind that man who through spiritual discrimination hath renounced action and cut asunder all doubt by knowledge, O despiser of wealth. Wherefore, O son of Bharata, having cut asunder with the sword of spiritual knowledge this doubt which existeth in thy heart, engage in the performance of action. Arise!"

Thus in the *Upanishads*, called the holy *Bhagavad-Gita*, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the

colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Fourth Chapter, by name --

DEVOTION THROUGH SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE.

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FOOTNOTES:

1. *Vivasvat*, the sun, first manifestation of divine wisdom at the beginning of evolution. ([return to text](#))
2. *Manu*, generic title for the reigning spirit of the sensuous universe; the present one being Vaivasvata Manu. ([return to text](#))
3. *Ikshvaku*, the founder of the Indian solar dynasty. ([return to text](#))
4. *Rajarshis*, Royal Sages. ([return to text](#))
5. *Maya*, Illusion. ([return to text](#))
6. See also the *Varaha Upanishad* of *Krishna Yajurveda*, viz: "The whole of the universe is evolved through Sankalpa [thought or ideation] alone; it is only through Sankalpa that the universe retains its appearance." ([return to text](#))
7. This refers to the four great castes of India: the Brahmin, the soldier, the merchant, and the servant. Such division is plainly evident in every country, even when not named as such. ([return to text](#))

Chapter V

DEVOTION BY MEANS OF RENUNCIATION OF ACTION

ARJUNA:

"At one time, O Krishna, thou praisest the renunciation of action, and yet again its right performance. Tell me with certainty which of the two is better."

KRISHNA:

"Renunciation of action and devotion through action are both means of final emancipation, but of these two devotion through action is better than renunciation. He is considered to be an ascetic (1) who seeks nothing and nothing rejects, being free from the influence of the 'pairs of opposites,' (2) O thou of mighty arms; without trouble he is released from the bonds forged by action. Children only and not the wise speak of renunciation of action (3) and of right performance of action (4) as being different. He who perfectly practices the one receives the fruits of both, and the place (5) which is gained by the renouncer of action is also attained by him who is devoted in action. That man seeth with clear sight who seeth that the Sankhya and the Yoga doctrines are identical. But to attain to true renunciation of action without devotion through action is difficult, O thou of mighty arms; while the devotee who is engaged in the right practice of his duties approacheth the Supreme Spirit in no long time. The man of purified heart, having his body fully controlled, his senses restrained, and for whom the only self is the Self of all creatures, is not tainted although performing actions. The devotee who knows the divine truth thinketh 'I am doing nothing' in seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving, sleeping, breathing;

even when speaking, letting go or taking, opening or closing his eyes, he sayeth, 'the senses and organs move by natural impulse to their appropriate objects.' Whoever in acting dedicates his actions to the Supreme Spirit and puts aside all selfish interest in their result is untouched by sin, even as the leaf of the lotus is unaffected by the waters. The truly devoted, for the purification of the heart, perform actions with their bodies, their minds, their understanding, and their senses, putting away all self-interest. The man who is devoted and not attached to the fruit of his actions obtains tranquillity; whilst he who through desire has attachment for the fruit of action is bound down thereby. (6) The self-restrained sage having with his heart renounced all actions, dwells at rest in the 'nine gate city of his abode,' (7) neither acting nor causing to act. (8)

"The Lord of the world creates neither the faculty of acting, nor actions, nor the connection between action and its fruits; but nature prevaieth in these. The Lord receives no man's deeds, be they sinful or full of merit. (9) The truth is obscured by that which is not true, and therefore all creatures are led astray. But in those for whom knowledge of the true Self has dispersed ignorance, the Supreme, as if lighted by the sun, is revealed. Those whose souls are in the Spirit, whose asylum is in it, who are intent on it and purified by knowledge from all sins, go to that place from which there is no return.

"The illuminated sage regards with equal mind an illuminated, selfless Brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and even an outcaste who eats the flesh of dogs. Those who thus preserve an equal mind gain heaven even in this life, for the Supreme is free from sin and equal-minded; therefore they rest in the Supreme Spirit. The man who knoweth the Supreme Spirit, who is not deluded, and who is fixed on him, doth not rejoice at obtaining what is pleasant, nor grieve when meeting what is unpleasant. He whose

heart is not attached to objects of sense finds pleasure within himself, and, through devotion, united with the Supreme, enjoys imperishable bliss. For those enjoyments which arise through the contact of the senses with external objects are wombs of pain, since they have a beginning and an end; O son of Kunti, the wise man delighteth not in these. He who, while living in this world and before the liberation of the soul from the body, can resist the impulse arising from desire and anger is a devotee and blessed. The man who is happy within himself, who is illuminated within, is a devotee, and partaking of the nature of the Supreme Spirit, he is merged in it. Such illuminated sages whose sins are exhausted, who are free from delusion, who have their senses and organs under control, and devoted to the good of all creatures, obtain assimilation with the Supreme Spirit. (10) Assimilation with the Supreme Spirit is on both sides of death for those who are free from desire and anger, temperate, of thoughts restrained; and who are acquainted with the true Self.

"The anchorite who shutteth his placid soul away from all sense of touch, with gaze fixed between his brows; who maketh the breath to pass through both his nostrils with evenness alike in inspiration and expiration, whose senses and organs together with his heart and understanding are under control, and who hath set his heart upon liberation and is ever free from desire and anger, is emancipated from birth and death even in this life. Knowing that I, the great Lord of all worlds, am the enjoyer of all sacrifices and penances and the friend of all creatures, he shall obtain me and be blessed."

Thus in the *Upanishads*, called the holy *Bhagavad-Gita*, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Fifth Chapter, by name —

DEVOTION BY MEANS OF RENUNCIATION OF ACTION.

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FOOTNOTES:

1. That is, one who has really renounced. ([return to text](#))
2. That is, cold and heat, pleasure and pain, misery and happiness, etc. ([return to text](#))
3. Sankhya school. ([return to text](#))
4. Yoga school. ([return to text](#))
5. Nirvana, or emancipation. ([return to text](#))
6. This refers not only to the effect on the man now, in life, but also to the "binding to rebirth" which such action causes. ([return to text](#))
7. That is, the body as having nine openings through which impressions are received, viz: eyes, ears, mouth, nose, etc. ([return to text](#))
8. The Sage who has united himself to true consciousness remains in the body for the benefit of mankind. ([return to text](#))
9. In order to understand this clearly it is necessary to remember that in the Vedic philosophy it is held that all actions, whether they be good or bad, are brought about by the three great qualities — *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*— inherent in all throughout evolution. This is set forth at length in the 17th Chapter, and in

Chapter 14 the manner in which those qualities show themselves is fully given. ([return to text](#))

10. That is, direct knowledge of Self. ([return to text](#))

Chapter VI

DEVOTION BY MEANS OF SELF-RESTRAINT

KRISHNA:

"He who, unattached to the fruit of his actions, performeth such actions as should be done is both a renouncer (1) of action and a devotee (2) of right action; not he who liveth without kindling the sacrificial fire and without ceremonies. (3) Know, O son of Pandu, that what they call *Sannyasa* or a forsaking of action is the same as *Yoga* or the practice of devotion. No one without having previously renounced all intentions can be devoted. Action is said to be the means by which the wise man who is desirous of mounting to meditation may reach thereto; so cessation from action is said to be the means for him who hath reached to meditation. When he hath renounced all intentions and is devoid of attachment to action in regard to objects of sense, then he is called one who hath ascended to meditation. He should raise the self by the Self; let him not suffer the Self to be lowered; for Self is the friend of self, and, in like manner, self is its own enemy. (4) Self is the friend of the man who is self-conquered; so self like a foe hath enmity to him who is not self-conquered. The Self of the man who is self-subdued and free from desire and anger is intent on the Supreme Self in heat and cold, in pain and pleasure, in honor and ignominy. The man who hath spiritual knowledge and discernment, who standeth upon the pinnacle, and hath subdued the senses, to whom gold and stone are the same, is said to be devoted. And he is esteemed among all who, whether amongst his friends and companions, in the midst of enemies or those who stand aloof or remain neutral, with those who love and those who hate, and in the company of sinners or the righteous, is of equal

mind.

"He who has attained to meditation should constantly strive to stay at rest in the Supreme, remaining in solitude and seclusion, having his body and his thoughts under control, without possessions and free from hope. He should in an undefiled spot place his seat, firm, neither too high nor too low, and made of kusa grass which is covered with a skin and a cloth. (5) There, for the self's purification he should practice meditation with his mind fixed on one point, the modifications of the thinking principle controlled and the action of the senses and organs restrained. Keeping his body, head, and neck firm and erect, with mind determined, and gaze directed to the tip of his nose without looking in any direction, with heart at peace and free from fear, the Yogi should remain, settled in the vow of a Brahmachari, his thoughts controlled, and heart fixed on me. The devotee of controlled mind who thus always bringeth his heart to rest in the Supreme reacheth that tranquillity, the supreme assimilation with me.

"This divine discipline, Arjuna, is not to be attained by the man who eateth more than enough or too little, nor by him who hath a habit of sleeping much, nor by him who is given to over watching. The meditation which destroyeth pain is produced in him who is moderate in eating and in recreation, of moderate exertion in his actions, and regulated in sleeping and waking. When the man, so living, centers his heart in the true Self and is exempt from attachment to all desires, he is said to have attained to yoga. Of the sage of self-centered heart, at rest and free from attachment to desires, the simile is recorded, 'as a lamp which is sheltered from the wind flickereth not.' When regulated by the practice of yoga and at rest, seeing the self by the self, he is contented; when he becometh acquainted with that boundless bliss which is not connected with objects of the senses, and being where he is not

moved from the reality (6); having gained which he considereth no other superior to it, and in which, being fixed, he is not moved even by the greatest grief; know that this disconnection from union with pain is distinguished as yoga, spiritual union or devotion, which is to be striven after by a man with faith and steadfastly.

"When he hath abandoned every desire that ariseth from the imagination and subdued with the mind the senses and organs which impel to action in every direction, being possessed of patience, he by degrees finds rest; and, having fixed his mind at rest in the true Self, he should think of nothing else. To whatsoever object the inconstant mind goeth out he should subdue it, bring it back, and place it upon the Spirit. Supreme bliss surely cometh to the sage whose mind is thus at peace; whose passions and desires are thus subdued; who is thus in the true Self and free from sin. He who is thus devoted and free from sin obtaineth without hindrance the highest bliss — union with the Supreme Spirit. The man who is endued with this devotion and who seeth the unity of all things perceiveth the Supreme Soul in all things and all things in the Supreme Soul. He who seeth me in all things and all things in me looseneth not his hold on me and I forsake him not. And whosoever, believing in spiritual unity, worshipeth me who am in all things, dwelleth with me in whatsoever condition he may be. He, O Arjuna, who by the similitude found in himself seeth but one essence in all things, whether they be evil or good, is considered to be the most excellent devotee."

ARJUNA:

"O slayer of Madhu (7), on account of the restlessness of the mind, I do not perceive any possibility of steady continuance in this yoga of equanimity which thou hast declared. For indeed, O

Krishna, the mind is full of agitation, turbulent, strong, and obstinate. I believe the restraint of it to be as difficult as that of the wind."

KRISHNA:

"Without doubt, O thou of mighty arms, the mind is restless and hard to restrain; but it may be restrained, O son of Kunti, by practice and absence of desire. Yet in my opinion this divine discipline called yoga is very difficult for one who hath not his soul in his own control; yet it may be acquired through proper means and by one who is assiduous and controlleth his heart."

ARJUNA:

"What end, O Krishna, doth that man attain who, although having faith, hath not attained to perfection in his devotion because his unsubdued mind wandered from the discipline? Doth he, fallen from both (8), like a broken cloud without any support (9), become destroyed, O strong-armed one, being deluded in the path of the Supreme Spirit? Thou, Krishna, shouldst completely dispel this doubt for me, for there is none other to be found able to remove it."

KRISHNA:

"Such a man, O son of Pritha, doth not perish here or hereafter. For never to an evil place goeth one who doeth good. The man whose devotion has been broken off by death goeth to the regions of the righteous (10), where he dwells for an immensity of years and is then born again on earth in a pure and fortunate family (11); or even in a family of those who are spiritually illuminated. But such a rebirth into this life as this last is more difficult to obtain. Being thus born again he comes in contact with the knowledge which belonged to him in his former body, and from that time he struggles more diligently towards perfection, O son

of Kuru. For even unwittingly, by reason of that past practice, he is led and works on. Even if only a mere enquirer, he reaches beyond the word of the *Vedas*. But the devotee who, striving with all his might, obtaineth perfection because of efforts continued through many births, goeth to the supreme goal. The man of meditation as thus described is superior to the man of penance and to the man of learning and also to the man of action; wherefore, O Arjuna, resolve thou to become a man of meditation. But of all devotees he is considered by me as the most devoted who, with heart fixed on me, full of faith, worships me."

Thus in the *Upanishads*, called the holy *Bhagavad-Gita*, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Sixth Chapter, by name —

DEVOTION BY MEANS OF SELF-RESTRAINT.

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FOOTNOTES:

1. A Sannyasi. ([return to text](#))
2. A Yogi. ([return to text](#))
3. Those ceremonies prescribed by the Brahmanical law. ([return to text](#))
4. In this play upon "self" the Higher and the lower self are meant, in that the lower is the enemy of the Higher through its resistance to true development; and the lower self is at the same time the

enemy of its own best interests through its downward tendency. ([return to text](#))

5. These directions are for those hermits who have retired from the world. Many of the translators have variously construed the text; one reads that the devotee has "only skin and sheet to cover him and grass to lie upon"; another that "his goods are a cloth and deer-skin and kusa grass." "Those who know" say that this is a description of a magnetically arranged seat and that kusa grass is laid on the ground, the skin on the grass, and the cloth on the skin. Philological discussion will never decide the point. ([return to text](#))

6. "Reality," Nirvana, and also complete realization of the True and the disappearance of the illusion as to objects and separateness. ([return to text](#))

7. Madhu: a daitya or demon slain by Krishna, and representing the quality of passion in nature. ([return to text](#))

8. "From both" here means the good Karma resulting from good deeds and spiritual knowledge acquired through yoga, or heaven and emancipation. ([return to text](#))

9. "Without any support" refers to the support or sanction contained in the Brahmanical law in its promises to him who keeps it, for he who practices yoga is not abiding by the promises of the law, which are for those who obey that law and refrain from yoga. ([return to text](#))

10. That is, *Devachan*. ([return to text](#))

11. Madhusudana says this means in the family of a king or emperor. ([return to text](#))

Chapter VII

DEVOTION BY MEANS OF SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT

KRISHNA:

"Hear, O son of Pritha, how with heart fixed on me, practicing meditation and taking me as thy refuge, thou shalt know me completely. I will instruct thee fully in this knowledge and in its realization, which, having learned, there remains nothing else to be known.

"Among thousands of mortals a single one perhaps strives for perfection, and among those so striving perhaps a single one knows me as I am. Earth, water, fire, air, and akasa, Manas, Buddhi, and Ahankara is the eightfold division of my nature. It is inferior; know that my superior nature is different and is the knower; by it the universe is sustained; learn that the whole of creation springs from this too as from a womb; I am the cause, I am the production and the dissolution of the whole universe. There is none superior to me, O conqueror of wealth, and all things hang on me as precious gems upon a string. I am the taste in water, O son of Kunti, the light in the sun and moon, the mystic syllable OM in all the *Vedas*, sound in space, the masculine essence in men, the sweet smell in the earth, and the brightness in the fire. In all creatures I am the life, and the power of concentration in those whose minds are on the spirit. Know me, O son of Pritha, as the eternal seed of all creatures. I am the wisdom (1) of the wise and the strength of the strong. And I am the power of the strong who in action are free from desire and longing; in all creatures I am desire regulated by moral fitness. Know also that the dispositions arising from the three qualities, *sattva*, *rajas*, and

tamas, are from me; they are in me, but I am not in them. The whole world, being deluded by these dispositions which are born of the three qualities, knoweth not me distinct from them, supreme, imperishable. For this my divine illusive power, acting through the natural qualities, is difficult to surmount, and those only can surmount it who have recourse to me alone. The wicked among men, the deluded and the low-minded, deprived of spiritual perception by this illusion, and inclining toward demoniacal dispositions, do not have recourse to me.

"Four classes of men who work righteousness worship me, O Arjuna; those who are afflicted, the searchers for truth, those who desire possessions, and the wise, O son of Bharata. Of these the best is the one possessed of spiritual knowledge, who is always devoted to me. I am extremely dear to the wise man, and he is dear unto me. Excellent indeed are all these, but the spiritually wise is verily myself, because with heart at peace he is upon the road that leadeth to the highest path, which is even myself. After many births the spiritually wise findeth me as the Vasudeva who is all this, for such an one of great soul (2) is difficult to meet. Those who through diversity of desires are deprived of spiritual wisdom adopt particular rites subordinated to their own natures, and worship other Gods. In whatever form a devotee desires with faith to worship, it is I alone who inspire him with constancy therein, and depending on that faith he seeks the propitiation of that God, obtaining the object of his wishes as is ordained by me alone. But the reward of such short-sighted men is temporary. Those who worship the Gods go to the Gods, and those who worship me come unto me. The ignorant, being unacquainted with my supreme condition which is superior to all things and exempt from decay, believe me who am unmanifested to exist in a visible form. Enveloped by my magic illusion I am not visible to the world; therefore the world doth not recognize me the unborn

and exhaustless. I know, O Arjuna, all creatures that have been, that are present, as well as all that shall hereafter be, but no one knows me. At the time of birth, O son of Bharata, all beings fall into error by reason of the delusion of the opposites which springs from liking and disliking, O harasser of thy foes. But those men of righteous lives whose sins have ceased, being free from this delusion of the 'pairs of opposites,' firmly settled in faith, worship me. They who depend on me, and labor for deliverance from birth and death know Brahman, the whole Adhyatma, and all Karma. Those who rest in me, knowing me to be the Adhibhuta, the Adhidaiva, and the Adhiyajna, know me also at the time of death."

Thus in the *Upanishads*, called the holy *Bhagavad-Gita*, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Seventh Chapter, by name —

DEVOTION BY MEANS OF SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT.

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FOOTNOTES:

1. This means here the principle "Buddhi." ([return to text](#))
2. In the original the word is "mahatma." ([return to text](#))

Chapter VIII

DEVOTION TO THE OMNIPRESENT SPIRIT NAMED AS OM

ARJUNA:

"What is that Brahman, what is Adhyatma, and what, O best of men! is Karma? What also is Adhibhuta, and what Adhidaiva? Who too is Adhiyajna here, in this body, and how therein, O slayer of Madhu? Tell me also how men who are fixed in meditation are to know thee at the hour of death."

KRISHNA:

"Brahman the Supreme is the exhaustless. Adhyatma is the name of my being manifesting as the Individual Self. Karma is the emanation which causes the existence and reproduction of creatures. (1) Adhibhuta is the Supreme Spirit dwelling in all elemental nature through the mysterious power of nature's illusion. Adhidaiva is the Purusha, the Spiritual Person, and Adhiyajna is myself in this body, O best of embodied men. Whoever at the hour of death abandoneth the body, fixed in meditation upon me, without doubt goeth to me. Whoso in consequence of constant meditation on any particular form thinketh upon it when quitting his mortal shape, even to that doth he go, O son of Kuni. Therefore at all times meditate only on me and fight. Thy mind and Buddhi being placed on me alone, thou shalt without doubt come to me. The man whose heart abides in me alone, wandering to no other object, shall also by meditation on the Supreme Spirit go to it, O son of Pritha. Whosoever shall meditate upon the All-Wise which is without beginning, the Supreme Ruler, the smallest of the small, the Supporter of all, whose form is incomprehensible, bright as the sun beyond the

darkness; with mind undeviating, united to devotion, and by the power of meditation concentrated at the hour of death, with his vital powers placed between the eyebrows, attains to that Supreme Divine Spirit.

"I will now make known to thee that path which the learned in the *Vedas* call indestructible, into which enter those who are free from attachments, and is followed by those desirous of leading the life of a Brahmachari (2) laboring for salvation. He who closeth all the doors of his senses, imprisoneth his mind in his heart, fixeth his vital powers in his head, standing firm in meditation, repeating the monosyllable OM, and thus continues when he is quitting the body, goeth to the supreme goal. He who, with heart undiverted to any other object, meditates constantly and through the whole of life on me shall surely attain to me, O son of Pritha. Those great-souled ones who have attained to supreme perfection come unto me and no more incur rebirths rapidly revolving, which are mansions of pain and sorrow.

"All worlds up to that of Brahman are subject to rebirth again and again, but they, O son of Kunti, who reach to me have no rebirth. Those who are acquainted with day and night (3) know that the day of Brahma is a thousand revolutions of the yugas and that his night extendeth for a thousand more. At the coming on of that day all things issue forth from the unmanifested into manifestation, so on the approach of that night they merge again into the unmanifested. This collection of existing things, having thus come forth, is dissolved at the approach of the night, O son of Pritha; and now again on the coming of the day it emanates spontaneously. But there is that which upon the dissolution of all things else is not destroyed; it is indivisible, indestructible, and of another nature from the visible. That called the unmanifested and exhaustless is called the supreme goal, which having once attained they never more return — it is my supreme abode. This

Supreme, O son of Pritha, within whom all creatures are included and by whom all this is pervaded, may be attained by a devotion which is intent on him alone.

"I will now declare to thee, O best of the Bharatas, at what time yogis dying obtain freedom from or subjection to rebirth. Fire, light, day, the fortnight of the waxing moon, six months of the sun's northern course — going then and knowing the Supreme Spirit, men go to the Supreme. But those who depart in smoke, at night, during the fortnight of the waning moon, and while the sun is in the path of his southern journey, proceed for a while to the regions of the moon and again return to mortal birth. These two, *light* and *darkness*, are the world's eternal ways; by one a man goes not to return, by the other he cometh back again upon earth. No devotee, O son of Pritha, who knoweth these two paths is ever deluded; wherefore, O Arjuna, at all times be thou fixed in devotion. (4) The man of meditation who knoweth all this reaches beyond whatever rewards are promised in the *Vedas* or that result from sacrifices or austerities or from gifts of charity, and goeth to the supreme, the highest place."

Thus in the *Upanishads*, called the holy *Bhagavad-Gita*, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Eighth Chapter, by name —

DEVOTION TO THE OMNIPRESENT SPIRIT NAMED AS OM.

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FOOTNOTES:

1. Karma here is, so to say, the action of the Supreme which is seen in manifestation throughout the evolution of the objective worlds. ([return to text](#))
2. Brahmacharya vow is a vow to live a life of religious study and asceticism — "following Brahma." ([return to text](#))
3. This refers to those who have acquired knowledge of the ultimate divisions of time, a power which is ascribed to the perfect yogi in Patanjali's *Yoga Aphorisms*. ([return to text](#))
4. The paragraph up to here is thought by some European Sanskritists to be an interpolation, but that view is not held by all, nor is it accepted by the Hindus. ([return to text](#))

Chapter IX

DEVOTION BY MEANS OF THE KINGLY KNOWLEDGE AND THE KINGLY MYSTERY

KRISHNA:

"Unto thee who findest no fault I will now make known this most mysterious knowledge, coupled with a realization of it, which having known thou shalt be delivered from evil. This is the royal knowledge, the royal mystery, the most excellent purifier, clearly comprehensible, not opposed to sacred law, easy to perform, and inexhaustible. Those who are unbelievers in this truth, O harasser of thy foes, find me not, but revolving in rebirth return to this world, the mansion of death.

"All this universe is pervaded by me in my invisible form; all things exist in me, but I do not exist in them. Nor are all things in me; behold this my divine mystery: myself causing things to exist and supporting them all but dwelling not in them. Understand that all things are in me even as the mighty air which passes everywhere is in space. O son of Kunti, at the end of a kalpa all things return unto my nature, and then again at the beginning of another kalpa I cause them to evolve again. Taking control of my own nature I emanate again and again this whole assemblage of beings, without their will, by the power of the material essence. (1) These acts do not bind me, O conqueror of wealth, because I am as one who sitteth indifferent, uninterested in those works. By reason of my supervision nature produceth the animate and inanimate universe; it is through this cause, O son of Kunti, that the universe revolveth.

"The deluded despise me in human form, being unacquainted

with my real nature as Lord of all things. They are of vain hopes, deluded in action, in reason and in knowledge, inclining to demoniac and deceitful principles. (2) But those great of soul, partaking of the godlike nature, knowing me to be the imperishable principle of all things, worship me, diverted to nothing else. Fixed in unbroken vows they worship, everywhere proclaiming me and bowing down to me. Others with the sacrifice of knowledge in other ways worship me as indivisible, as separable, as the Spirit of the universe. I am the sacrifice and sacrificial rite; I am the libation offered to ancestors, and the spices; I am the sacred formula and the fire; I am the food and the sacrificial butter; I am the father and the mother of this universe, the grandsire and the preserver; I am the Holy One, the object of knowledge, the mystic purifying syllable OM, the *Rik*, the *Sama*, the *Yajur*, and all the *Vedas*. I am the goal, the Comforter, the Lord, the Witness, the resting-place, the asylum and the Friend; I am the origin and the dissolution, the receptacle, the storehouse, and the eternal seed. I cause light and heat and rain; I now draw in and now let forth; I am death and immortality; I am the cause unseen and the visible effect. Those enlightened in the three *Vedas*, offering sacrifices to me and obtaining sanctification from drinking the soma juice (3), petition me for heaven; thus they attain the region of Indra (4), the prince of celestial beings, and there feast upon celestial food and are gratified with heavenly enjoyments. And they, having enjoyed that spacious heaven for a period in proportion to their merits, sink back into this mortal world where they are born again as soon as their stock of merit is exhausted; thus those who long for the accomplishment of desires, following the *Vedas*, obtain a happiness which comes and goes. But for those who, thinking of me as identical with all, constantly worship me, I bear the burden of the responsibility of their happiness. And even those also who worship other gods with a firm faith in doing so, involuntarily worship me, too, O son

of Kunti, albeit in ignorance. I am he who is the Lord of all sacrifices, and am also their enjoyer, but they do not understand me truly and therefore they fall from heaven. Those who devote themselves to the gods go to the gods; the worshipers of the pitris go to the pitris; those who worship the evil spirits (5) go to them, and my worshipers come to me. I accept and enjoy the offerings of the humble soul who in his worship with a pure heart offereth a leaf, a flower, or fruit, or water unto me. Whatever thou doest, O son of Kunti, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou sacrificest, whatever thou givest, whatever mortification thou performest, commit each unto me. Thus thou shalt be delivered from the good and evil experiences which are the bonds of action; and thy heart being joined to renunciation and to the practice of action, thou shalt come to me. I am the same to all creatures; I know not hatred nor favor; but those who serve me with love dwell in me and I in them. Even if the man of most evil ways worship me with exclusive devotion, he is to be considered as righteous, for he hath judged aright. Such a man soon becometh of a righteous soul and obtaineth perpetual happiness. I swear, O son of Kunti, that he who worships me never perisheth. Those even who may be of the womb of sin, women (6), vaisyas, and sudras, (7) shall tread the highest path if they take sanctuary with me. How much more, then, holy brahmans and devotees of kingly race! Having obtained this finite, joyless world, worship me. Serve me, fix heart and mind on me, be my servant, my adorer, prostrate thyself before me, and thus, united unto me, at rest, thou shalt go unto me."

Thus in the *Upanishads*, called the holy *Bhagavad-Gita*, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Ninth Chapter, by name —

DEVOTION BY MEANS OF THE KINGLY KNOWLEDGE AND THE

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FOOTNOTES:

1. That is to say, by the power of "prakriti." ([return to text](#))
2. This reads that "they are inclined to the nature of the asuras and rakshasas," a class of evil elementals of beings, or, as some say, "of the nature of the very low constituents of nature." ([return to text](#))
3. Among the Hindus the drinking of the soma at the end of a sacrifice is an act of great merit, with its analogy in the Christian faith in the drinking of the communion wine. ([return to text](#))
4. "The region of Indra" is the highest of the celestial spheres. It is the *devachan* of theosophical literature, for Indra is the prince of the celestial beings who abide in deva-sthan. ([return to text](#))
5. These evil spirits are the Bhutas, and are the same as the so-called spirits of the dead — the shells — worshiped or run after at spiritualistic seances. ([return to text](#))
6. This may seem strange to those who have been born in Christendom, and perhaps appear to be testimony to harsh views on the part of Hindu sages respecting women, but in the Bible the same thing is to be found and even worse, where in *1 Tim. 2, 11-15*, it is declared that the woman shall be saved through her husband, and that she must be subservient. ([return to text](#))

7. Vaisyas and sudras are the two lower castes, or merchants and servitors. ([return to text](#))

Chapter X

DEVOTION BY MEANS OF THE UNIVERSAL DIVINE PERFECTIONS

KRISHNA:

"Hear again, O thou of mighty arms, my supreme words, which unto thee who art well pleased I will declare because I am anxious for thy welfare.

"Neither the assemblage of the Gods nor the Adept Kings know my origin, because I am the origin of all the Gods and of the Adepts. Whosoever knoweth me to be the mighty Ruler of the universe and without birth or beginning, he among men, undeluded, shall be liberated from all his sins. Subtle perception, spiritual knowledge, right judgment, patience, truth, self-mastery; pleasure and pain, prosperity and adversity; birth and death, danger and security, fear and equanimity, satisfaction, restraint of body and mind, alms-giving, inoffensiveness, zeal and glory and ignominy, all these the various dispositions of creatures come from me. So in former days the seven great Sages and the four Manus who are of my nature were born of my mind, and from them sprang this world. He who knoweth perfectly this permanence and mystic faculty of mine becometh without doubt possessed of unshaken faith. I am the origin of all; all things proceed from me; believing me to be thus, the wise gifted with spiritual wisdom worship me; their very hearts and minds are in me; enlightening one another and constantly speaking of me, they are full of enjoyment and satisfaction. To them thus always devoted to me, who worship me with love, I give that mental devotion by which they come to me. For them do I out of my compassion, standing within their hearts, destroy the darkness

which springs from ignorance by the brilliant lamp of spiritual discernment."

ARJUNA:

"Thou art Parabrahman! (1) the supreme abode, the great Purification; thou art the Eternal Presence, the Divine Being, before all other Gods, holy, primeval, all-pervading, without beginning! Thus thou art declared by all the Sages — by Narada, Asita, Devala, Vyasa, and thou thyself now dost say the same. I firmly believe all that thou, O Kesava, sayest unto me; for neither Gods nor demons comprehend thy manifestations. Thou alone knowest thyself by thy Self, Supreme Spirit, Creator and Master of all that lives, God of Gods, and Lord of all the universe! Thou alone canst fully declare thy divine powers by which thou hast pervaded and continuest to pervade these worlds. How shall I, constantly thinking of thee, be able to know thee, O mysterious Lord? In what particular forms shall I meditate on thee? O Janardana — besought by mortals — tell me therefore in full thine own powers and forms of manifestation, for I am never sated of drinking of the life-giving water of thy words."

KRISHNA:

"O best of Kurus, blessings be upon thee. (2) I will make thee acquainted with the chief of my divine manifestations, for the extent of my nature is infinite.

"I am the Ego which is seated in the hearts of all beings; I am the beginning, the middle, and the end of all existing things. Among Adityas (3) I am Vishnu, and among luminous bodies I am the sun. I am Marichi among the Maruts (4), and among heavenly mansions I am the moon. Among the *Vedas* I am the *Samaveda* (5), and Indra (6) among the Gods; among the senses and organs I am the Manas (7), and of creatures the existence. I am Sankara

among the Rudras; and Vittesa, the lord of wealth among the Yakshas (8) and Rakshasas. (9) I am Pavaka among the Vasus (10), and Meru (11) among high-aspiring mountains. And know, O son of Pritha, that I am Brihaspati (12), the chief of teachers; among leaders of celestial armies Skanda, and of floods I am the ocean. I am Bhrigu among the Adept Kings; of words I am the monosyllable OM; of forms of worship, the silent repetition of sacred texts, and of immovable things I am the Himalaya. Of all the trees of the forest I am Asvattha the Pippala tree; and of the celestial Sages, Narada; among Gandharvas (13) I am Chitraratha, and of perfect saints, Kapila. Know that among horses I am Uchchaisrava, who arose with the Amrita out of the ocean; among elephants, Airavata, and among men their sovereigns. Of weapons I am the thunderbolt; among cows, Kamadhuk, the cow of plenty; of procreators, the God of love, and of serpents, Vasuki (14), their chief. I am Ananta among the Nagas (15), Varuna among things of the waters; among the ancestors, Aryarman, and of all who judge I am Yama. (16) Among the Daityas I am Prahlada, and among computations I am Time itself; the lion among beasts, and Garuda (17) among the feathered tribe. Among purifiers I am Pavana, the air; Rama among those who carry arms, Makara among the fishes, and the Ganges among rivers. Among that which is evolved, O Arjuna, I am the beginning, the middle, and the end; of all sciences I am the knowledge of the Adhyatma (18), and of uttered sounds the human speech. Among letters I am the vowel A, and of all compound words I am the Dvandva (19); I am endless time itself, and the Preserver whose face is turned on all sides. I am all-grasping death, and the birth of those who are to be; among feminine things I am fame, fortune, speech, memory, intelligence, patience, and forgiveness. Among the hymns of the *Samaveda* I am *Brihat-Saman*, and the Gayatri among metres; among months I am the month Margasirsha (20), and of seasons spring called Kusumakara, the

time of flowers. Of those things which deceive I am the dice, and splendor itself among splendid things. I am victory, I am perseverance, and the goodness of the good. Of the race of Vrishni I am Vasudeva; of the Pandava I am Arjuna the conqueror of wealth; of perfect saints I am Vyasa (21), and of prophet-seers I am the bard Usana. Among rulers I am the rod of punishment, among those desiring conquest I am policy; and among the wise of secret knowledge I am their silence. I am, O Arjuna, the seed of all existing things, and there is not anything, whether animate or inanimate which is without me. My divine manifestations, O harasser of thy foes, are without end, the many which I have mentioned are by way of example. Whatever creature is permanent, of good fortune or mighty, also know it to be sprung from a portion of my energy. But what, O Arjuna, hast thou to do with so much knowledge as this? I established this whole universe with a single portion of myself, and remain separate."

Thus in the *Upanishads*, called the holy *Bhagavad-Gita*, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Tenth Chapter, by name --

DEVOTION BY MEANS OF THE UNIVERSAL DIVINE PERFECTIONS.

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FOOTNOTES:

1. Beyond Brahman. ([return to text](#))
2. In the original the first word is one which carries a blessing

with it; it is a benediction and means "now then," but this in English conveys no idea of a benediction. ([return to text](#))

3. Adityas, the twelve Sun-Gods, who, at the recurrence of the time for dissolution by fire, bring on the universal conflagration. ([return to text](#))

4. The Gods of air. ([return to text](#))

5. In Western language this may be said to be the *Veda* of song in the very highest sense of the power of song. Many nations held that song had the power to make even mere matter change and move obedient to the sound. ([return to text](#))

6. In the original it is "Vasava" which is a name of Indra. ([return to text](#))

7. The heart or the mind. ([return to text](#))

8. Spirits of a sensual nature. ([return to text](#))

9. An order of evil spirits. ([return to text](#))

10. Among the first created Beings of a high order. ([return to text](#))

11. Said by some to be the North Pole. ([return to text](#))

12. Jupiter, the teacher of the Devas. ([return to text](#))

13. Celestial host of singers; they are a class of elementals. ([return to text](#))

14. Poisonous serpents. ([return to text](#))

15. Non-poisonous serpents of a fabled sort, said to have speech and wisdom. ([return to text](#))

16. The Judge of the dead. ([return to text](#))

17. Garuda, the bird of Vishnu, and also means esoterically the

whole manvantaric cycle. ([return to text](#))

18. The highest spiritual knowledge. ([return to text](#))

19. A form of compound word in the Sanskrit which preserves the meaning of the words making up the compound. ([return to text](#))

20. The month when the regular rains have stopped and the heat abated. ([return to text](#))

21. Vyasa, the author of the *Mahabbarata*. ([return to text](#))

Chapter XI

THE VISION OF THE DIVINE FORM AS INCLUDING ALL FORMS

ARJUNA:

"My delusion has been dispersed by the words which thou for my soul's peace hast spoken concerning the mystery of the Adhyatma — the spirit. For I have heard at full length from thee, O thou whose eyes are like lotus leaves, the origin and dissolution of existing things, and also thy inexhaustible majesty. It is even as thou hast described thyself, O mighty Lord; I now desire to see thy divine form, O sovereign Lord. Wherefore, O Lord, if thou thinkest it may be beheld by me, show me, O Master of devotion, thine inexhaustible Self."

KRISHNA:

"Behold, O son of Pritha, my forms by hundreds and by thousands, of diverse kinds divine, of many shapes and fashions. Behold the Adityas, Vasus, Rudras, Asvins, and the Maruts, see things wonderful never seen before, O son of Bharata. Here in my body now behold, O Gudakesa, the whole universe animate and inanimate gathered here in one, and all things else thou hast a wish to see. But as with thy natural eyes thou are not able to see me, I will give thee the divine eye. Behold my sovereign power and might!"

SANJAYA:

O king, having thus spoken, Hari (1), the mighty Lord of mysterious power, showed to the son of Pritha his supreme form; with many mouths and eyes and many wonderful appearances, with many divine ornaments, many celestial weapons upraised;

adorned with celestial garlands and robes, anointed with celestial ointments and perfumes, full of every marvelous thing, the eternal God whose face is turned in all directions. The glory and amazing splendor of this mighty Being may be likened to the radiance shed by a thousand suns rising together into the heavens. The son of Pandu then beheld within the body of the God of gods the whole universe in all its vast variety.

Overwhelmed with wonder, Dhananjaya (2), the possessor of wealth, with hair standing on end, bowed down his head before the Deity, and thus with joined palms (3) addressed him:

ARJUNA:

"I behold, O God of gods, within thy frame all beings and things of every kind; the Lord Brahma on his lotus throne, all the Rishis and the heavenly Serpents. (4) I see thee on all sides, of infinite forms, having many arms, stomachs, mouths, and eyes. But I can discover neither thy beginning, thy middle, nor thy end, O universal Lord, form of the universe. I see thee crowned with a diadem and armed with mace and chakra (5), a mass of splendor, darting light on all sides; difficult to behold, shining in every direction with light immeasurable, like the burning fire or glowing sun. Thou art the supreme inexhaustible Being, the end of effort, changeless, the Supreme Spirit of this universe, the never-failing guardian of eternal law: I esteem thee Purusha (6), I see thee without beginning middle, or end, of infinite power with arms innumerable, the sun and moon thy eyes, thy mouth a flaming fire, overmastering the whole universe with thy majesty. Space and heaven, and earth and every point around the three regions of the universe are filled with thee alone. The triple world is full of fear, O thou mighty Spirit, seeing this thy marvelous form of terror. Of the assemblage of the gods some I see fly to thee for refuge, while some in fear with joined hands sing forth thy praise; the hosts of the Maharshis and Siddhas, great sages and

saints, hail thee, saying "svasti," (7) and glorify thee with most excellent hymns. The Rudras, Adityas, the Vasus, and all those beings — the Sadhyas, Visvas, the Asvins, Maruts, and Ushmapas, the hosts of Gandharvas, Yakshas, and Siddhas (8) — all stand gazing on thee and are amazed. All the worlds alike with me are terrified to behold thy wondrous form gigantic, O thou of mighty arms, with many mouths and eyes, with many arms, thighs and feet, with many stomachs and projecting tusks. For seeing thee thus touching the heavens, shining with such glory, with widely-opened mouths and bright expanded eyes, my inmost soul is troubled and I lose both firmness and tranquillity, O Vishnu. Beholding thy dreadful teeth and thy face like the burning of death, I can see neither heaven nor earth; I find no peace; have mercy, O Lord of gods, thou Spirit of the universe! The sons of Dhritarashtra with all these rulers of men, Bhishma, Drona and also Kama and our principal warriors, seem to be impetuously precipitating themselves into thy mouths terrible with tusks; some are seen caught between thy teeth, their heads ground down. As the rapid streams of full-flowing rivers roll on to meet the ocean, even so these heroes of the human race rush into thy flaming mouths. As troops of insects carried away by strong impulse find death in the fire, even so do these beings with swelling force pour into thy mouths for their own destruction. Thou involvest and swallowest all these creatures from every side, licking them in thy flaming lips; filling the universe with thy splendor, thy sharp beams burn, O Vishnu. Reverence be unto thee, O best of Gods! Be favorable! I seek to know thee, the Primeval One, for I know not thy work."

KRISHNA:

"I am Time matured, come hither for the destruction of these creatures; except myself, not one of all these warriors here drawn up in serried ranks shall live. Wherefore, arise! seize fame! Defeat

the foe and enjoy the fullgrown kingdom! They have been already slain by me; be thou only the immediate agent, O thou both-armed one. (9) Be not disturbed. Slay Drona, Bhishma, Jayadratha, Karna, and all the other heroes of the war who are really slain by me. Fight, thou wilt conquer all thine enemies."

SANJAYA:

When he of the resplendent diadem (10) heard these words from the mouth of Kesava (11), he saluted Krishna with joined palms and trembling with fear, addressed him in broken accents, and bowed down terrified before him.

ARJUNA:

"The universe, O Hrishikesa (12), is justly delighted with thy glory and is filled with zeal for thy service; the evil spirits are affrighted and flee on all sides, while all the hosts of saints bow down in adoration before thee. And wherefore should they not adore thee, O mighty Being, thou who art greater than Brahma, who art the first Maker? O eternal God of gods! O habitation of the universe! Thou art the one indivisible Being, and Non-Being, that which is supreme. Thou art the first of Gods, the most ancient Spirit; thou art the final supreme receptacle (13) of this universe; thou art the Knower and that which is to be known, and the supreme mansion; and by thee, O thou of infinite form, is this universe caused to emanate. Thou art Vayu, God of wind, Agni, God of fire, Yama, God of death, Varuna, God of waters; thou art the moon; Prajapati, the progenitor and grandfather, art thou. Hail! hail to thee! Hail to thee a thousand times repeated! Again and again hail to thee! Hail to thee! Hail to thee from before! Hail to thee from behind! Hail to thee on all sides, O thou All! Infinite is thy power and might; thou includest all things, therefore thou art all things!

"Having been ignorant of thy majesty, I took thee for a friend, and

have called thee 'O Krishna, O son of Yadu, O friend,' and blinded by my affection and presumption, I have at times treated thee without respect in sport, in recreation, in repose, in thy chair, and at thy meals, in private and in public; all this I beseech thee, O inconceivable Being, to forgive.

"Thou art the father of all things animate and inanimate; thou art to be honored as above the guru himself, and worthy to be adored; there is none equal to thee, and how in the triple worlds could there be thy superior, O thou of unrivaled power? Therefore I bow down and with my body prostrate, I implore thee, O Lord, for mercy. Forgive, O Lord, as the friend forgives the friend, as the father pardons his son, as the lover the beloved. I am well pleased with having beheld what was never before seen, and yet my heart is overwhelmed with awe; have mercy then, O God; show me that other form, O thou who art the dwelling-place of the universe; I desire to see thee as before with thy diadem on thy head, thy hands armed with mace and chakra; assume again, O thou of a thousand arms and universal form, thy four-armed shape!" (14)

KRISHNA:

"Out of kindness to thee, O Arjuna, by my divine power I have shown thee my supreme form, the universe, resplendent, infinite, primeval, and which has never been beheld by any other than thee. Neither by studying the *Vedas*, nor by alms-giving, nor by sacrificial rites, nor by deeds, nor by the severest mortification of the flesh can I be seen in this form by any other than thee, O best of Kurus. Having beheld my form thus awful, be not disturbed nor let thy faculties be confounded, but with fears allayed and happiness of heart look upon this other form of mine again."

SANJAYA:

Vasudeva (15) having so spoken reassumed his natural form; and thus in milder shape the Great One presently assuaged the fears of the terrified Arjuna.

ARJUNA:

"Now that I see again thy placid human shape, O Janadana, who art prayed to by mortals, my mind is no more disturbed and I am self-possessed."

KRISHNA:

"Thou hast seen this form of mine which is difficult to be perceived and which even the gods are always anxious to behold. But I am not to be seen, even as I have shown myself to thee, by study of the *Vedas*, nor by mortifications, nor alms-giving, nor sacrifices. I am to be approached and seen and known in truth by means of that devotion which has me alone as the object. He whose actions are for me alone, who esteemeth me the supreme goal, who is my servant only, without attachment to the results of action and free from enmity towards any creature, cometh to me, O son of Pandu."

Thus in the *Upanishads*, called the holy *Bhagavad-Gita*, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Eleventh Chapter, by name —

THE VISION OF THE DIVINE FORM AS INCLUDING ALL FORMS.

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FOOTNOTES:

1. *Hari*, an epithet of Krishna, meaning that he has the power to remove all difficulty. ([return to text](#))
2. Arjuna. ([return to text](#))
3. This is the Hindu mode of salutation. ([return to text](#))
4. These are the Uragas, said to be serpents. But it must refer to the great Masters of Wisdom, who were often called Serpents. ([return to text](#))
5. Among human weapons this would be known as the discus, but here it means the whirling wheel of spiritual will and power. ([return to text](#))
6. Purusha, the Eternal Person. The same name is also given to man by the Hindus. ([return to text](#))
7. This cry is supposed to be for the benefit of the world, and has that meaning. ([return to text](#))
8. All these names refer to different classes of celestial beings, some of which are now called in theosophical literature "elementals"; the others are explained in H. P. Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*. ([return to text](#))
9. Arjuna was a famous archer who could use the celestial bow, Gandiva, with either hand equally well. ([return to text](#))
10. Arjuna wore a brilliant tiara. ([return to text](#))
11. Krishna, by another name. ([return to text](#))
12. Krishna. ([return to text](#))
13. That is, that into which the universe is resolved on the final dissolution. ([return to text](#))

14. Arjuna had been accustomed to see Krishna in his four-armed form, not only in the images shown in youth, but also when Krishna came into incarnation, and could therefore look on the four-armed form without fear. ([return to text](#))

15. A name of Krishna. ([return to text](#))

Chapter XII

DEVOTION BY MEANS OF FAITH

ARJUNA:

"Among those of thy devotees who always thus worship thee (1), which take the better way, those who worship the indivisible and unmanifested, or those who serve thee as thou now art?"

KRISHNA:

"Those who worship me with constant zeal, with the highest faith and minds placed on me, are held in high esteem by me. But those who, with minds equal toward everything, with senses and organs restrained, and rejoicing in the good of all creatures, meditate on the inexhaustible, immovable, highest, incorruptible, difficult to contemplate, invisible, omnipresent, unthinkable, the witness, undemonstrable, shall also come unto me. For those whose hearts are fixed on the unmanifested the labor is greater because the path which is not manifest is with difficulty attained by corporeal beings. (2) But for those who worship me, renouncing in me all their actions, regarding me as the supreme goal and meditating on me alone, if their thoughts are turned to me, O son of Pritha, I presently become the savior from this ocean of incarnations and death. Place, then, thy heart on me, penetrate me with thy understanding, and thou shalt without doubt hereafter dwell in me. But if thou shouldst be unable at once steadfastly to fix thy heart and mind on me, strive then, O Dhananjaya, to find me by constant practice in devotion. If after constant practice, thou art still unable, follow me by actions performed for me (3); for by doing works for me thou shalt attain perfection. But if thou art unequal even to this, then, being self-

restrained, place all thy works, failures and successes alike, on me, abandoning in me the fruit of every action. For knowledge is better than constant practice, meditation is superior to knowledge, renunciation of the fruit of action to meditation; final emancipation immediately results from such renunciation.

"My devotee who is free from enmity, well-disposed towards all creatures, merciful, wholly exempt from pride and selfishness, the same in pain and pleasure, patient of wrongs, contented, constantly devout, self-governed, firm in resolves, and whose mind and heart are fixed on me alone, is dear unto me. He also is my beloved of whom mankind is not afraid and who has no fear of man; who is free from joy, from despondency and the dread of harm. My devotee who is unexpecting (4), pure, just, impartial, devoid of fear, and who hath forsaken interest in the results of action, is dear unto me. He also is worthy of my love who neither rejoiceth nor findeth fault, who neither lamenteth nor coveteth, and being my servant hath forsaken interest in both good and evil results. He also is my beloved servant who is equal-minded to friend or foe, the same in honor and dishonor, in cold and heat, in pain and pleasure, and is unsolicitous about the event of things; to whom praise and blame are as one; who is of little speech, content with whatever cometh to pass, who hath no fixed habitation, and whose heart, full of devotion, is firmly fixed. But those who seek this sacred ambrosia — the religion of immortality — even as I have explained it, full of faith, intent on me above all others, and united to devotion, are my most beloved."

Thus in the *Upanishads*, called the holy *Bhagavad-Gita*, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Twelfth Chapter, by name —

DEVOTION BY MEANS OF FAITH.

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FOOTNOTES:

1. That is, as described at the end of Chapter XI. ([return to text](#))
2. The difficulty here stated is that caused by the personality, which causes us to see the Supreme as different and separate from ourselves. ([return to text](#))
3. The works referred to here are special works of all kinds performed for the sake of the Supreme Being, which will have their effect upon the performer in future lives. ([return to text](#))
4. In the original this reads as "not peering about." ([return to text](#))

Chapter XIII

DEVOTION BY MEANS OF THE DISCRIMINATION OF THE KSHETRA FROM KSHETRAJNA

KRISHNA:

"This perishable body, O son of Kunti, is known as Kshetra; those who are acquainted with the true nature of things call the soul who knows it, the Kshetrajna. Know also that I am the Knower in every mortal body, O son of Bharata; that knowledge which through the soul is a realization of both the known and the knower is alone esteemed by me as wisdom. What the Kshetra or body is, what it resembleth, what it produceth, and what is its origin, and also who he is who, dwelling within, knoweth it, as well as what is his power, learn all in brief from me. It has been manifoldly sung by the Rishis with discrimination and with arguments in the various Vedic hymns which treat of Brahman.

"This body, then, is made up of the great elements, Ahankara — egotism, Buddhi — intellect or judgment, the unmanifest, invisible spirit; the ten centers of action, the mind, and the five objects of sense; desire, aversion, pleasure and pain, persistency of life, and firmness, the power of cohesion. Thus I have made known unto thee what the Kshetra or body is with its component parts.

"True wisdom of a spiritual kind is freedom from self-esteem, hypocrisy, and injury to others; it is patience, sincerity, respect for spiritual instructors, purity, firmness, self-restraint, dispassion for objects of sense, freedom from pride, and a meditation upon birth, death, decay, sickness, and error; it is an exemption from self-identifying attachment for children, wife,

and household, and a constant unwavering steadiness of heart upon the arrival of every event whether favorable or unfavorable; it is a never-ceasing love for me alone, the self being effaced, and worship paid in a solitary spot, and a want of pleasure in congregations of men; it is a resolute continuance in the study of Adhyatma, the Superior spirit, and a meditation upon the end of the acquirement of a knowledge of truth; — this is called wisdom or spiritual knowledge; its opposite is ignorance.

"I will now tell thee what is the object of wisdom, from knowing which a man enjoys immortality; it is that which has no beginning, even the supreme Brahman, and of which it cannot be said that it is either Being or Non-Being. It has hands and feet in all directions; eyes, heads, mouths, and ears in every direction; it is immanent in the world, possessing the vast whole. Itself without organs, it is reflected by all the senses and faculties; unattached, yet supporting all; without qualities, yet the witness of them all. It is within and without all creatures animate and inanimate; it is inconceivable because of its subtlety, and although near it is afar off. Although undivided it appeareth as divided among creatures, and while it sustains existing things, it is also to be known as their destroyer and creator. It is the light of all lights, and is declared to be beyond all darkness; and it is wisdom itself, the object of wisdom, and that which is to be obtained by wisdom; in the hearts of all it ever presideth. Thus hath been briefly declared what is the perishable body, and wisdom itself, together with the object of wisdom; he, my devotee, who thus in truth conceiveth me, obtaineth my state.

"Know that *prakriti* or nature, and *purusha* the spirit, are without beginning. And know that the passions and the three qualities are sprung from nature. Nature or *prakriti* is said to be that which operates in producing cause and effect in actions (1); individual spirit or *purusha* is said to be the cause of experiencing pain and

pleasure. (2) For spirit when invested with matter or *prakriti* experienceth the qualities which proceed from *prakriti*; its connection with these qualities is the cause of its rebirth in good and evil wombs. (3) The spirit in the body is called *Mahesvara*, the Great Lord, the spectator, the admonisher, the sustainer, the enjoyer, and also the *Paramatma*, the highest soul. He who thus knoweth the spirit and nature, together with the qualities, whatever mode of life he may lead, is not born again on this earth.

"Some men by meditation, using contemplation upon the Self, behold the spirit within, others attain to that end by philosophical study with its realization, and others by means of the religion of works. Others, again, who are not acquainted with it in this manner, but have heard it from others, cleave unto and respect it; and even these, if assiduous only upon tradition and attentive to hearing the scriptures, pass beyond the gulf of death. (4)

"Know, O chief of the Bharatas, that whenever anything, whether animate or inanimate, is produced, it is due to the union of the Kshetra and Kshetrajna — body and the soul. He who seeth the Supreme Being existing alike imperishable in all perishable things, sees indeed. Perceiving the same Lord present in everything and everywhere, he does not by the lower self destroy his own soul, but goeth to the supreme end. He who seeth that all his actions are performed by nature only, and that the self within is not the actor, sees indeed. And when he realizes perfectly that all things whatsoever in nature are comprehended in the ONE, he attains to the Supreme Spirit. This Supreme Spirit, O son of Kunti, even when it is in the body, neither acteth nor is it affected by action, because, being without beginning and devoid of attributes, it is changeless. As the all-moving Akasa by reason of its subtlety passeth everywhere unaffected, so the Spirit, though present in every kind of body, is not attached to action nor affected. As a

single sun illuminateth the whole world, even so doth the One Spirit illumine every body, O son of Bharata. Those who with the eye of wisdom thus perceive what is the difference between the body and Spirit and the destruction of the illusion of objects (5), go to the Supreme."

Thus in the *Upanishads*, called the holy *Bhagavad-Gita*, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Thirteenth Chapter, by name —

DEVOTION BY MEANS OF THE DISCRIMINATION OF THE
KSHETRA FROM KSHETRAJNA.

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FOOTNOTES:

1. *Prakriti*, matter or nature, is the cause of all action throughout the universe, as it is the basis by which action may take place; and herein are included all actions, whether of men, of gods, powers, or what not. ([return to text](#))

2. *Purusha* is the aspect of the individual spirit in every human breast; it is the cause of our experiencing pain and pleasure through the connection with nature found in the body. ([return to text](#))

3. Here *Purusha* is the persisting individuality which connects all reincarnations, as if it were the thread, and has hence been called the "thread Soul." ([return to text](#))

4. This last sentence means that they thus lay such a foundation so that in subsequent lives they will reach the other states and then to immortality. ([return to text](#))

5. This refers to what has previously been said about the great illusion produced by nature in causing us to see objects as different from Spirit, and it agrees with Patanjali, who says that, although the perfectly illuminated being has destroyed the illusion, it still has a hold upon those who are not illuminated — they will have to go through repeated rebirths until their time of deliverance also comes. ([return to text](#))

Chapter XIV

DEVOTION BY MEANS OF SEPARATION FROM THE THREE QUALITIES

KRISHNA:

"I will explain further the sublime spiritual knowledge superior to all others, by knowing which all the sages have attained to supreme perfection on the dissolution of this body. They take sanctuary in this wisdom, and having attained to my state they are not born again even at the new evolution, nor are they disturbed at the time of general destruction.

"The great Brahman is my womb in which I place the seed; from that, O son of Bharata, is the production of all existing things. (1) This great Brahman is the womb for all those various forms which are produced from any womb, and I am the Father who provideth the seed. The three great qualities called *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* — light, or truth, passion or desire, and indifference or darkness — are born from nature, and bind the imperishable soul to the body, O thou of mighty arms. Of these the *sattva* quality by reason of its lucidity and peacefulness entwined the soul to rebirth through attachment to knowledge and that which is pleasant. Know that *rajas* is of the nature of desire, producing thirst and propensity; it, O son of Kunti, imprisoneth the Ego through the consequences produced from action. The quality of *tamas*, the offspring of the indifference in nature, is the deluder of all creatures, O son of Bharata; it imprisoneth the Ego in a body through heedless folly, sleep, and idleness. The *sattva* quality attaches the soul through happiness and pleasure, the *rajas* through action, and *tamas* quality surrounding the power of judgment with indifference attaches the soul through heedlessness.

"When, O son of Bharata, the qualities of *tamas* and *rajas* are overcome, then that of *sattva* prevaleth; *tamas* is chiefly acting when *sattva* and *rajas* are hidden; and when the *sattva* and *tamas* diminish, then *rajas* prevaleth. When wisdom, the bright light, shall become evident at every gate of the body, then one may know that the *sattva* quality is prevalent within. The love of gain, activity in action, and the initiating of works, restlessness and inordinate desire are produced when the quality of *rajas* is prevalent, whilst the tokens of the predominance of the *tamas* quality are absence of illumination, the presence of idleness, heedlessness, and delusion, O son of Kunti.

"If the body is dissolved when the *sattva* quality prevails, the self within proceeds to the spotless spheres of those who are acquainted with the highest place. When the body is dissolved while the quality of *rajas* is predominant, the soul is born again in a body attached to action; and so also of one who dies while *tamas* quality is prevalent, the soul is born again in the wombs of those who are deluded.

"The fruit of righteous acts is called pure and holy, appertaining to *sattva*; from *rajas* is gathered fruit in pain, and the *tamas* produceth only senselessness, ignorance, and indifference. From *sattva* wisdom is produced, from *rajas* desire, from *tamas* ignorance, delusion and folly. Those in whom the *sattva* quality is established mount on high, those who are full of *rajas* remain in the middle sphere, the world of men, while those who are overborne by the gloomy quality, *tamas*, sink below. But when the wise man perceiveth that the only agents of action are these qualities, and comprehends that which is superior to the qualities, he attains to my state. And when the embodied self surpasseth these three qualities of goodness, action, and indifference — which are coexistent with the body — it is

released from rebirth and death, old age and pain, and drinketh of the water of immortality."

ARJUNA:

"What are the characteristic marks by which the man may be known, O Master, who hath surpassed the three qualities? What is his course of life, and what are the means by which he overcometh the qualities?"

KRISHNA:

"He, O son of Pandu, who doth not hate these qualities — illumination, action, and delusion — when they appear, nor longeth for them when they disappear; who, like one who is of no party, sitteth as one unconcerned about the three qualities and undisturbed by them, who being persuaded that the qualities exist, is moved not by them; who is of equal mind in pain and pleasure, self-centered, to whom a lump of earth, a stone, or gold are as one; who is of equal mind with those who love or dislike, constant, the same whether blamed or praised; equally minded in honor and disgrace, and the same toward friendly or unfriendly side, engaging only in necessary actions, such an one hath surmounted the qualities. And he, my servant, who worships me with exclusive devotion, having completely overcome the qualities, is fitted to be absorbed in Brahman the Supreme. I am the embodiment of the Supreme Ruler, and of the incorruptible, of the unmodifying, and of the eternal law, and of endless bliss."

Thus in the *Upanishads*, called the holy *Bhagavad-Gita*, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Fourteenth Chapter, by name —

DEVOTION BY MEANS OF SEPARATION FROM THE THREE QUALITIES.

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FOOTNOTES:

1. In this verse *Brahman* is to be taken as *prakriti*, or nature.
([return to text](#))

Chapter XV

DEVOTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE OF THE SUPREME SPIRIT

KRISHNA:

"Men say that the *Asvattha*, the eternal sacred tree (1), grows with its roots above and its branches below, and the leaves of which are the *Vedas*; he who knows this knows the *Vedas*. Its branches growing out of the three qualities (2) with the objects of sense as the lesser shoots, spread forth, some above and some below; and those roots which ramify below in the regions of mankind are the connecting bonds of action. Its form is not thus understood by men; it has no beginning, nor can its present constitution be understood (3), nor has it any end. When one hath hewn down with the strong axe of dispassion this *Asvattha* tree with its deeply-imbedded roots, then that place is to be sought after from which those who there take refuge never more return to rebirth, for it (4) is the Primeval Spirit from which floweth the never-ending stream of conditioned existence. Those who are free from pride of self and whose discrimination is perfected, who have prevailed over the fault of attachment to action, who are constantly employed in devotion to meditation upon the Supreme Spirit, who have renounced desire and are free from the influence of the opposites known as pleasure and pain, are undeluded, and proceed to that place which endureth forever. Neither the sun nor the moon nor the fire enlighteneth that place; from it there is no return; it is my supreme abode.

"It is even a portion of myself which, having assumed life in this world of conditioned existence, draweth together the five senses and the mind in order that it may obtain a body and may leave it

again. And those are carried by the Sovereign Lord to and from whatever body he enters or quits, even as the breeze bears the fragrance from the flower. Presiding over the eye, the ear, the touch, the taste, and the power of smelling, and also over the mind, he experienceth the objects of sense. The deluded do not see the spirit when it quitteth or remains in the body, nor when, moved by the qualities, it has experience in the world. But those who have the eye of wisdom perceive it, and devotees who industriously strive to do so see it dwelling in their own hearts; whilst those who have not overcome themselves, who are devoid of discrimination, see it not even though they strive thereafter. Know that the brilliance of the sun which illuminateth the whole world, and the light which is in the moon and in the fire, are the splendor of myself. I enter the earth supporting all living things by my power, and I am that property of sap which is taste, nourishing all the herbs and plants of the field. Becoming the internal fire of the living, I associate with the upward and downward breathing, and cause the four kinds of food to digest. I am in the hearts of all men, and from me come memory, knowledge, and also the loss of both. I am to be known by all the *Vedas*; I am he who is the author of the *Vedanta*, and I alone am the interpreter of the *Vedas*.

"There are two kinds of beings in the world, the one divisible, the other indivisible; the divisible is all things and the creatures, the indivisible is called Kutastha, or he who standeth on high unaffected. But there is another spirit designated as the Supreme Spirit — Paramatma — which permeates and sustains the three worlds. As I am above the divisible and also superior to the indivisible, therefore both in the world and in the *Vedas* am I known as the Supreme Spirit. He who being not deluded knoweth me thus as the Supreme Spirit, knoweth all things and worships me under every form and condition.

"Thus, O sinless one, have I declared unto thee this most sacred science; he who understandeth it, O son of Bharata, will be a wise man and the performer of all that is to be done."

Thus in the *Upanishads*, called the holy *Bhagavad-Gita*, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Fifteenth Chapter, by name —

DEVOTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE OF THE SUPREME SPIRIT.

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FOOTNOTES:

1. This is a symbol for the universe, which, although apparently destroyed and then again renovated, is never ending, for it is the same as the Evolutionary Stream. ([return to text](#))
2. See preceding Chapter. ([return to text](#))
3. This means that the bound Ego cannot understand it. ([return to text](#))
4. It is the place of the Supreme. ([return to text](#))

Chapter XVI

DEVOTION THROUGH DISCRIMINATING BETWEEN GODLIKE AND DEMONIAL NATURES

KRISHNA:

"Fearlessness, sincerity, assiduity in devotion, generosity, self-restraint, piety, and alms-giving, study, mortification, and rectitude; harmlessness, veracity, and freedom from anger, resignation, equanimity, and not speaking of the faults of others, universal compassion, modesty, and mildness; patience, power, fortitude, and purity, discretion, dignity, unvengefulness, and freedom from conceit — these are the marks of him whose virtues are of a godlike character, O son of Bharata. Those, O son of Pritha, who are born with demoniacal dispositions are marked by hypocrisy, pride, anger, presumption, harshness of speech, and ignorance. The destiny of those whose attributes are godlike is final liberation, while that of demoniacal dispositions, born to the Asuras' lot, is continued bondage to mortal birth; grieve not, O son of Pandu, for thou art born with the divine destiny. There are two kinds of natures in beings in this world, that which is godlike, and the other which is demoniacal; the godlike hath been fully declared, hear now from me, O son of Pritha, what the demoniacal is.

"Those who are born with the demoniacal disposition — of the nature of the Asuras — know not the nature of action nor of cessation from action, they know not purity nor right behavior, they possess no truthfulness. They deny that the universe has any truth in it, saying it is not governed by law, declaring that it hath no Spirit; they say creatures are produced alone through the union of the sexes, and that all is for enjoyment only. Maintaining

this view, their souls being ruined, their minds contracted, with natures perverted, enemies of the world, they are born to destroy. They indulge insatiable desires, are full of hypocrisy, fast-fixed in false beliefs through their delusions. They indulge in unlimited reflections which end only in annihilation, convinced until death that the enjoyment of the objects of their desires is the supreme good. Fast-bound by the hundred cords of desire, prone to lust and anger, they seek by injustice and the accumulation of wealth for the gratification of their own lusts and appetites. 'This today hath been acquired by me, and that object of my heart I shall obtain; this wealth I have, and that also shall be mine. This foe have I already slain, and others will I forthwith vanquish; I am the lord, I am powerful, and I am happy. I am rich and with precedence among men; where is there another like unto me? I shall make sacrifices, give alms, and enjoy.' In this manner do those speak who are deluded. Confounded by all manner of desires, entangled in the net of delusion, firmly attached to the gratification of their desires, they descend into hell. Esteeming themselves very highly, self-willed, full of pride and ever in pursuit of riches, they perform worship with hypocrisy and not even according to ritual (1), but only for outward show. Indulging in pride, selfishness, ostentation, power, lust, and anger, they detest me who am in their bodies and in the bodies of others. Wherefore I continually hurl these cruel haters, the lowest of men, into wombs of an infernal nature in this world of rebirth. And they being doomed to those infernal wombs, more and more deluded in each succeeding rebirth, never come to me, O son of Kunti, but go at length to the lowest region. (2)

"The gates of hell are three — desire, anger, covetousness, which destroy the soul; wherefore one should abandon them. Being free from these three gates of hell, O son of Kunti, a man worketh for the salvation of his soul, and thus proceeds to the highest path. He

who abandoneth the ordinances of the Scriptures to follow the dictates of his own desires, attaineth neither perfection nor happiness nor the highest path. Therefore, in deciding what is fit and what unfit to be done, thou shouldst perform actions on earth with a knowledge of what is declared in Holy Writ."

Thus in the *Upanishads*, called the holy *Bhagavad-Gita*, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Sixteenth Chapter, by name —

DEVOTION THROUGH DISCRIMINATING BETWEEN GODLIKE AND DEMONIAL NATURES.

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FOOTNOTES:

1. This refers to the irregular performance of Vedic sacrifices by those who are without the right spiritual gifts, and only wish to imitate ostentatiously the right performance. ([return to text](#))
2. This is final annihilation of those who deny their own soul and thus lose it. It is worse than the hell before spoken of, for there is no return. ([return to text](#))

Chapter XVII

DEVOTION AS REGARDS THE THREE KINDS OF FAITH

ARJUNA:

"What is the state of those men who, while they neglect the precepts of the Scriptures, yet worship in faith, O Krishna? Is it of the *sattva*, the *rajas*, or the *tamas* quality?"

KRISHNA:

"The faith of mortals is of three kinds, and is born from their own disposition; it is of the quality of truth — *sattva*, action — *rajas*, and indifference — *tamas*; hear now what those are.

"The faith of each one, O son of Bharata, proceeds from the *sattva* quality; the embodied soul being gifted with faith, each man is of the same nature as that ideal on which his faith is fixed. Those who are of the disposition which ariseth from the prevalence of the *sattva* or good quality worship the gods; those of the quality of *rajas* worship the celestial powers, the Yakshas and Rakshasas; other men in whom the dark quality of indifference or *tamas* predominates worship elemental powers and the ghosts of dead men. Those who practice severe self-mortification not enjoined in the Scriptures are full of hypocrisy and pride, longing for what is past and desiring more to come. They, full of delusion, torture the powers and faculties which are in the body, and me also, who am in the recesses of the innermost heart; know that they are of an infernal tendency.

"Know that food which is pleasant to each one, as also sacrifices, mortification, and alms-giving, are of three kinds; hear what their divisions are. The food which increases the length of days, vigor

and strength, which keeps one free from sickness, of tranquil mind, and contented, and which is savory, nourishing, of permanent benefit and congenial to the body, is that which is attractive to those in whom the *sattva* quality prevaleth. The food which is liked by those of the *rajas* quality is over bitter, too acid, excessively salt, hot, pungent, dry and burning, and causeth unpleasantness, pain, and disease. Whatever food is such as was dressed the day before, that is tasteless or rotting, that is impure, is that which is preferred by those in whom predominates the quality of *tamas* or indifference.

"The sacrifice or worship which is directed by Scripture and is performed by those who expect no reward but who are convinced that it is necessary to be done, is of the quality of light, of goodness, of *sattva*. But know that that worship or sacrifice which is performed with a view to its results, and also for an ostentation of piety, belongs to passion, the quality of *rajas*, O best of the Bharatas. But that which is not according to the precepts of Holy Writ, without distribution of bread, without sacred hymns, without gifts to brahmans at the conclusion, and without faith, is of the quality of *tamas*.

"Honoring the gods, the brahmans, the teachers, and the wise, purity, rectitude, chastity, and harmlessness are called mortification of the body. Gentle speech which causes no anxiety, which is truthful and friendly, and diligence in the reading of the Scriptures, are said to be austerities of speech. Serenity of mind, mildness of temper, silence, self-restraint, absolute straightforwardness of conduct, are called mortification of the mind. This threefold mortification or austerity practiced with supreme faith and by those who long not for a reward is of the *sattva* quality.

"But that austerity which is practiced with hypocrisy, for the sake

of obtaining respect for oneself or for fame or favor, and which is uncertain and belonging wholly to this world, is of the quality of *rajas*. Those austerities which are practiced merely by wounding oneself or from a false judgment or for the hurting of another are of the quality of *tamas*. Those gifts which are bestowed at the proper time to the proper person, and by men who are not desirous of a return, are of the *sattva* quality, good and of the nature of truth. But that gift which is given with the expectation of a return from the beneficiary or with a view to spiritual benefit flowing therefrom or with reluctance, is of the *rajas* quality, bad and partaketh of untruth. Gifts given out of place and season and to unworthy persons, without proper attention and scornfully, are of the *tamas* quality, wholly bad and of the nature of darkness.

"OM TAT SAT: these are said to be the threefold designation of the Supreme Being. By these in the beginning were sanctified the knowers of Brahman (1), the *Vedas*, and sacrifices. Therefore the sacrifices, the giving of alms, and the practicing of austerities are always, among those who expound Holy Writ, preceded by the word OM. Among those who long for immortality and who do not consider the reward for their actions, the word TAT precedes their rites of sacrifice, their austerities, and giving of alms. The word SAT is used for qualities that are true and holy, and likewise is applied to laudable actions, O son of Pritha. The state of mental sacrifice when actions are at rest is also called SAT. Whatever is done without faith, whether it be sacrifice, alms-giving, or austerities, is called ASAT, that which is devoid of truth and goodness, O son of Pritha, and is not of any benefit either in this life or after death."

Thus in the *Upanishads*, called the holy *Bhagavad-Gita*, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the

Seventeenth Chapter, by name —

DEVOTION AS REGARDS THE THREE KINDS OF FAITH.

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FOOTNOTE:

1. It reads "Brahmanas," and does not seem to refer to any caste.
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Chapter XVIII

DEVOTION AS REGARDS RENUNCIATION AND FINAL LIBERATION

ARJUNA:

"I wish to learn, O great-armed one, the nature of abstaining from action and of the giving up of the results of action, and also the difference between these two, O slayer of Kesin." (1)

KRISHNA:

"The bards conceive that the forsaking of actions which have a desired object is renunciation or Sannyasa, the wise call the disregard of the fruit of every action true disinterestedness in action. By some wise men it is said, 'Every action is as much to be avoided as a crime,' while by others it is declared, 'Deeds of sacrifice, of mortification, and of charity should not be forsaken.' Among these divided opinions hear my certain decision, O best of the Bharatas, upon this matter of disinterested forsaking, which is declared to be of three kinds, O chief of men. Deeds of sacrifice, of mortification, and of charity are not to be abandoned, for they are proper to be performed, and are the purifiers of the wise. But even those works are to be performed after having renounced all selfish interest in them and in their fruits; this, O son of Pritha, is my ultimate and supreme decision. The abstention from works which are necessary and obligatory is improper; the not doing of such actions is due to delusion springing from the quality of *tamas*. The refraining from works because they are painful and from the dread of annoyance ariseth from the quality of *rajas* which belongs to passion, and he who thus leaves undone what he ought to do shall not obtain the fruit which comes from right forsaking. The work which is performed, O Arjuna, because it is

necessary, obligatory, and proper, with all self-interest therein put aside and attachment to the action absent, is declared to be of the quality of truth and goodness which is known as *sattva*. The true renouncer, full of the quality of goodness, wise and exempt from all doubt, is averse neither to those works which fail nor those which succeed. It is impossible for mortals to utterly abandon actions; but he who gives up the results of action is the true renouncer. The threefold results of action — unwished for, wished for, and mixed — accrue after death to those who do not practice this renunciation, but no results follow those who perfectly renounce. (2)

"Learn, O great-armed one, that for the accomplishment of every work five agents are necessary, as is declared. These are the substratum, the agent, the various sorts of organs, the various and distinct movements and with these, as fifth, the presiding deities. These five agents are included in the performance of every act which a man undertaketh, whether with his body, his speech, or his mind. This being thus, whoever because of the imperfection of his mind beholdeth the real self as the agent thinketh wrongly and seeth not aright. He whose nature is free from egotism and whose power of discrimination is not blinded does not slay though he killeth all these people, and is not bound by the bonds of action. The three causes which incite to action are knowledge, the thing to be known, and the knower, and threefold also is the totality of the action in the act, the instrument, and the agent. Knowledge, the act, and the agent are also distinguished in three ways according to the three qualities; listen to their enumeration after that classification.

"Know that the wisdom which perceives in all nature one single principle, indivisible and incorruptible, not separate in the separate objects seen, is of the *sattva* quality. The knowledge which perceives different and manifold principles as present in

the world of created beings pertains to *rajas*, the quality of passion. But that knowledge, wholly without value, which is mean, attached to one object alone as if it were the whole, which does not see the true cause of existence, is of the nature of *tamas*, indifferent and dark.

"The action which is right to be done, performed without attachment to results, free from pride and selfishness, is of the *sattva* quality. That one is of the *rajas* quality which is done with a view to its consequences, or with great exertion, or with egotism. And that which in consequence of delusion is undertaken without regard to its consequences, or the power to carry it out, or the harm it may cause, is of the quality of darkness — *tamas*.

"The doer who performs necessary actions unattached to their consequences and without love or hatred is of the nature of the quality of truth — *sattva*. The doer whose actions are performed with attachment to the result, with great exertion, for the gratification of his lusts and with pride, covetousness, uncleanness, and attended with rejoicing and grieving, is of the quality of *rajas* — passion and desire. The doer who is ignorant, foolish, undertaking actions without ability, without discrimination, with sloth, deceit, obstinacy, mischievousness, and dilatoriness, is of the quality of *tamas*.

"Hear now, O Dhananjaya, conqueror of wealth, the differences which I shall now explain in the discerning power (3) and the steadfast power within, according to the three classes flowing from the divisions of the three qualities. The discerning power that knows how to begin and to renounce, what should and what should not be done, what is to be feared and what not, what holds fast and what sets the soul free, is of the *sattva* quality. That discernment, O son of Pritha, which does not fully know what

ought to be done and what not, what should be feared and what not, is of the passion-born *rajas* quality. That discriminating power which is enveloped in obscurity, mistaking wrong for right and all things contrary to their true intent and meaning, is of the dark quality of *tamas*.

"That power of steadfastness holding the man together, which by devotion controls every motion of the mind, the breath, the senses and the organs, partaketh of the *sattva* quality. And that which cherisheth duty, pleasure, and wealth, in him who looketh to the fruits of action is of the quality of *rajas*. But that through which the man of low capacity stays fast in drowsiness, fear, grief, vanity and rashness is from the *tamas* quality, O son of Pritha.

"Now hear what are the three kinds of pleasure wherein happiness comes from habitude and pain is ended. That which in the beginning is as poison and in the end as the waters of life, and which arises from a purified understanding, is declared to be of the *sattva* quality. That arising from the connection of the senses with their objects which in the beginning is sweet as the waters of life but at the end like poison, is of the quality of *rajas*. That pleasure is of the dark *tamas* quality which both in the beginning and the end arising from sleep, idleness, and carelessness, tendeth both in the beginning and the end to stupefy the soul. There is no creature on earth nor among the hosts in heaven who is free from these three qualities which arise from nature.

"The respective duties of the four castes, of Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, and Sudras, are also determined by the qualities which predominate in the disposition of each, O harasser of thy foes. The natural duty of a Brahman compriseth tranquillity, purity, self-mastery, patience, rectitude, learning, spiritual discernment, and belief in the existence of another world. Those of the

Kshatriya sprung from his nature are valor, glory, strength, firmness, not to flee from the field of battle, liberality and a lordly character. The natural duties of the Vaisya are to till the land, tend cattle and to buy and sell; and that of the Sudra is to serve, as is his natural disposition.

"Men being contented and devoted to their own proper duties attain perfection; hear now how that perfection is attained by devotion to natural duty.

"If a man maketh offering to the Supreme Being who is the source of the works of all and by whom this universe was spread abroad, he thus obtaineth perfection. The performance of the duties of a man's own particular calling, although devoid of excellence, is better than doing the duty of another, however well performed; and he who fulfills the duties obligated by nature, does not incur sin. A man's own natural duty, even though stained with faults, ought not to be abandoned. For all human acts are involved in faults, as the fire is wrapped in smoke. The highest perfection of freedom from action is attained through renunciation by him who in all works has an unfettered mind and subdued heart.

"Learn from me, in brief, in what manner the man who has reached perfection attains to the Supreme Spirit, which is the end, the aim, and highest condition of spiritual knowledge.

"Imbued with pure discrimination, restraining himself with resolution, having rejected the charms of sound and other objects of the senses, and casting off attachment and dislike; dwelling in secluded places, eating little, with speech, body, and mind controlled, engaging in constant meditation and unwaveringly fixed in dispassion; abandoning egotism, arrogance, violence, vanity, desire, anger, pride, and possession, with calmness ever present, a man is fitted to be the Supreme Being. And having thus attained to the Supreme, he is serene, sorrowing no more, and no

more desiring, but alike towards all creatures he attains to supreme devotion to me. By this devotion to me he knoweth fundamentally who and what I am and having thus discovered me he enters into me without any intermediate condition. And even the man who is always engaged in action shall attain by my favor to the eternal and incorruptible imperishable abode, if he put his trust in me alone. With thy heart place all thy works on me, prefer me to all else, exercise mental devotion continually, and think constantly of me. By so doing thou shalt by my divine favor surmount every difficulty which surroundeth thee; but if from pride thou wilt not listen to my words, thou shalt undoubtedly be lost. And if, indulging self-confidence, thou sayest 'I will not fight,' such a determination will prove itself vain, for the principles of thy nature will impel thee to engage. Being bound by all past karma to thy natural duties, thou, O son of Kunti, wilt involuntarily do from necessity that which in thy folly thou wouldst not do. There dwelleth in the heart of every creature, O Arjuna, the Master — *Isvara* — who by his magic power causeth all things and creatures to revolve mounted upon the universal wheel of time. Take sanctuary with him alone, O son of Bharata, with all thy soul; by his grace thou shalt obtain supreme happiness, the eternal place.

"Thus have I made known unto thee this knowledge which is a mystery more secret than secrecy itself; ponder it fully in thy mind, act as seemeth best unto thee.

"But further listen to my supreme and most mysterious words which I will now for thy good reveal unto thee because thou art dearly beloved of me. Place thy heart upon me as I have declared myself to be, serve me, offer unto me alone, and bow down before me alone, and thou shalt come to me; I swear it, for thou art dear to me. Forsake every other religion and take refuge alone with me; grieve not, for I shall deliver thee from all transgressions.

Thou must never reveal this to one who doth not practice mortification, who is without devotion, who careth not to hear it, nor unto him who despiseth me. He who expoundeth this supreme mystery to my worshipers shall come to me if he performs the highest worship of me; and there shall not be among men anyone who will better serve me than he, and he shall be dearest unto me of all on earth. If anyone shall study these sacred dialogues held between us two, I shall consider that I am worshiped by him with the sacrifice of knowledge; this is my resolve. And even the man who shall listen to it with faith and not reviling shall, being freed from evil, attain to the regions of happiness provided for those whose deeds are righteous.

"Hast thou heard all this, O son of Pritha, with mind one-pointed? Has the delusion of thought which arose from ignorance been removed, O Dhananjaya?"

ARJUNA:

"By thy divine power, O thou who fallest not (4), my delusion is destroyed, I am collected once more; I am free from doubt, firm, and will act according to thy bidding."

SANJAYA:

Thus have I been an ear-witness of the miraculous astonishing dialogue, never heard before, between Vasudeva and the magnanimous son of Pritha. By the favor of Vydsa I heard this supreme mystery of Yoga — devotion — even as revealed from the mouth of Krishna himself who is the supreme Master of devotion. And as I again and again remember, O mighty king, this wonderful sacred dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, I am delighted again and again. Also, as I recall to my memory the wonderful form of Hari (5), the Lord, my astonishment is great, O king, and I rejoice again and again. Wherever Krishna, the

supreme Master of devotion, and wherever the son of Pritha, the mighty archer, may be, there with certainty are fortune, victory, wealth, and wise action; this is my belief.

Thus in the *Upanishads*, called the holy *Bhagavad-Gita*, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Eighteenth Chapter, by name —

DEVOTION AS REGARDS RENUNCIATION AND FINAL LIBERATION.

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FOOTNOTES:

1. Kesin was a daitya, a demon, fabled to have been sent by Kansa for the purpose of destroying Krishna. ([return to text](#))
2. This verse refers not only to effects after death in the post-mortem states, but also to subsequent lives in the body upon reincarnating. ([return to text](#))
3. This is Buddhi, the highest intellection, the power of judgment. ([return to text](#))
4. The word is "Achyuta." ([return to text](#))
5. One of the names of Vishnu, and also applied to Krishna. ([return to text](#))

Essay on Chapter I of the *Bhagavad-Gita*

If the title of this sacred Hindu poem were paraphrased, it would read:

The Holy Song of God Himself, who, at the beginning of Kali yuga or the dark age, descended upon earth to aid and instruct Man.

GITA means song, and BHAGAVAD is one of the names of Krishna. Krishna was an Avatar. According to the views of the Brahmins, we are now in Kali-yuga, which began about the time of Krishna's appearance. He is said to have descended in order to start among men those moral and philosophical ideas which were necessary to be known during the revolution of the Age, at the end of which — after a brief period of darkness — a better Age will begin.

The composition of this poem is attributed to Vyasa and, as he is also said to have given the Vedas to men, a discussion about dates would not be profitable and can well stand over until some other occasion.

The *Bhagavad-Gita* is a portion of the *Mahabharata*, the great epic of India. The *Mahabharata* is so called because it contains the general history of the house of Bharat, and the prefix *Maha* signifies great. Its more definite object, however, is to give an account of the wars of the Kurus and Pandus, two great branches of the family. And that portion included in our poem is the sublime philosophical and metaphysical dialogue held by Krishna with Arjuna, on the eve of a battle between the two aspirants for dominion.

The scene of the battle is laid on the plain called "Kurukshetra," a strip of land near Delhi, between the Indus, the Ganges, and the

Himalayan mountains. Many European translators and commentators, being ignorant of the psychological system of the Hindus — which really underlies every word of this poem — have regarded this plain and the battle as just those two things and no more; some have gone so far as to give the commercial products of the country at the supposed period, so that readers might be able, forsooth, in that way to know the motives that prompted the two princes to enter into a bloody internecine conflict. No doubt such a conflict did take place, for man is continually imitating the higher spiritual planes; and a great sage could easily adopt a human event in order to erect a noble philosophical system upon such an allegorical foundation.

In one aspect history gives us merely the small or great occurrences of man's progress; but in another, any one great historical epoch will give us a picture of the evolution in man, in the mass, of any corresponding faculty of the Individual Soul. So we see, here and there, Western minds wondering why such a highly tuned metaphysical discussion should be "disfigured by a warfare of savages." Such is the materializing influence of Western culture that it is hardly able to admit any higher meaning in a portion of the poem which confessedly it has not yet come to fully understand.

Before the Upanishads can be properly rendered, the Indian psychological system must be understood; and even when its existence is admitted, the English speaking person will meet the great difficulty arising from an absence of words in that language which correspond to the ideas so frequently found in the Sanskrit. Thus we have to wait until a new set of words has been born to express the new ideas not yet existing in the civilization of the West.

The location of the plain on which this battle was fought is

important, as well as are also the very rivers and mountains by which it is bounded. And as equally needful to be understood, or at least guessed at, are the names of the respective princes. The very place in the *Mahabharata* in which this episode is inserted has deep significance, and we cannot afford to ignore anything whatever that is connected with the events. If we merely imagine that Vyasa or Krishna took the sacred plain of Kurukshetra and the great battle as simply accessories to his discourse, which we can easily discard, the whole force of the dialogue will be lost.

Although the *Bhagavad-Gita* is a small work, there have been written upon it, among the Hindus, more commentaries than those upon the *Revelation* of St. John among the Christians.

I do not intend to go into those commentaries, because on the one hand I am not a Sanskrit scholar, and on the other it would not tend to great profit. Many of them are fanciful, some unwarrantable; and those that are of value can be consulted by anyone anxious to pursue that line of inquiry. What I propose here to myself and to all who may read these papers is to study the *Bhagavad-Gita* by the light of that spiritual lamp — be it small or great — which the Supreme Soul will feed and increase within us if we attend to its behests and diligently inquire after it. Such at least is the promise by Krishna in the *Bhagavad-Gita* — the "Song Celestial."

In the few introductory lines with which I took up this subject, it was stated that not being a Sanskrit scholar I did not intend to go into the commentaries upon the poem in that language. The great mass of those commentaries have looked at the dialogue from various standpoints. Many later Hindu students have not gone beyond the explanations made by Sankaracharya, and nearly all refuse to do more than transliterate the names of the different

personages referred to in the first chapter.

But there is the highest authority for reading this poem between the lines. The Vedas themselves say that what we see of them is only "the disclosed Veda," and that one should strive to get above this *disclosed* word. It is here clearly implied that the undisclosed Vedas must be hidden or contained in that which is apparent to the outer senses. Did we not have this privilege, then surely would we be reduced to obtaining true knowledge solely from the facts of experience as suffered by the mortal frame, and fall into the gross error of the materialists who claim that mind is only an effect produced by the physical brain-molecules coming into motion. We would also have to follow the canonical rule, that conscience is a safe guide only when it is regulated by an external law such as the law of the church, or of the Brahmanical caste. But we very well know that within the material, apparent — or disclosed — man, exists the *real* one who is undisclosed.

This valuable privilege of looking for the inner sense, while not straining after impossible meanings in the text, is permitted to all sincere students of any holy scriptures, Christian or Pagan. And in the poem itself, Krishna declares that he will feed the lamp of spiritual wisdom so that the real meaning of his words may be known; so too the Upanishads uphold the existence of a faculty together with the right to use it, whereby one can plainly discern the real, or undisclosed, meaning of holy books. Indeed, there is a school of occultists who hold, as we think with reason, that this power may be so developed by devoted persons, that even upon hearing the words of a holy book read in a totally unfamiliar language, the true meaning and drift of the strange sentences become instantly known. (1) The Christian commentators all allow that in studying their Bible the spirit must be attended to and not the letter. This *spirit* is that *undisclosed* Veda which must be looked for between the lines.

Nor should the Western student of the poem be deterred from any attempt to get at the real meaning by the attitude of the Brahmins, who hold that only Brahmins can be told this real meaning, and, because Krishna did not make it plain, it may not be made plain now to Sudras, or low caste people. Were this view to prevail, then the whole Western body of students would be excluded from using this important book, inasmuch as all persons not Hindus are necessarily of Sudra caste. Krishna did not make such an exclusion, which is only priestcraft. He was himself of shepherd caste and not a Brahmin; and he says that anyone who listens to his words will receive great benefit. The sole limitation made by him is that one in which he declares that these things must not be taught to those who do not want to listen, which is just the same direction as that given by Jesus of Nazareth when he said, "cast not your pearls before swine."

But as our minds work very much upon suggestion or clues and might, in the absence of any hints as to where those clues are placed, be liable to altogether overlook the point, we must bear in mind the existence among the Aryans of a psychological system that gives substance and impulse to utterances declared by many Orientalists to be folly unworthy of attention from a man of the nineteenth century civilization. Nor need we be repulsed from our task because of a small acquaintance with that Aryan psychology. The moment we are aware of its existence in the poem, our inner self is ready to help the outer man to grasp after it; and in the noble pursuit of these great philosophical and moral truths, which is only our eternal endeavor to realize them as a part of our being, we can patiently wait for a perfect knowledge of the anatomy and functions of the inner man.

Western Sanskritists have translated many important words into the very lowest of their real meanings, being drawn away from

the true by the incomplete Western psychological and spiritual knowledge, or have mixed them up hopelessly. Such words as *karma* and *dharma* are not understood. *Dharma* means *law*, and is generally turned into *duty*, or said to refer merely to some rule depending upon human convention, whereas it means an inherent property of the faculties or of the whole man, or even of anything in the cosmos. Thus it is said that it is the duty, or dharma, of fire to burn. It always will burn and thus do its whole duty, having no consciousness, while man alone has the power to retard his "journey to the heart of the Sun," by refusing to perform his properly appointed and plainly evident dharma. So again, when we read in the *Bhagavad-Gita* that those who depart this life "in the bright half of the moon, in the six months of the sun's northern course," will go to eternal salvation, while others, "who depart in the gloomy night of the moon's dark season while the sun is in the southern half of his path," ascend for a time to the moon's region, to be reborn on this earth, our Orientalists tell us this is sheer folly, and we are unable to contradict them. But if we know that the Aryans, with a comprehensive knowledge of the vast and never inharmonious correspondence reigning throughout the macrocosm, in speaking thus meant to admit that the human being may be or not in a state of development in strict conformity to the bright or dark moon, the verse becomes clear. The materialistic critic will take the verse in the fourth chapter, which says that "he who eats of the ambrosia left from a sacrifice passes into the supreme spirit," and ask us how the eating of the remnants of a burnt offering can confer salvation. When, however, we know that Man is the altar and the sacrifice, and that this *ambrosia* is the *perfection of spiritual cultivation* which he eats or incorporates into his being, the Aryan is vindicated and we are saved from despair.

A strange similarity on one point may be noticed between our

poem and the old Hebrew record. The Jews were prepared by certain experiences to enter into the promised land, but were unable to do so until they had engaged in mighty conflicts with Hivites, Jebusites, Perizzites, and Amalekites. Here we find that the very opening verse signalizes a war. The old, blind king Dhritarashtra asks his prime minister to tell him what these opposing forces of Pandus and Kurus have been doing assembled as they are resolved upon war. So too the Jews assembled upon the borders of the promised land, resolved on conflict, and sustained in their resolve by the declarations of their God who had brought them out of the darkness of Egypt, carried on the fight. Egypt was the place where they had, in mystic language, obtained corporification, and stands for antenatal states, for unformed chaotic periods in the beginning of evolution, for the gestation in the womb. We are on the eve of a gigantic combat, we are to rush into the midst of "a conflict of savages." If this opening verse is understood as it was meant, we are given the key to a magnificent system, and shall not fall into the error of asserting that the unity of the poem is destroyed.

Dhritarashtra is blind, because the body, as such, is blind in every way.

Someone has said — Goethe I think — that the old pagan religions taught man to look up, to aspire continually toward the greatness which was really his to achieve, and thus led him to regard himself as but little less, potentially, than a god; while the attitude of man under the Christian system is one of humility, of bowed head and lowered eyes, in the presence of his God. In approaching the "jealous God" of the Mosaic dispensation, it is not permissible to assume an erect position. This change of attitude becomes necessary as soon as we postulate a Deity who is outside and beyond us. And yet it is not due to the Christian scriptures in themselves, but solely to the wrong interpretation given them by

priests and churches, and easily believed by a weak humanity that needs a support beyond itself on which to lean.

The Aryans, holding that man in his essence is *God*, naturally looked up to him and referred everything to him. They therefore attributed to the material of the body no power of sight or feeling. And so Dhritarashtra, who is *material existence*, in which thirst for its renewal inheres, is blind.

The eye cannot see nor the ear hear, of themselves. In the Upanishads the pupil is asked: "What is the sight of the eye, and the hearing of the ear?" replying that these powers reside solely with inner organs of the soul, using the material body as the means for experiencing the phenomena of material life. Without the presence of this indwelling, informing, hearing and seeing power — or being — this collection of particles now deified as *body* is dead or blind.

These philosophers were not behind our nineteenth century. Boscovich, the Italian, Faraday, Fiske and other moderns, have concluded that we cannot even see or know the *matter* of which these bodies and the different substances about us are made up, and that the ultimate resolution is not into atoms finely divided, but into "points of dynamic force"; and therefore, we cannot know a piece of iron, we only know the *phenomena* it produces. This position is an ancient Aryan one, with another added — that the real perceiver of those phenomena is the *Self*.

It is only by an acceptance of this philosophy that we will ever comprehend the facts of nature which our science is so laboriously noting and classifying. But that science ignores a large mass of phenomena well known to spiritualists here and to ascetics in Asia, because the actual existence of the Self as the final support of every phase of consciousness is denied. "The disappearance of the ascetic is a possibility." But the West denies

it, while it is doubtful if even spiritists will admit that any living man can cause that phenomenon known as "form" to disappear. They are, however, willing to grant that a "materialized spirit form" may disappear, or that some mediums are living who have disappeared while sitting in a chair, either as an actual dissipation of molecules or by being covered as with a veil. (2)

In those instances the thing happened without knowledge or effort on the part of the medium, who was a passive agent. But the Eastern ascetic, possessing the power of disappearing, is a person who has meditated upon the real basis of what we know as "form," with the doctrine ever in view, as stated by Bosovich and Faraday, that these phenomena are not realities per se, and adding that all must be referred to the Self. And so we find Patanjali in his compilation of yoga aphorisms stating the matter. In his twenty-first aphorism Book III, he says that the ascetic being aware that form, as such, is nothing, can cause himself to disappear (3) It is not difficult to explain this as a species of hypnotism or psychologizing performed by the ascetic. But such sort of explaining is only the modern method of getting out of a difficulty by stating it over again in new terms. Not until it is admitted that the Self eternally persists, and is always unmodified, will any real knowledge be acquired by us respecting these matters. In this Patanjali is very clear in his seventeenth aphorism, Book IV, where he says: "The modifications of the mental state are always known, because the presiding spirit is not modified."

We must admit the blindness of Dhritarashtra, as body, and that our consciousness and ability to know anything whatever of the modifications going on in the organism, are due to the "presiding spirit."

So this old, blind rajah is that part of man which, containing the

principle of thirst for existence, holds material life. The Ganges bounding his plain on one side typifies the sacred stream of spiritual life incarnated here.

At first it flows down unperceived by us, through the spiritual spheres, coming at last into what we call matter, where it manifests itself but yet remains unseen, until at last it flows into the sea — or death — to be drawn up again by the sun — or the karma of reincarnation. The plain is sacred because it is the "temple of the Holy Ghost." Kurukshetra should then read: "The body which is acquired by karma." So the king does not ask what this body itself has been doing, but what have the followers of material existence, that is the entire host of lower elements in man by which he is attached to physical life, and the followers of Pandu, that is the entire set of spiritual faculties, been doing on this sacred plain.

It follows then that the enumeration of generals and commanders gone into by the prime minister in reply to the king must be a catalogue of all the lower and higher faculties in man, containing also, in the names adopted, clues to powers of our being only at present dimly guessed at in the West or included in such vague terms as brain and mind. We find these generals given their appropriate places upon either side, and see also that they have assigned to them various distinctive weapons, which in many cases are flourished or exhibited in the preliminary movements, so that our attention may be drawn to them.

Salutation to Krishna! the Lord of Devotion, the God of Religion, the never failing help of those who trust in him.

We now have discovered that the poem is not disfigured by this account of a conflict that begins in the first chapter; to be then

dropped while the two great actors retire to their chariot for a discussion. This description of forces, and the first effect on Arjuna of his survey, show us that we are now to learn from Krishna what is the duty of man in his warfare with all the forces and tendencies of his nature. Instead of the conflict being a blemish to the poem, it is a necessary and valuable portion. We see that the fight is to be fought by every human being, whether he lives in India or not, for it is raging on the sacred plain of our body. Each one of us, then, is Arjuna.

In the Sanskrit, the first chapter is called "Arjuna-Vishada," which in English means, "The despair and despondency of Arjuna." Some have called it "The Survey of Army"; but while truly an army is surveyed, that is not the essential meaning intended. It is the result of the survey we are to consider; and that result upon Arjuna who is the person most interested — the one who is the chief questioner and beneficiary throughout the whole action of the poem — is despondency.

The cause of this despondency is to be inquired into.

Arjuna, in the flush of determination, and before any analysis of either the consequences to himself or to others who might become involved, entered the conflict, after having chosen Krishna as his charioteer. The forces are drawn up in line of battle, and he rides out to survey them. At once he sees ranged against him relatives of every class, in their turn preparing to destroy others, their relatives, friends and acquaintances as well as Arjuna's, who are enlisted on his side. Turning to Krishna, he says that he cannot engage in such a war, that he perceives only evil omens, and that even if the opposers, being ignorant, may be willing to fight with such dreadful consequences in view, he cannot do so, but must give up the battle ere it is begun.

Thereupon:

Arjuna, whose heart was troubled with grief, let fall his bow and arrows, and sat down on the bench of his chariot.

Every student of occultism, theosophy or true religion — all being the one thing — will go through Arjuna's experiences. Attracted by the beauty or other seductive quality, for him, of this study, he enters upon the prosecution of it, and soon discovers that he arouses two sets of forces. One of them consists of all his friends and relations who do not view life as he does, who are wedded to the "established order," and think him a fool for devoting any attention to anything else; while the general mass of his acquaintances and those whom he meets in the world instinctively array themselves against one who is thus starting upon a crusade that begins with his own follies and faults, but must end in a condemnation of theirs, if only by the force of example. The other opponents are far more difficult to meet, because they have their camp and base of action upon the astral and other hidden planes; they are all his lower tendencies and faculties, that up to this time have been in the sole service of material life. By the mere force of moral gravity, they fly to the other side, where they assist his living friends and relatives in their struggle against him. They have more efficiency in producing despondency than anything else. In the poem, it is referred to in the words addressed by Arjuna to Krishna:

I am not able to stand; for my understanding, as it were turneth round, and I behold inauspicious omens on all sides.

All of us are brought to this study by our own request made to our higher self, who is Krishna. Arjuna requested Krishna to be his charioteer, and to drive him forth between the two armies. It does not matter whether he now is consciously aware of having made the request, nor whether it was made as a specific act, in this life

or in many another precedent one; *it was made and it is to be answered at the right time*. Some of us have asked this many times before, in ancient births of ours in other bodies and other lands; others are making the request now; but it is more than likely in the case of those who are spurred on to intense effort and longing to know the truth, and to strive for unity with God, that they have put up the petition ages since. So now Krishna, the charioteer of this body with its horses — the mind — drives us forth so that we may stand with our higher self and all the tendencies connected with it on one side, and all the lower (but not all necessarily evil) principles on the other. The student may, perhaps, with ease face the crowd of friends and relatives, having probably gone through that experience in other lives and is now proof against it, but he is not proof against the first dark shadow of despair and ill result that falls upon him. Every elemental that he has vivified by evil thinking now casts upon him the thought,

"After all, it is no use; I cannot win; if I did, the gain would be nothing; I can see no great or lasting result to be attained, for all, all, is impermanent."

This dreadful feeling is sure in each case to supervene, and we might as well be prepared for it. We cannot always live on the enthusiasm of heavenly joys. The rosy hue of dawn does not reach round the world; it chases darkness. Let us be prepared for it, not only at the first stage, but all along in our progress to the holy seat; for it comes at each pause; at that slight pause when we are about to begin another breath, to take another step, to pass into another condition.

And here it is wise, turning to the 18th, and last, chapter of the poem, to read the words of the immortal master of life:

From a confidence in thine own self-sufficiency thou
mayest think that thou wilt not fight. Such is a fallacious

determination, *for the principles of thy nature will compel thee*. Being confined to actions by the duties of thy natural calling, *thou wilt involuntarily do that from necessity*, which thou wantest through ignorance to avoid.

In this, Krishna uses the very argument advanced by Arjuna against the fight, as one in its favor. In the chapter we are considering, Arjuna repeats the old Brahmanical injunction against those who break up the "eternal institutions of caste and tribe," for, as he says, the penalty annexed is a sojourn in hell, since, when the caste and tribe are destroyed, the ancestors, being deprived of the rites of funeral-cakes and libations of water (4), fall from heaven, and the whole tribe is thus lost. But Krishna shows, as above, that each man is naturally, by his bodily tendencies, compelled to do the acts of some particular calling, and that body with its tendencies is merely the manifestation of what the inner man is, as the result of all his former thoughts up to that incarnation. So he is forced by nature's law — which is his own — to be born just where he must have the experience that is needed. And Arjuna, being a warrior, is compelled to fight, whether he will or no.

In another chapter, the institution of caste is more particularly referred to, and there we will have occasion to go into that subject with more detail.

As stated in the last paper, the substratum, or support, for the whole cosmos, is the presiding spirit, and all the various changes in life, whether of a material nature or solely in mental states, are cognizable because the presiding spirit within is not modifiable. Were it otherwise, then we would have no memory, for with each passing event, we, becoming merged in it, could not remember anything, that is, we would see no changes. There must therefore be something eternally persisting, which is the witness and

perceiver of every passing change, itself unchangeable. All objects, and all states of what Western philosophers call mind, are modifications, for in order to be seen or known by us, there must be some change, either partial or total, from a precedent state. The perceiver of these changes is the inner man — Arjuna-Krishna.

This leads us to the conviction that there must be a universal presiding spirit, the producer as well as the spectator, of all this collection of animate and inanimate things. The philosophy taught by Krishna holds that at first this spirit — so called, however, by me only for the purpose of the discussion — remained in a state of quiet with no objects, because as yet there was no modification. But, resolving to create, or rather to emanate the universe, IT formed a picture of what should be, and this at once was a modification willingly brought about in the hitherto wholly unmodified spirit; thereupon the divine Idea was gradually expanded, coming forth into objectivity; while the essence of the presiding spirit remained unmodified, and became the perceiver of its own expanded idea. Its modifications are visible (and invisible) nature. Its essence then differentiates itself continually in various directions, becoming the immortal part of each man — the Krishna who talks to Arjuna. Coming like a spark from the central fire, it partakes of that nature, that is, the quality of being unmodifiable, and assumes to itself — as a cover, so to speak — the human body (5) and thus, being in essence unmodified, it has the capacity to perceive all the changes going on around the body.

This *Self* must be recognized as being within, pondered over, and as much as possible understood, if we are to gain any true knowledge.

We have thus quickly, and perhaps in an inadequate way, come

down to a consideration of Arjuna as composed of all these generals and heroes enumerated in this chapter, and who are, as we said, the various powers, passions and qualities included in the Western terms "brain and mind."

Modern physical, mental and psychological sciences have as yet but scratched the surface of that which they are engaged in examining. Physical science confessedly is empiric, knowing but the very outposts of the laws of nature; and our psychology is in a worse state. The latter has less chance for arriving at the truth than physical science, because scientists are proceeding to a gradual demonstration of natural laws by careful examination of facts easily observable, but psychology is a something which demands the pursuit of another method than that of science, or those now observed.

It would avail nothing at present to specify the Aryan nomenclature for all the sheaths — as they call them — that envelop the soul, because we as yet have not acquired the necessary ideas. Of what use is it to say that certain impressions reside in the *Anandamaya* sheath. But there is such an one, whether we call it by that name or by any other. We can, however, believe that the soul, in order to at last reach the objective plane where its experience is gained, places upon itself, one after the other, various sheaths, each having its peculiar property and function. The mere physical brain is thus seen to be only the material organ first used by the real percipient in receiving or conveying ideas and perceptions; and so with all the other organs, they are only the special seats for centralizing the power of the real man in order to experience the modifications of nature at that particular spot.

Who is the sufferer from this despondency?

It is our false personality as distinguished from Krishna — the

higher self — which is oppressed by the immediate resistance offered by all the lower part of our nature, and by those persons with whom we are most closely connected, as soon as we begin to draw them away from all old habits, and to present a new style of thinking for their consideration.

For Arjuna, sinking down upon the seat of that chariot which is his body, fell back upon his own nature and found therein the elements of search and courage, as well as those previous ones of gloom which arise first, being nearer the natural man. Reliance and pressure upon our own inner nature, in moments of darkness, are sure to be answered by the voice of Krishna, the inner guide.

The first consequences of the despondency are to make us feel that the battle we have invited ought not to be carried on, and we then are almost overwhelmed with the desire to give it up. Some do give it up, to begin it again, in a succeeding life, while others like Arjuna listen to the voice of Krishna, and bravely fight it out to the end.

"Thus, in the Upanishads, in the holy *Bhagavad-Gita*, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the Book of Devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the first chapter by name:

"THE DESPONDENCY OF ARJUNA."

Salutation to the god of battles, to the charioteer, to him who disposeth the forces aright, who leadeth us on to victory, with whom alone success is certain: that he may guide us to where the never-dying light shineth: Om!

Salutation to the prowess of Krishna! May it be with us in

the fight, strengthening our hearts that they faint not in the gloomy night that follows in the path of the day.

THE FIRST ABYSS

The first chapter is ended. In one aspect, the *Bhagavad-Gita* is a personal book. It is for each man; and it is in that way we have so far considered it. Some have called it obscure, and others a book which deals solely with the great principles of nature; with only great questions of cosmogony; with difficult and bewildering questions relating to the first cause; and still others think it is contradictory and vague. But this first scene in the great colloquy is plain. It has the din of arms, the movement of battalions and the disposition of forces with their generals. No one need feel any hesitation now, for we are face to face with ourselves. The weak man, or he who does not care for truth no matter where it leads, had better shut the book now. Unless he can go on reading the poem with the fixed intention of applying it to himself, it will do him no good whatever. He may say, however, that he will read it for what it may seem to contain, but if he reads to the end of time and does not fairly regard this first lecture, his knowledge gained further on will be no knowledge. It is indeed the book of the great mystery; but that problem was never solved *for* anyone; it must be settled and solved *by* each one *for himself*.

No doubt it was for this reason that Vyasa, to whom the poem is attributed, placed this conflict, in which the principal characters are Arjuna and Krishna, at the outset. It would have been easier to have made them sit down for a philosophical discourse beforehand in which reasons pro and con regarding any battle would be discussed, and then, after all that was done, to show us Arjuna, encouraged and equipped, entering upon the war sure of victory because he had spent much time in dispelling his doubts. But instead of doing this he pictures the impetuous Arjuna

precipitating the battle before he had considered whom it was he had to fight.

It does not appear in the *Bhagavad-Gita* that Krishna had induced Arjuna, as was the case, to make the war for the purpose of regaining his kingdom. While stirring him up to it Krishna had wisely refrained from telling that which Arjuna finds out on the first day, that he had to oppose all these friends, kinsmen and preceptors. It was a wise reticence. If we completely apprehended the enormous power of our passions and various tendencies, most of us would throw up the fight in advance; for nothing would persuade us that any power within could withstand such overwhelming odds. For us then the incitement to fight is found, not so much in any conversation that we hold now with Krishna, but in the impulses which are carried across, again and again, from incarnation to incarnation.

We take up the gage over and over, life after life, in experience after experience, never completely defeated if we always look to Krishna — our higher self. And in the tale of Arjuna we find this also. For in a succeeding book, called *Anugita*, is an account of the hero walking with Krishna through the Palace of Maya. The battle over, for the time, Arjuna tells his friend that he has really forgotten much that he had told him (in the *Bhagavad-Gita*) and asks for a succinct repetition. This is given to him by the great warrior.

The palace of maya is this body of illusion, built up around us by desire. In our last birth we had all the advice given in this poem, and walking today through the palace, which sometimes seems so lovely, we now and then have reminiscences from the past. Sometimes we stoutly take up the fight; but surely, if we have listened to the guide aright, we will compel ourselves at last to carry it out until finished.

In coming to the conclusion of this first chapter, we reach the *first abyss*. It is not the great abyss, albeit it may seem to us, in our experience, to be the greatest. We are now vis-a-vis our own despair, and doubt its companion. Many a student of theosophy has in our own sight reached this point — all true students do. Like a little child who first ventures from the parent's side, we are affrighted at what seems new to us, and dropping our weapons attempt to get away; but, in the pursuit of theosophy it is not possible to go back.

Because the abyss is behind us.

There is in nature a law that operates in every department whether moral or physical, and which may now be called that of undulation and then that of inhibition; while at other times it reappears as vibration, and still again as attraction and repulsion, but all these changes are only apparent because at bottom it is the same. Among vegetables it causes the sap to flow up the tree in one way and will not permit it to return in the same direction. In our own blood circulation we find the blood propelled from the heart, and that nature has provided little valves which will not permit it to return to the heart by the way it came, but by the way provided. Medical and anatomical science are not quite sure what it is that causes the blood to pass these valves; whether it is pressure from behind communicated by the heart, or the pressure by atmosphere from without which gently squeezes, as it were, the blood upon its way. But the occultist does not find himself limited by these empirical deductions. He goes at once to the center and declares that the impulse *is* from the heart and that that organ receives its impulse from the great astral heart or the akasa, which has been said by all mystics to have a double motion, or alternate vibration — the systole and diastole of nature.

So in this sense the valve in the circulation represents the abyss behind us that we cannot re-pass. We are in the great general circulation and compelled, whether we like it or not, to obey its forward impulse.

This place of dejection of Arjuna is also the same thing as is mentioned in *Light on the Path* as the silence after the storm. In tropical countries this silence is very apparent. After the storm has burst and passed, there is a quietness when the earth and the trees seem to have momentarily ceased making their familiar, manifold noises. They are obeying the general law and beginning the process of assimilation.

And in the astral world it is just the same. When one enters there for the first time, a great silence falls, during which the regulated soul is imbibing its surroundings and becoming accustomed to them. It says nothing but waits quietly until it has become in vibration precisely the same as the plane in which it is; when that is accomplished then it can speak properly, make itself understood, and likewise understand. But the unregulated soul flies to that plane of the astral world in a disturbed state, hurries to speak before it is able to do so intelligibly and as a consequence is not understood, while it increases its own confusion and makes it less likely that it will soon come to understand. People are attracted to the astral plane; they hear of its wonders and astonishments and like a child with a new toy in sight they hurry to grasp it. They refuse to learn its philosophy because that seems dry and difficult. So they plunge in, and as Murdhna Joti said in a former article in this magazine, they then "swim in it and cut capers like a boy in a pool of water."

But for the earnest student and true disciple the matter is serious. He has vowed to have the truth at whatever cost, willing to go wherever she leads — even if it be to death.

So Krishna, having got Arjuna to where the battle has really begun, where retreat is not possible, begins to tell his loved disciple and friend what is the philosophy that underlies it all and without which success cannot be compassed.

We should not fail to observe at this point, that when Arjuna threw down his bow and arrows, the flying of missiles had already begun. We cannot say that when the philosophical discourse began between these two the opposing forces declared a truce until the mighty heroes should give the signal, because there is nowhere any verse that would authorize it, and we also can read in the accompanying books that all the paraphernalia of war had been brought onto the field and that the enemy would not desist, no matter what Arjuna might do. Now there is a meaning here, which is also a part of the great abyss the son of Pandu saw behind him, and which every one of us also sees.

We enter upon this great path of action in occultism mentally disposed towards final victory. This mental attitude instantly throws all the parts of our being into agitation, during which the tendencies which are by nature antipathetic to each other separate and range themselves upon opposite sides. This creates great distress, with oftentimes wandering of the mind, and adds additional terror to our dark despair. We may then sink down and declare that we will fly to a forest — or as they did once in Europe, to a monastery — so as to get away from what seems to be unfavorable ground for a conflict. But we have evoked a force in nature and set up a current and vibration which *will go on* no matter what we do. This is the meaning of the "flying of arrows" even when Arjuna sat down on the bench of his chariot.

At this point of our progress we should *examine our motive and desire*.

It has been said in some theosophical writings of the present day,

that a "spiritualized will" ought to be cultivated. As terms are of the highest importance we ought to be careful how we use them, for in the inner life they represent either genuine, regulated forces, or useless and abortive things that lead to nothing but confusion. This term "spiritualized will" leads to error, because in fact it has no existence. The mistake has grown out of the constant dwelling on "will" and "forces" needed for the production of phenomena, as something the disciple should strive to obtain — whether so confessed or not — while the real motive power is lost sight of. It is very essential that we should clearly understand this, for if we make the blunder of attributing to *will* or to any other faculty an action which it does not have, or of placing it in a plane to which it does not belong, we at once remove ourselves far from the real knowledge, since all action on this plane is by mind alone.

The old Hermetic statement is: "*Behind will stands desire,*" and it is true.

Will is a pure, colorless force which is moved into action by *desire*. If desire does not give a direction, the will is motionless; and just as desire indicates, so the will proceeds to execute.

But as there are countless wills of sentient beings constantly plying to and fro in our sphere, and must be at all times in some manner acting upon one another, the question arises: What is that sort of knowledge which shows how to use the will so that the effect of counteracting wills may not be felt? That knowledge is lost among the generality of men and is only instinctive here and there in the world as a matter of karmic result, giving us examples of men whose will seems to lead them on to success, as Jay Gould and others.

Furthermore, men of the world are not desiring to see results which shall be in accord with the general will of nature, because

they are wanting this and that for their own benefit. Their desire, then, no matter how strong, is limited or nullified: (1) by lack of knowledge of how to counteract other wills; (2) by being in opposition to the general will of nature without the other power of being able to act strongly in opposition to that too.

So it follows — as we see in practice in life — *that men obtain only a portion of that which they desire.*

The question next arises: Can a man go against the general will of nature and escape destruction, and also be able to desire wickedly with knowledge, and accomplish, through will, what he wishes?

Such a man can do all of these — except to escape destruction. That is sure to come, no matter at how remote a period.

He acquires extraordinary knowledge, enabling him to use powers for selfish purposes during immense periods of time, but at last the insidious effects of the opposition to the general true will makes itself felt and he is destroyed forever.

This fact is the origin of the destruction-of-worlds myths, and of those myths of combats such as between Krishna and Ravana, the demon god, and between Durga and the demons.

For in other ages, as is to again occur in ages to come, these wickedly desiring people, having great knowledge, increase to an enormous extent and threaten the stability of the world. Then the adherents of the good law can no longer quietly work on humanity, but come out in force, and a fight ensues in which the black magicians are always destroyed, because the good adepts possess not only equal knowledge with the bad ones, but have in addition the great assistance of the general will of nature which is not in control of the others, and so it is inevitable that the good should triumph always. This assistance is also the heritage of

every true student, and may be invoked by the real disciple when he has arrived at and passed the first abyss.

"And when the Great King of Glory saw the Heavenly Treasure of the Wheel, he sprinkled it with water and said: 'Roll onward, O my Lord, the Wheel! O my Lord, go forth and overcome!'"

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FOOTNOTES:

1. We have in mind an incident where a person of some slight development in this direction, heard read several verses from the Vedas in Sanskrit — with which he had no acquaintance — and instantly told what the verses were about. ([return to text](#))
2. For an instance see Olcott's *People from the Other World*, respecting a female medium. ([return to text](#))
3. The aphorism reads: "By performing Sanyama — restraint (or meditation) — about form, its power of being apprehended (by the seer's eye) being checked, and luminousness, the property of the organ of sight, having no connection with its object (that is the form), the result is the disappearance of the ascetic." ([return to text](#))
4. This reference by Arjuna is to the immemorial custom of the son, or descendants, offering to the departed, at stated times, funeral-cakes and water, called "Sraddha and Pinda" — one of the so-called superstitions of the Hindus.

It has always been a grave question with me whether the boasted

"freedom from superstitions" of Western 19th century civilization is an unmixed good, or any evidence of real progress. All such ancient forms have been swept away, and with them nearly every vestige of true religious feeling, leaving only an unquenchable thirst for money and power. In the present ignorance of the true reason at the bottom of these forms, the assertion is made that they mean nothing whatever. But in the Catholic church it is continued, and to some extent believed in, as is shown in their masses for the dead; surely these masses would not be offered if supposed to have no effect on the state of those for whom they are offered.

Although greatly corrupted and debased, it is in this church alone that these old practices are preserved. *Sraddha* and *Pinda* are now neglected, because the inner constitution of man, and the constitution of the macrocosm, are not understood in such a way as to make the ceremony of the slightest use. ([return to text](#))

5. It is also, of course, inherent in all nature. ([return to text](#))

Essay on Chapter II of the *Bhagavad-Gita*

And now, under the Lotus in the Heart, glows the lamp of the Soul. Protected by the gods who there stand guard, it sheds its soft rays in every direction.

A mighty spirit moves through the pages of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. It has the seductive influence of beauty; yet, like strength, it fills one as with the sound of armies assembling or the roar of great waters. Appealing alike to the warrior and the philosopher, it shows to the one the righteousness of lawful action, and to the other the calmness which results to him who has reached inaction through action. Schlegel, after studying the poem, pays tribute to it in these words:

By the Brahmins, reverence of masters is considered the most sacred of duties. Thee therefore, first, most holy prophet, interpreter of the Deity, by whatever name thou wast called among mortals, the author of this poem, by whose oracles the mind is rapt with ineffable delight to doctrines lofty, eternal, and divine — thee first, I say, I hail, and shall always worship at thy feet.

The second chapter begins to teach philosophy, but in such a way that Arjuna is led on gradually step by step to the end of the dialogue; and yet the very first instructions from Krishna are so couched that the end and purpose of the scheme are seen at the beginning.

Although philosophy seems dry to most people, and especially to minds in the Western world who are surrounded by the rush of their new and quite undeveloped civilization, yet it must be taught and understood. It has become the fashion to some extent

to scout careful study or practice and go in for the rapid methods inaugurated in America. In many places emotional goodness is declared to exceed in value the calmness that results from a broad philosophical foundation, and in others astral wonder seeking, or great strength of mind whether discriminative or not, is given the first rank. Strength without knowledge, and sympathetic tears without the ability to be calm — in fine, faith without works — will not save us. And this is one of the lessons of the second chapter.

The greatest of the ancients inculcated by both symbols and books the absolute necessity for the acquirement of philosophical knowledge, inasmuch as strength or special faculties are useless without it. Those Greeks and others who recorded some of the wisdom of the elder Egyptians well illustrated this. They said,

that in the symbols it was shown, as where Hermes is represented as an old and a young man, intending by this to signify that he who rightly inspects sacred matters ought to be both intelligent and strong, one of these without the other being imperfect. And for the same reason the symbol of the great Sphinx was established; the beast signifying strength, and the man wisdom. For strength when destitute of the ruling aid of wisdom, is overcome by stupid astonishment confusing all things together; and for the purpose of action the intellect is useless when it is deprived of strength.

So, whether our strength is that of sympathy or of astral vision, we will be confounded if philosophical knowledge be absent.

But, so as not to be misunderstood, I must answer the question that will be asked, "Do you then condemn sympathy and love, and preach a cold philosophy only?" By no means. Sympathy and emotion are as much parts of the great whole as knowledge, but

inquiring students wish to know all that lies in the path. The office of sympathy, charity, and all other forms of goodness, so far as the effect on us is concerned, is to entitle us to help. By this exercise we inevitably attract to us those souls who have the knowledge and are ready to help us to acquire it also. But while we ignore philosophy and do not try to attain to right discrimination, we must pass through many lives, many weary treadmills of life, until at last little by little we have been forced, without our will, into the possession of the proper seeds of mental action from which the crop of right discrimination may be gathered.

Arjuna asks Krishna:

As I am of a disposition which is affected by compassion and the fear of doing wrong, my mind is bewildered. Tell me truly what may be best for me to do! I am thy disciple, wherefore instruct me in my duty, who am under thy tuition; for my understanding is confounded by the dictates of my duty, and I see nothing that may assuage the grief which drieth up my faculties, although I were to obtain a kingdom without a rival upon earth or dominion over the hosts of heaven.

Krishna, now the guru — or spiritual teacher — of Arjuna, makes a reply which is not excelled anywhere in the poem; pointing out the permanence and eternal nature of the soul, the progress it has to make through reincarnation to perfection, the error of imagining that we really do anything ourselves, and showing how all duties must be performed by him who desires to reach salvation. The words used by the Blessed Lord in speaking of the soul cannot be added to by me. He says:

The wise grieve not for dead or living. But never at any period did I, or thou, or these kings of men, not exist, nor

shall any of us at any time henceforward cease to exist. As the soul in the body undergoes the changes of childhood, prime, and age, so it obtains a new body hereafter; a sensible man is not troubled about that. But the contact of the elements, O son of Kunti, which bring cold and heat, pleasure and pain, which come and go and are temporary, these do thou endure, O Bharata! (1) For that man whom, being the same in pain and pleasure and ever constant, these elements do not afflict, is fitted for immortality.

There is no existence for what does not exist, nor is there any non-existence for what exists. . . . Know this, that that by which all this universe is created is indestructible. No one can cause the destruction of this inexhaustible thing. . . . He who believes that this spirit can kill, and he who thinks it can be killed, both of these are wrong in judgment. It is not born, nor dies at any time; it has no origin, nor will it ever have an end. Unborn, changeless, eternal both as to future and past time, it is not slain when the body is killed. How can that man, O son of Pritha, who knows that it is indestructible, constant, unborn, and inexhaustible, really cause the death of anybody or kill anybody himself? As a man abandons worn-out clothes and takes other new ones, so does the soul quit worn-out bodies and enter other new ones. Weapons cannot cleave it. Fire cannot burn it, nor can water wet it, nor wind dry it. . . . It is constant, capable of going everywhere, firm, immovable, and eternal. It is said to be invisible, incomprehensible, immutable. Therefore, knowing it to be such, thou art not right to grieve for it.

This is the same doctrine as is found in the Isavasya-Upanishad: *The Identity of all Spiritual Beings, and Resignation*. And by "spiritual beings" is meant all life above the inorganic, for man is not admitted to be material. There is only one life, one

consciousness. It masquerades under all the different forms of sentient beings, and those varying forms with their intelligences mirror a portion of the *One Life*, thus producing in each a false idea of egoism. A continuance of belief in that false ego produces a continuance of ignorance, thus delaying salvation. The beginning of the effort to dissipate this false belief is the beginning of the Path; the total dissipation of it is the perfection of yoga, or union with God. The entry upon that Path *cannot be made until resignation is consummated*; for, as the Upanishad and the *Bhagavad-Gita* say:

"All this, whatsoever moves on earth, is to be surrendered to the Lord — the Self. When thou hast surrendered all this; then thou mayest enjoy."

If this be true, then how necessary to consider philosophy so as to be able to cut off the false belief. And how useless to pursue occultism merely for your own benefit. You may know all about currents and polarities, about any and every phenomenon possible in the astral world, but with the death of your body it is lost, leaving to you only the amount of real spiritual advance you happen to have made. But once resign and all is possible. This will not ruin your life nor destroy any proper ideals; poor and petty ideals had better be at once lost. It may seem that all ideals are gone, but that will be only the first effect of taking this step.

We must be ready to say at any moment under whatever circumstances, whether expected or unexpected: "It is just what I in fact desired." For only those ideals can be dissipated which rest upon a lower basis than the highest aim, or which are not in accord with nature's (God's) law. And as our aim ought to be to reach the supreme condition and to help all other sentient beings to do so also, we must cultivate complete resignation to the Law, the expression and operation of which is seen in the

circumstances of life and the ebb and flow of our inner being. All that can be gotten out of wealth, or beauty, or art, or pleasure, are merely pools of water found along our path as it wanders through the desert of life. If we are not seeking them their appearance gives us intense pleasure, and we are thus able to use them for our good and that of others just so long as the Law leaves them to us; but when that superior power removes them, we must say: "It is just what I in fact desired." Any other course is blindness. All the passing shows of life, whether fraught with disaster or full of fame and glory, are teachers; he who neglects them, neglects opportunities which seldom the gods repeat. And the only way to learn from them is through the heart's resignation; for when we become in heart completely poor, we at once are the treasurers and disbursers of enormous riches.

Krishna then insists on the scrupulous performance of natural duty. (2)

And considering thine own duty as a Kshatriya, thou art not right to waver. For there is nothing better for a Kshatriya than lawful war.

In order to see more clearly the occasion for his insistence upon performance of duty, we must remember that at the opening of the battle Arjuna "threw down his bow and arrows." This, in India, meant that he then resolved to desert the circumstances in which karma had placed him and *to become an ascetic*, or, as has been frequently proposed by Western students, he wished to get away from a state of society which offered apparent obstruction to spiritual culture. But Krishna refers him to his birth in the Kshatriya — or warrior — caste, and to the natural duty of a Kshatriya, which is war. The natural caste of Arjuna might have been represented as that of merchant, but wisely it was not, for this is the book of action, and only a warrior fitly typifies action

(3); so his natural duty will stand for whatever be that of any man. We are not to shirk our karma; by abhorring it we only make new karma. Our only true course is to "let the motive for action be in the action itself, never in its reward; not to be incited to action by the hope of the result, nor yet indulge a propensity to inertness." This advice and the direction to see the one Spirit in all things and all things in *It* (ch. xiii) express the gist of the *Bhagavad-Gita's* teaching as to the proper attitude to be assumed by those striving after salvation.

In verse 40 Krishna alludes to this system as being one of initiation:

In this no initiation is lost, nor are there any evil consequences, and even a little of this practice saves from great danger; there is no destruction of nor detriment to one's efforts.

Although not proclaimed in the newspapers nor advertised here and there through Secretaries, Delegates, and "Doors," this is the mother and the head of all systems of initiation. It is the progenitor of the mystic Rosicrucians, who have adopted the *lotus* and changed it into a *rose* (4), and all the other hundreds of initiating occult societies are merely faint and incomplete copies of this real one; but, unlike those, *it* has never dissolved. It is secret, because, founded in nature and having only real Hierophants at the head, its privacy cannot be invaded without the real key. And that key, in each degree, is the *aspirant himself*. Until that aspirant has become in fact the sign and the key, he cannot enter the degree above him. As a whole then, and in each degree, it is self-protective.

Thus including all other systems, it is the most difficult of all; but as at some time, in this life or in a succeeding age, we must perforce enter this *Lodge*, the attempt at entry might as well be

made at once. Of this we will speak in our next.

In my last I said that a system of initiation is spoken of which is the mother of all others, and that all the rest are mere exoteric copies or perversions of the real. In order that the idea intended to be expressed may be made clear, it is to be stated that the system is not confined to India, but at the same time it is true that the Western world has up to this time been so deeply engaged in the pursuit of mere money and external enjoyment that no body of Hierophants has taken up its actual residence in Europe or America as yet. There is very little force in the objection that, if those Adepts have such powers as have been ascribed to them, they could very easily have a residence here and overcome all the influences of the place. If it were in the least necessary that they should be here, no doubt can there be that they would come. But as all of the work required to be done, all that could possibly be accomplished, is to be achieved by the messengers sent out into each country who, so to say, prepare the ground, with the assistance of the Adepts, for others who follow them, there would be a waste of energy if the Hierophants appeared in person. Nor are those messengers dismayed by the critical attitude of those persons who, wanting a sign, continually deny that the help for the workers is afforded because the givers of it cannot be seen; and it can also be admitted that even the workers themselves are not continually in receipt of instruction or telegrams showing how and where to work. They are men and women who possess a faith that carries them through a long course of effort without a glimpse of those who have sent them. Yet at the same time some of them now and then see very plain evidence of the fact that they are constantly assisted.

We few equals indifferent of lands, indifferent of times,

We, enclosers of all continents, all castes, allowers of all
theologies,
Compassionaters, perceivers, rapport of men,
We walk silent among disputes and assertions, but reject not
the disputers: nor anything that is asserted,
We hear the bawling and din, we are reach'd at by divisions,
jealousies, recriminations on every side,
They close peremptorily upon us to surround us, my comrade,
Yet we walk unheld, free, the whole earth over, journeying up
and down till we make our ineffaceable mark upon time
and the diverse eras,
Till we saturate time and eras, that the men and women of
races, ages to come, may prove brethren and lovers as we
are. — Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*

So all this preparation is similar to that of the primeval forest by the early settlers in America; it is as yet hardly a tilling of the soil, but rather a clearing off of trees and weeds. This is not because they are unable to do more, but because the weeds and trees are there requiring to be removed before the Elder Ones can usefully push on in person the further development.

When the materials are all prepared and ready the architects shall appear.

All human beings are working through this system of initiation, and for that reason it includes all the exoteric societies. Very often the Masters in this have appeared in those when they saw an opportunity for sowing the seed, which, although for a time to be enclosed in the shell of formalism, was to be preserved for future use; just as the Egyptian mummy held in its hand for centuries the germ that blossomed and bore fruit in our day. And since man in all his struggles must be helped, they have assisted in political changes where a hope was held out for the rise of a beneficent

era. (5) The great mass of men are not with their own knowledge engaged in the work of this powerful and impregnable *Lodge*, but they will knowingly engage therein at some point in the course of their long evolution. And yet at every hour of each day these Masters are willing and anxious to meet those who are clear-eyed enough to see their true destiny, and noble-hearted so as to work for "the great orphan, humanity."

Then, further, none of us, and especially those who have heard of the Path or of Occultism or of the Masters, can say with confidence that he is not already one who has passed through some initiations with knowledge of them. We may be already initiated into some higher degree than our present attainments would suggest, and are undergoing a new trial unknown to ourselves. It is better to consider that we are, being sure to eliminate all pride of that unknown advance we have made. Having so concluded, we know that this long life is in itself another initiation, wherein we succeed or fail just as we learn the lesson of life. Some, I know, will not hasten to adopt this view, for they desire the Law to work in the manner appointed by them; they wish to have a sign or a password or a parchment or some wonderful test propounded, to which they shall be ready to submit at a certain time and place. But this is not the manner of it, and all true students know that. Surely if the little circumstances of life are not understood, if they have yet power to light the torch of anger or blow up the smoldering fire of lust, no set time or tournament will be offered for you by the Masters of this *Lodge*. Those set times and larger tests *are* given and have in their place to be overcome, but they belong to the day when you have raised the arch of attainment all perfect but the keystone — that is found or lost in the appointed trial.

Reaching to the actual door of this *Lodge* is the Path that I spoke of in my last, and leading to that Path are many roads. We might

as well attempt to enter the Path in this incarnation as to wait for succeeding lives.

There is great encouragement in Krishna's words to Arjuna in the second chapter:

In this system there is no destruction of or detriment to one's efforts; even a very small portion of this duty delivereth a man from great fear.

This refers to the law of karma. Every point of progress gained is never in reality lost. Even did we die at a time when our lives were not stainless, the real level of our development would not be lowered, for upon reassuming a mortal body in some after life on this earth we take up the thread just where we dropped it. In a later chapter (vi) Krishna says that we

come in contact with the knowledge which belonged to us in our former body, and from that time we struggle more diligently toward perfection.

Patanijali also says the same thing, and all the Aryan sacred books concur in the opinion. (6) The thoughts and aspirations of our life form a mass of force that operates instantly upon our acquirement of a body that furnishes the corresponding instrument, or upon our so altering our mental state as to give it opportunity for action. The objection that this would be a suspension of energy is not tenable, since such a thing is well known in the physical world, even if called by some other name. We are not obliged to rest on that objection, as it by no means follows that the energy is suspended; it has its operation in other ways.

The encouragement given by Krishna leads us to consider what method is offered for entering upon the Path. We find it to be a right knowledge of the spirit. This right knowledge is found in the

second chapter.

As by all illuminated sages, the ultimate truth is first declared by the Blessed Lord as we have seen, and in the very chapter wherein right action is insisted upon as the way to liberation. He then, proceeding to explain himself further, points out errors common to humanity, and certain false views that prevailed in India then, as they do now.

Verse 41: — In this system there is only one single object of a steady, constant nature, O son of Kuru. Those who do not persevere, and whose principles are indefinite, have objects with many ramifications and without end.

In the men thus described, desires for worldly or intellectual acquisitions prevail and, desires being infinite as also capable of producing endless modifications of desire, there is no concentration possible. This also has an application to the methods of our present scientific schools, which indulge in an eternal seeking for so-called facts before general principles are admitted. One single branch of investigation with them has endless ramifications that no human being could compass in a lifetime. Then:

Not disposed to meditation and perseverance is the intention of those who are devoted to enjoyments and dominion, and whose minds are seduced by that flowery sentence which is proclaimed by the unwise, who delight in texts from the Vedas, O son of Pritha, and say, "There is nothing else than that," being covetous-minded and considering heaven as the very highest good; offering rebirth as the reward of actions, and enjoining many special ceremonies for the sake of obtaining pleasures and dominion, and preferring the transient enjoyment of heaven to eternal absorption.

This is better understood when some of the ideas held in India regarding sacrifices and ceremonies are known. In the Occident sacrifices have long gone out of use, as there appeared to be no reason for them. And yet it must seem strange to the reflective mind that Christian nations should claim redemption through the Jews whose prophet enjoined sacrifices, and when Jesus himself said that not one jot or tittle of the law should pass away. In the place of the sacrifices of the East, the West has adopted a mere theory to be embraced, together with an uncertain moral code to be followed, with a result which is the same as that claimed by the Hindus — save only in one respect. That difference lies in the doctrine of reincarnation. The Christian looks for an eternal reward in heaven and knows nothing of reincarnation on earth, while the Hindu relies upon pleasure to be had in heaven — called *Svarga* — and a continuation of it upon earth by reason of a fortunate rebirth. They have special ceremonies, certain sorts of sacrifices, penances, prayers, and actions, the result of which is a rebirth on earth in a royal family, or with great riches, or in any other sort of pleasant circumstances; and also a sure admittance to heaven. Some ceremonies procure entrance into a delightful state after death which will last for incalculable periods of time.

Now no one of these sorts of procedure leads us to the ultimate, but all are causes of karma and of delusion: therefore Krishna did not approve them to Arjuna. And his warning is useful to theosophists who are students or wish to become such. With them the false view warned against by Krishna has altered itself into a craving for phenomena, or to perform some action that shall bring them the favor of Mahatmas, or a morbid fear of making karma, or else an equally accentuated desire to acquire good karma. They should abandon those attitudes and carefully study the following verses, trying to incorporate their true meaning into their very being.

The subject of the three Vedas is the assemblage of the three qualities. O Arjuna! be thou free from these three qualities, from the ordinary influence of the natural opposites, reposing on eternal truth, free from worldly anxieties, self-possessed. . . . Let, then, the motive for action be in the action itself, never in its event. Be not one whose motive for action is the hope of reward. Let not thy life be spent in inaction. Depend upon concentration, perform thy duty, abandon all thought of the consequence, and make the event equal to thee, whether it terminate in good or evil; for such an equanimity is called Yoga (union with God).

By far inferior to union with wisdom is action. Seek an asylum, then, in wisdom alone; for the miserable and unhappy are so on account of the event of things. Men who are endued with true wisdom dismiss, by means of this concentration, alike successful and unsuccessful results. Study then to obtain this concentration of thy understanding, for such concentration is a precious art.

Wise men, who have abandoned all thought of the fruit which is produced from their actions, are freed from the chains of birth in this world, and go to the regions of eternal happiness.

When thy reason shall get the better of the gloomy weakness of thy heart, then shalt thou have obtained all knowledge which has been or is to be taught. When thy understanding, by study brought to maturity, shall be fixed immovably in contemplation, then shall it obtain true wisdom.

The first portion of this paper was designedly enlarged in order to

precede the above. The last quoted verses contain the essence of what is called Karma-yoga, or, as it might be translated, *concentration and contemplation while engaged in action*. It is difficult, just as it is difficult to enter upon the Path, and if we desire to tread that aright we must know what we should do as true travelers. Krishna seems to me to here settle the dispute as to whether faith or works will save us. Mere faith will not do it, because in every act of faith there is some action. And it would appear to be impossible to acquire true faith without at once turning it into that sort of action which our faith shows us must be done, as it were, in evidence; yet action, pure and simple, will not be a cause of liberation, inasmuch as action, or karma, will produce new karma. We must therefore seek for concentration in order that we may be able to do those actions which the All-Wise presents to us to be done, remaining the while unaffected. We have nothing to do with the results; they will come of themselves, and are beyond us; they are already done so far as we are concerned. But if we perform either an act of faith or an action of the body, hoping for any result — no matter what — we become to that extent attached to the consequences, and thus bound by them. It matters not whether those consequences be good or bad. Many will think that it is well to have attachment to good consequences, since that has been the received opinion. But this is unwise, because the only reason for it is found in the idea that thereby one is somewhat better than some other persons who are enamored of evil results and desire to see them come to pass. This idea produces separateness, and is opposed to that *identity* without the realization of which there can be no true knowledge. We should therefore be imitators of the Deity, who, while acting as he does in the manifestation of universes, is at the same time free from all consequences. To the extent that we do so we become the Deity himself, for, as we follow the dictates of the Lord who dwells in us, we resign every act upon the altar, leaving

the consequences to him.

The attitude to be assumed, then, is that of doing every act, small and great, trifling or important, because it is before us to do, and as a mere carrying out by us as instruments of the will of that Deity who is ourself. Nor should we stop to inquire whether the act is of any use to the Lord within (7), as some ask. For, they say, of what possible benefit to him can be the small hourly acts which, as soon as done, are forgotten? It is not for us to inquire. The act that pleases that Lord is the act which is done as presented with no attachment to its result, while the act that is displeasing to him is the one which we do, desiring some result therefrom.

This practice is the highest; that which some day we must and will learn to perform. Other sorts are inculcated in other writings, but they are only steps to lead us at last to this. Therefore I said, Let us enter the Path as soon as we can.

We are still on the second chapter. If my object were merely to skim through the poem, showing where it agreed with, differed from, or reconciled the various systems of philosophy that were followed in India, we could have long ago reached the end of the book. But we are looking at it in one of its aspects — the one most important for all earnest students — the personal interior view that aids us to reach Moksha (salvation). From this standpoint we can easily defer a consideration of the philosophical discussion to a later period.

Let us take up some of the instruction given in the portion of the second chapter just finished. The remainder of the lecture is devoted to a reply from Krishna to Arjuna's question as to what is the description, appearance, carriage, and conversation of the

man who has attained to steady meditation.

Krishna says that "the subject of the three Vedas is the assemblage of the three qualities." These three qualities are *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, and are separately treated in a succeeding chapter. Now *sattva-guna* (8) is a pure, high quality, the opposite of *tamas-guna* which is darkness and indifference. Yet the remarkable advice is here given, "be thou free from these three qualities." It is a very great wonder that this has not been pounced upon before as showing that Krishna directs his follower to renounce the quality of goodness, and thus directly encourages wickedness, but as that is immediately followed by the direction to "repose upon eternal truth," possible critics have been perhaps deterred by the seeming paradox. It is evident at once that a higher sort of *sattva* is referred to in the words "eternal truth." *Sattva* is the Sanskrit for truth, and is not qualified when its place among the three qualities is given, so that, when the disciple frees himself from this ordinary *sattva*, he is to take refuge in its eternal counterpart. Further, the instruction is not to *renounce* truth or either of the other two qualities, but to remain freed from the influence or binding force that any sort of quality has upon the human ego.

It is difficult for a great being such as Krishna to convey to the inquiring mind these high themes, and so, perforce, language must be used that forever has two meanings — it continually retreats before us, going from one to the other. *Sattva* — truth — had to be taken to express the highest quality of any being who possesses them, and yet, when we begin to speak of the highest conceivable state in which attributes are absent, we still use the same word, only adding to it *eternal*.

The essence of the instruction given by Krishna is *to become devoted*, as he says, "Therefore give thyself up to devotion." He

prepared the way for that by showing, as adverted to in the last article, how erroneous it was to follow even the special ceremonies and texts laid down for the people in the Vedas. Those ceremonies procured either rewards in heaven, or upon the earth during subsequent lives as well as in those in which the ceremonies were performed. We can more easily understand what Krishna meant if we will suppose him to be referring to a doctrine that in those days was precisely similar in its scheme of rewards to the old-fashioned Christian belief that, by following the Scriptures, one secured happiness and prosperity on earth and great bliss forever in heaven with the saints. This is declared by him to be a deluding doctrine. He does not say that the rewards as laid down will not follow the practice, but implies that they will. But as the wheel of rebirth will eternally revolve, drawing us inevitably back to a mortal body, we are continually deluded and never succeed in attaining to God — that being the goal for us all.

Heaven, whether it be that of the Christian or of the Hindu, is what Buddha called a thing or state that has a beginning and will have an end. It may, surely, last aeons of time, but it will come to an end, and then the weary task of treading the world — whether this or some other one — has to be recommenced. Hence Krishna said that men were deluded by those flowery sentences proclaiming a means of reaching heaven, than which there was nothing better.

Doubtless there are many students who, believing in the possibility of reaching heaven, say that they are willing to take the risk of what may happen after the enjoyment for such a long period is ended. But those risks would not be taken were they well understood. They are numerous and great. Many of them cannot be stated, because, in order to be understood at all, more must be known of the power of mind and the real meaning of

meditation. But the ordinary risks are found in what we may roughly, for the present, call delayed karma and unspent affinities.

The power of these two has its root in the vast complexity of man's nature. Such is its complexity that a man cannot, as a complete being, ever enjoy heaven or any state short of union with the divine. Learned theosophists talk of a man's going to devachan, and of his being here on earth suffering or enjoying karma, when as a fact only a small part of him is either here or there. When he has lived out his life and gone to devachan, the vast root of his being stands waiting in the One Life, waiting patiently for him to return and exhaust some more karma. That is, in any one life the ordinary man only takes up and exhausts what karma his bodily apparatus permits. Part of the power of karma is in the "mysterious power of meditation," which exhibits itself according to the particular corporeal body one has assumed. So the man may in this life perform "special ceremonies" and conform to texts and doctrine, attaining thereby the reward of heaven, and still have left over a quantity of that "mysterious power of meditation" unexpended; and what its complexion is he does not know. Its risk therefore is that it may be very bad, and, when he does return from heaven, his next body may furnish the needed apparatus to bring up to the front this mass of unexpended karma, and his next compensation might be a sojourn in hell.

In reassuming a body, the "mysterious power" spoken of reaches out to numberless affinities engendered in other lives, and takes hold of all that come in its reach. Other beings once known to the man arrive into incarnation at the same time, and bring into action affinities, attractions, and powers that can only act through them and him. Their influence cannot be calculated. It may be good or bad, and, just as he is swayed by them or as his sway the

other being, so will work out the karma of each. Krishna therefore advises Arjuna to be free from the influence of the quality, so that he may obtain a *complete* release. And that freedom can only be attained, as he says, by means of devotion.

These effects, divergencies and swaying, are well known to occultists, and, although the idea is very new in the West, it is not unknown in India. This law is both an angel of mercy and a messenger of justice, for, while we have just stated its operation as among the risks, it is also a means whereby nature saves men often from damnation.

Suppose in some life long past I had a dear friend, or wife, or relative, with whom my intimacy was interior and deep. Death separates us, and in subsequent lives he devotes himself to truth, to wisdom, to the highest in him, while I go on careless of all but pleasure in the present. After many lives we meet again as either friends or acquaintances. At once the old intimacy asserts itself, and my former friend — although maybe neither of us knows it — has a strange power to touch my inward life, and wakes me up to search for truth and my own soul. It is the unexpended affinity, and by its aid nature works my salvation.

Then we should both seek devotion. This devotion is what is inculcated by the Adepts to their chelas. It involves a mental abnegation not agreeable to our modern mind, but that must be acquired or real progress is impossible. We must by means of this mental devotion to the divine, which means abnegation of all the rest, dismiss all results of our actions. It is not ours to say what shall be the result of an action; the Law will bring about a result much better, perhaps, than we had imagined. If the results, if the passing daily circumstances, are not those we expected, then by means of devotion we accept them as just what the Law intended. But if we fix our desire on accomplishing even a seeming good

result, we are bound by that desire, no matter whether our wish is accomplished or not.

This exhortation to devotion is at once the most simple and the most difficult. Some deride it because they want powers and "development"; others because they think it too simple; but the wise student, even when he cannot at first grasp its meaning, will revolve it in his mind, strive after it, and make it a thing to be attained by him.

We have seen that devotion must be attained by that student who desires to reach enlightenment. This is what is meant by Krishna's reply to Arjuna, at the conclusion of the second chapter.

When he has put away all desires which enter the heart, and is satisfied by the Self in himself, he is then said to be confirmed in spiritual knowledge.

It is not possible to be wholly given up to the dictates of the Spirit while any desires that come into the heart are permitted to engross the attention.

Of course the person described here is one who has gone much higher in development than most of us have been able to. But we ought to set up a high ideal at which to aim, for a low one gives a lower result at the expense of the same effort. We should not put before us an aim less than the highest merely because it seems that our success will not be as great as we think it ought to be. It is not so much the clearly perceived outward result that counts, as the motive, effort, and aim, for judgment is not passed upon us among the things of sense where human time exists, but in that larger sphere of being where time ceases, and where we are confronted by what *we are* and not by what we have done. That which we have done touches us only in mortal life among the

delusions of material existence; but the motives with which we live our lives go to make up our greater being, our larger life, our truer self. Do actions we must, for no mortal can live without performing actions; those bring us back to earth for many weary incarnations, perhaps to final failure, unless the lesson is learned that they must be done with the right motive and the true aim. That stage reached, they affect us no more, for, like Krishna, we become the perfect performers of all action. And in so far as we purify and elevate the motive and the aim, we become spiritually enlightened, reaching in time the power to see what should be done and what refrained from.

Many would-be occultists leave out of sight this chapter's teaching. Devotion has no charms for them; they leave it to those who would be good men, no matter what their creed or philosophy, and attention is paid to reading books, either new or old, upon magic, upon ceremonial, or any other of the manifold delusions. Nor is this erroneous practice newly risen. It was common among the alchemists, and the result in some cases is that students now waste valuable years in mastering ceremonial, Rosicrucianism, talismanic lore, and what not, as laid down in the books, while all of it is either useless mental lumber or positively dangerous.

I do not mean it to be understood that there never was real Rosicrucianism, or that ceremonial magic yields no results, or that there is no science of talismans. There are realities of which these, as now known, are shadows. But we might as well expect to find the soul by attentively studying the body, as to know the truths behind the influence of talismans or ceremonial magic by studying the books now extant upon those subjects. The mediaeval so-called magicians have left a mass of writings that are now a delusion and a snare for students, theosophical and nontheosophical. In these are minute directions for various sorts

of practices, but they are all the attempts of men to enable mortals, by methods altogether outward, to control the astral or natural world. Success did not come to these practitioners, nor will much else save failure be the portion of those of our own day who follow their directions. In most cases of the old European so-called sorcerers and writers on magic, their published lucubrations are only salves to disappointed vanity; in the rest, mere reduplications of formulae left by their predecessors. Paracelsus positively declares that true magic is within the man — a part of his inner nature, potential at first, active after development, and that ceremonies or formulae are the veriest rubbish unless the person using them is himself a magician.

In the practice of ceremonial magic, where certain geometrical and other figures are to be used with the aid of prayers and invocations, there lies positive danger. This danger is increased if the student follows the practice for the sake of gain or glory or power or mere wonder seeking — all of these being selfish. In this ceremonial the operator, or self-styled magus, surrounds himself with a circle or an arrangement of triangles, the use and purpose of which are to protect him from whatever sprites he may arouse. Mark that well! It is for *protection*. Protection of this sort would not be needed or thought of unless a fear lurked inside that the shades or demons had power to hurt. So at the outset, fear, the product of ignorance, is fully present. The next important thing to be noted is that a sword has to enter into the conjuration. This is advised because the demons are said to fear sharp steel. Now Jesus said that he who lived by the sword should perish by the sword. By this he meant just what we are talking about.

Ceremonial magic involves at almost every step the use of a sword. After the invocator or magus has used the ceremonial, say with success, for some time, he at last creates within his aura, or what Swedenborg called his sphere, a duplicate of what he had

previously used and pictured on the floor or walls. In this he is no longer master, for, it being placed in that part of his nature of which he is ignorant, the sword of metal becomes an astral sword with the handle held by the demons or influences he unwisely raised. They then attack him where no defense can be interposed — on the astral and mental planes, and, just as surely as the wise man's words were uttered, he at last perishes by the weapon he himself used. This danger, thus roughly outlined, is no mere figment of the brain. It is positive, actual, immanent in the practice. No book study will give a man the power to make the constitutional changes, as well as psychical alterations, needed before he is commander of immaterial forces. But these latter may be temporarily evoked and made acquainted with us by pursuing certain methods. That is the beginning. Their turn is sure to come, and, obeying a law of their nature, they take what has sometimes been called their "revenge." For all such practices call only upon the lower, unspiritual part of our nature, and that clothes such beings with corresponding attributes. Their "revenge" consists in bringing on inflammations in the moral character which will eventuate in a development of evil passions, atrophy of concentration, destruction of memory, ending at last in a miserable conclusion to life, and almost total failure to use the opportunities for progress presented by that incarnation. Therefore I said, it is all either useless mental lumber or positively dangerous.

In history and in our own experience there is abundant evidence that the *Bhagavad-Gita* is right in saying "spiritual knowledge includes every action without exception," and that it is to be attained by means of devotion. Ignorant men who had no access to books have by their inward sense perceived the real truth of things, not only those round about them, but relating to the larger concerns of nature. Jacob Boehme was wholly unlettered, but he

knew the truth. His writings show an acquaintance, not to be then gained from books, with the true doctrines found in the Hindu scriptures and secret books. In Germany today are men known to me, who, more unlearned yet than Jacob Boehme was, know many things still mysteries for our learned theosophists who can boast of college education. The reason is that these men have attained to devotion, and thereby cleared away from before the eye of the soul the clouds of sense whose shadows obscure our view of truth. I do not decry or despise learning; it is a great possession; but if the learned man were also a devoted one in the sense of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, how much wider would be the sweep of his intellection no one could calculate.

Learning of the human sort is not despised among the highest occultists, even among the adepts. They use it and acquire it. They accumulate *the record* of the experiences of seers and devoted men of small learning for long periods of time, until a great master of both learning and devotion arises who, by reason of his profound knowledge joined to devotion, can make the wonderful deductions in the possession of the Lodge respecting matters so far beyond us that they can with difficulty be imagined. But this again proves that devotion is the first and best, for these extraordinary Masters would not appear unless devotion had been the aim of their existence.

Without devotion a vast confusion arises within us that has been likened by some to a whirling motion, by others to the inrushing, overpowering flow of turbid waters. Boehme calls it in some aspects the *turba*. It is the delusion produced by the senses. And so Krishna, in closing the second lecture, says:

Let a man, restraining all these, remain in devotion when at rest, and intent on me alone; for he whose senses are under his control possesses spiritual knowledge.

Attachment to objects of sense arises in a man who meditates upon them; from attachment arises desire; from desire passion springs up; from passion comes bewilderment; from bewilderment, confusion of the memory; from confusion of the memory, destruction of the intellect; from destruction of the intellect he perishes.

But he who approaches the objects of sense with senses free from love and hate and beneath his own control, having his soul well-disposed, attains to tranquillity of thought. In this tranquillity there springs up in him a separation from all troubles. For the mind of him whose thoughts are tranquil soon becomes perfect in concentration.

A very beautiful portion of the *Sanatsujatiya* (ch. 2) may be read with profit here.

"Some say, that freedom from death results from action; and others that death exists not. Hear me explain, O King! have no misgiving about it.

"Both truths, O Kshatriya, have been current from the beginning. The wise maintain what is called delusion to be death. I verily call heedlessness death, and likewise I call freedom from heedlessness immortality. Through heedlessness, verily, were the demons vanquished; and through freedom from heedlessness the gods attained to the Brahman. Death, verily, does not devour living creatures like a tiger; for, indeed, his form is not to be perceived. . . . heedlessness develops in men as desire, and afterwards as wrath, and in the shape of delusion. And then traveling in devious paths through egoism, one does not attain to union with the Self Those who are deluded by it, and who remain under its influence, depart from this world, and there again fall down [into generation]. Then the deities [i.e. the senses] gather

around them. And then they undergo death after death. Being attached to the fruit of action, on action presenting itself, they follow after it, and do not cross beyond death. And the embodied self, in consequence of not understanding union with the real entity, proceeds on all hands with attachment to enjoyments. That, verily, is the great source of delusion to the senses: for by contact with unreal entities, his migrations are rendered inevitable; because, having his inner self contaminated by contact with unreal entities, he devotes himself to objects of sense on all sides, pondering on them only. That pondering, verily, first confuses him; and soon afterwards desire and wrath attack him. These lead children to death. But sensible men cross beyond death by their good sense. He who, pondering on the Self, destroys the fugitive objects of sense, not even thinking of them through contempt for them, and who, being possessed of knowledge, destroys desires in this way, becomes, as it were, the death of Death itself, and swallows it up."

The second chapter ends with a declaration of what is the sort of death that results in union with the divine, preventing absolutely any return to incarnations upon earth. It is found in the sentences:

That man who, casting off all desires, acts without attachment to results, free from egotism and selfishness, attains to tranquillity. This is the condition of the Supreme Being, O son of Pritha! Having obtained this, one is not troubled; and remaining in it, even at the time of death, he passes on to extinction (or union with) the Supreme Spirit.

Those are the last words of the second chapter.

Any other mental attitude at the time of passing away will surely cause us to acquire a mortal body again.

Krishna's declaration brings up before us, not only the practices previously inculcated, but also the whole subject of death. For, in order to know how to "think of Him at the moment of death," or to have that tranquillity which only perfection of devotion confers, we must find out what death is, and whether it is solely what we see going on at the decease of a human being, or more than can be gauged with the eye. A little reflection shows that what is seen and noted by physicians and spectators is but the withdrawal of the soul and energy from the outer envelope called "body." While that is going on, the person may accept rites of the church or profess adherence to any sort of doctrine whatever, even with his last outward sigh speak of heaven with its bliss awaiting him. But that is only the first step. It leaves his visible features calm and happy, perhaps, in expression; his relatives close his eyes — they call it death. He, however, has only begun to die. The soul has yet to pass through other envelopes beyond the ken of friends, beyond even the dying man's present control. All now depends upon the whole course and kind of thought in which he indulged during the life of the body. For the soul has to pass along the road by which it came, and that way is lined with the memories of a lifetime; as these memories rise up they affect the departing entity, causing it to be either disturbed from concentration on the Supreme Being, or assisting to a greater perfection. If, then, some few years only near the close of life were devoted to the sort of practice inculcated by Krishna, the memories of the years previously spent in following after desires will throw a cloud over the soul and absolutely prevent it from attaining that state from which return to earth is impossible without our consent. It is more perfectly illustrated by considering life as a grand musical movement that is brought to a close by using at once all the tones sounded throughout the whole preceding portion. The result will be a combined sound, expressing neither the highest nor lowest notes, or the sweetest

or less sweet, but the resultant of all. And this last sound is the fixed vibration that governs the entity, sounding all through him, and throwing him into the state to which it corresponds or of which it is the key. Thus it is easily seen that in each thought lie the possibilities of a harmony or a discord for life's conclusion.

"Guided by the clear light of the soul, we have considered thy teachings, O holy sage! They have been efficacious for the removal of the obscurities surrounding Isvara's abiding place in us; we are delighted and refreshed; may thy words remain with us, and, as a spring refreshes the earth, may we be refreshed by them!"

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FOOTNOTES:

1. In this verse, the 14th, Krishna calls Arjuna by two names: first — as son of Kunti (his mother), and second — as Bharata (descendant of the mighty Bharata). He is reminded of his earthly origin in the beginning when reference is made to the elements that produce bodily sensations; and at the end, when adjured to endure these changes, his attention is directed to a great and powerful, spiritual, paternal ancestor. All of this is significant. ([return to text](#))

2. Some students, as well as critics, have said that theosophy teaches a running away from family and from the world, and that neither knowledge nor salvation can be gained without a ridiculous asceticism which would upset the natural order. This is

wrong. ([return to text](#))

3. My opinion is that the Kshatriya caste is the greatest. The Brahmins, it is true, have always had more veneration paid them as being spiritual teachers and thus representing the *head* of Brahma; but in some of the Aryan sacrifices there is an occasion when the Kshatriya ranks the Brahmin. The latter are more the conservators of true doctrine; but when the time comes for the "gods to descend in order to establish a new harmony on earth," they always begin with a warrior. Osiris who educated and solidified the Egyptians was a warrior, and the mysterious Melchizedek, who blessed Abraham, was prophet, priest, and king, that is — warrior. Then, too, the warrior caste could learn and speak the Vedas as well as engage in war, whereas the Brahmin's only duty was that of a teacher and not fighter. The Kshatriya therefore stands in the position of mediator between the action of the body of Brahma and the calm inaction of Brahma's head. ([return to text](#))

4. The probability is that the Rosicrucian "rose" was altered from the *lotus* because the latter flower was not understood in Europe, whereas the rose was; and the rose is the nearest to the lotus, taken all in all. In Japan the *lotus in the heart* is adhered to; they say that by directing attention to the heart, it is found to burst open into a lotus of eight petals, in each of which resides one power, while in the center sits the lord of all. ([return to text](#))

5. It has been asserted by some theosophical writer that these adepts were concerned in the formation of the American Republic, and either were here in person or sent messengers. ([return to text](#))

6. See Patanjali's *Yoga Aphorisms*, Book 2; and *Vishnu-Smriti*, chap. xcvii, v. 11. ([return to text](#))

7. *Isvara*, the particular manifestation of Brahman in each human being. ([return to text](#))

8. Quality of truth or purity. ([return to text](#))

Essay on Chapter III of the *Bhagavad-Gita*

The first two verses of this chapter express a doubt arising in Arjuna's mind, and contain a request for its solution and for a method by which he may attain perfect knowledge — salvation. They are:

If, according to thy opinion, O thou who givest all that men ask! the use of the understanding be superior to the practice of deeds, why then dost thou urge me to engage in an undertaking so dreadful as this?

Thou, as it were, confoundest my reason with a mixture of sentiments; with certainty declare one method by which I may obtain happiness, and explain it unto me.

The doubt arose because the Blessed Lord had declared that Arjuna must reach salvation by the right use of his understanding, and yet also must perform the dreaded act of opposing, perhaps slaying, his friends, tutors, and relatives. The request is the same as is repeated nearly every day by serious students and for which an answer is demanded. (1) It is for *one* single method, *one* practice, *one* doctrine, by means of which the student may obtain that for which he seeks, whether he has formulated it as happiness or only as a thirst for wonderful knowledge and power.

Arjuna's doubt is the one which naturally arises in one who for the first time is brought face to face with the great duality of nature — or of God. This duality may be expressed metaphysically by the words *thought* and *action*, for these mean in this the same as *ideation* and *expression*. Brahman, as the unmanifested God, conceives the idea of the Universe, and it at

once expresses itself in what is called creation by the Christian and by the scientist evolution. This creation or evolution is the action of God. With him there is no difference in time between the arising of the idea and its expression in manifested objects. Coming down to consider the "created" objects, or the planes on which the thought of God has its expression through its own laws, we find the duality expressed by action and reaction, attraction and repulsion, day and night, outbreathing and inbreathing, and so on. When face to face with these, one is first confused by the multiplicity of objects, and we strive to find one simple thing, some law or doctrine, practice, dogma, or philosophy, by which, being known, happiness can be secured.

Although there *is* one single Vehicle, to use a Buddhist term, yet it cannot be grasped in the beginning by the student. He must pass through sufficient experience to give him a greater consciousness before he can understand this one *Vehicle*. Could that unique law be understood by the beginner, could it be possible to lift us by one word to the shining heights of power and usefulness, it is certain that Those who do know would gladly utter the word and give us the sole method, but as the only possible way in which we can get true happiness is by *becoming* and not by intellectually grasping any single system or dogma, the guardians of the lamp of truth have to raise men gradually from stage to stage. It was in such an attitude Arjuna stood when he uttered the verses with which this chapter opens. (2)

Krishna then proceeds to tell Arjuna that, it being impossible for one to remain in the world without performing actions, the right practice is to do those actions (duties of life whether in war or peace) which must be done, with a heart unattached to the result, being satisfied to do what is deemed the will of the Lord within, for no other reason than that it ought to be done. He sums it up in the words:

But he who, restraining his senses by his heart, and being free from attachment to the results of action, undertakes active devotion through the organs of action, is worthy of praise.

This he illustrates by referring to those whom he calls "false pietists of bewildered soul," who remain inert with their bodies, restraining the organs of action, while at the same time they ponder on objects of sense which they have merely quitted in form. He thus shows the false position that it is useless to abandon the outer field of action while the mind remains attached to it, for such mental attachment will cause the ego to incarnate again and again upon earth. A little further on in the chapter he refers to a great yogi, one Janaka, who, even while a saint possessed of perfect knowledge which he had obtained while engaged in affairs of state, still performed actions.

These peculiar verses next occur:

The creator, when of old he had created mortals and appointed sacrifice, said to them, "By means of this sacrifice ye shall be propagated. It shall be to you a cow of plenty. By means of it do ye support the gods, and let these gods support you. Supporting one another mutually, ye shall obtain the highest felicity. For, being nourished by sacrifices, the gods will give you the desired food. He who eats the food given by them without first offering some to them, is a thief indeed."

At the outset I confess that these and succeeding verses do not appear easy to explain to Western minds. Although I have had some acquaintance with Occidental reasoning based on Occidental knowledge, it seems hopeless in the present century to elucidate much that is in this chapter. There are numerous points

touched on by Krishna for which I find no response in Western thought. Among these are the verses on sacrifice. To say all I think about sacrifice would only expose me to a charge of madness, superstition, or ignorance; it certainly would on every hand be received with incredulity. And while sneers or disbelief have no terrors, it is needless to advert to certain points in the chapter. Yet in passing them by, some sadness is felt that a high civilization should on these subjects be so dense and dark. Although Moses established sacrifices for the Jews, the Christian successors have abolished it both in spirit and letter, with a curious inconsistency which permits them to ignore the words of Jesus that "not one jot or tittle of the law should pass until all these things were fulfilled." With the culmination of the dark age (3) it was, however, natural that the last vestige of sacrifice should disappear. On the ruins of the altar has arisen the temple of the lower self, the shrine of the personal idea. In Europe individualism is somewhat tempered by various monarchical forms of government which do not by any means cure the evil; and in America, being totally unrestrained and forming in fact the basis of independence here, it has culminated. Its bad effects — vaguely as yet shadowing the horizon — might have been avoided if the doctrines of the Wisdom-religion had been also believed in by the founders of the republic. And so, after the sweeping away of the fetters forged by priestly dogma and kingly rule, we find springing up a superstition far worse than that which we have been used to call by the name. It is the superstition of materialism that bows down to a science which leads only to a negation.

There are, however, many willing minds here who have some intuition that after all there can be extracted from these ancient Hindu books more than is to be found if they are merely studied as a part of the lisplings of infant humanity — the excuse given by

Prof. Max Muller for translating them at all. It is to such natural theosophists I speak for they will see that, even while advancing so rapidly in material civilization, we need the pure philosophical and religious teachings found in the Upanishads.

The peculiar explanation of the Mosaic sacrifices advanced by the mystic, Count Saint-Martin (4), needs only a passing allusion. Students can think upon it and work out for themselves what truth it contains. He holds that the efficacy of the sacrifices rested in magnetic laws, for the priest, according to him, collected the bad effects of the sins of the people into his own person and then, by laying his hands upon the scapegoat (as in one sacrifice), communicated those deleterious influences to the poor animal who in the wilderness exhaled them so far away as not to affect the people. It is suggested that Moses knew something of occult laws, since he was educated by the Egyptians and initiated by them. But Saint-Martin goes on to say that

the Jews were directed to kill even the animals in the land because the death of animals infected with the impure influences of those nations preserved the Jews from the poison; whereas in sacrifices the death of clean animals attracted wholesome preservative influences, [and that] pure and regular influences attached to certain classes and individuals of animals, and that *by breaking the bases in which they are fixed* they may become useful to man, and we should thus read Lev. xvii, 11: "It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul."

He then says that the virtue of sacrifices comes through the rapport that man has with animals and nature; and,

if the Jews had observed the sacrifices faithfully, they would never have been abandoned, but would have drawn upon themselves every good thing they were capable of

receiving. . . . The extraordinary holocausts at the three great festivals were to bring down upon the people such active influences as corresponded to the epochs, for we see bulls, rams, and lambs always added to the burnt sacrifices Some substances, mineral, vegetable, and animal, retain a greater proportion of the living and powerful properties of their first estate.

In these views Saint-Martin had some of the truth. But Moses ordained some sacrifices as a religious duty from sanitary reasons of his own, since the unthinking tribes would perform devotional acts willingly which, if imposed only as hygienic measures, they might omit. (5) The burnt offerings were, however, founded upon different views, very like those at the bottom of Hindu sacrifices, and the law of which is stated in these words from our chapter:

Beings are nourished by food. Food has its origin from rain. *Rain is the fruit of sacrifice.* Sacrifice is performed by action.

It is not contended by either Brahmins or their followers that food will not be produced except from sacrifice performed according to Vedic ritual, but that *right food*, productive in the physical organism of the proper conditions enabling man to live up to his highest possibilities, alone is produced in that age where the real sacrifices are properly performed. In other places and ages food is produced, but it does not in everything come up to the required standard. In this age we have to submit to these difficulties, and can overcome them by following Krishna's instructions as given in this book. In a verse just quoted the distinction is made between food naturally produced without, and that due to, sacrifice, for he says, "For, being nourished by sacrifices, the gods will give you the *desired* food." Carrying out

the argument, we find as a conclusion that if the sacrifices which thus nourish the gods are omitted, these "gods" must die or go to other spheres. And as we know that sacrifices are totally disused now, the "gods" spoken of must have long ago left this sphere. It is necessary to ask what and who they are. They are not the mere idols and imaginary beings so constantly mentioned in the indictments brought against India by missionaries, but are certain powers and properties of nature which leave the world when the Kali-yuga or dark age, as this is called, has fully set in. Sacrifices therefore among us would be useless just at present.

There is, however, another meaning to the "revolution of the wheel" spoken of by Krishna. He makes it very clear that he refers to the principle of reciprocity or brotherhood. And this he declares must be kept revolving; that is, each being must live according to that rule, or else he lives a life of sin to no purpose. And we can easily believe that in these days this principle, while admired as a fine theory, is not that which moves the people. They are, on the contrary, spurred by the personal selfish idea of each one becoming better, greater, richer than his neighbor. If continued unchecked it would make this nation one entirely of black magicians. And it was to counteract this that the Theosophical Society was founded, with the object of inducing men to once more revolve this wheel of brotherly love first set in motion by the "creator when of old he had created mortals."

Krishna then proceeds to exhort Arjuna again to perform the duties appointed to him, and urges him to do it on the ground that he being a great man should set a good example that the lower orders would follow; saying,

He who understands the whole universe should not cause these people, slow and ignorant of the universe, to relax from their duty.

Knowing that, under the great cyclic laws which govern us, periods arrive even in the worst of ages when good examples of living imprinted on the astral light cause effects ever increasing in intensity, until at last the "gods" before referred to begin in distant spheres to feel the force of these good actions and to return again to help mankind on the recurrence of a better age, he implores Arjuna to be the very first to set the good example.

In such an age as this, the ritualistic sacrifice of a different age which has indeed a magical effect becomes a sacrifice to be performed by each man in his own nature upon the altar of his own heart. And especially is this so with theosophists of sincerity and aspiration. Being born as we are in these days, among families with but small heritage in the wave of descent from unsullied ancestors, we are without the advantage of great natural spiritual leanings, and without certain peculiar powers and tendencies that belong to another cycle. But the very force and rapidity of the age we live in give us the power to do more now in fewer incarnations. Let us then recognize this, and learn what is our duty and do it. This portion of the chapter ends with a famous verse:

It is better to do one's own duty, even though it be devoid of excellence, than to perform another's duty well. Death is better in the performance of one's own duty. Another's duty is productive of danger.

Krishna having said to Arjuna that a certain class of men, being without faith, revile the true doctrine and perish at last, bewildered even by all their knowledge, Arjuna sees at once a difficulty growing out of a consideration of what, if anything, induces these men to sin as it were against their will. He sees in this the operation of an unknown force that molds men in a

manner that they would not allow if conscious of it, and he says:

Instigated by what does this man incur sin, even against his will, O descendant of Vrishni, impelled, as it were, by force?

To this Krishna replies:

It is desire; it is passion springing from the quality of rajās, voracious, all-sinful. Know that it is hostile to man in this world. As fire is surrounded by smoke, and a mirror by rust (6), as the foetus is involved in the womb, so is this universe surrounded by this quality. Knowledge is surrounded by this, and it is the constant enemy of the wise man — a fire which assumes any form it will, O son of Kunti! and is insatiable. Its empire is said to be the senses, the heart, and the intellect. By means of these it surrounds knowledge and bewilders the soul. Therefore do thou, O best of Bharatas! in the first place, restraining thy senses, cast off this sinful impetus which devours spiritual knowledge and spiritual discernment.

They say that the senses are great. The heart is greater than the senses. But intellect is greater than the heart, and that which is greater than intellect is He. Knowing that it is thus greater than the mind, strengthening thyself by thyself, do thou O great-armed one! slay this foe, which assumes any form it will and is intractable.

Deep reflection upon this reply by the Great Lord of men shows us that the realm over which the influence of passion extends is much wider than we at first supposed. It is thought by many students that freedom can be quickly obtained as soon as they begin the study of occultism or the investigation of their inner being of which the outer is only a partial revelation. They enter

upon the study full of hope, and, finding great relief and buoyancy, think that the victory is almost won. But the enemy spoken of, the obstruction, the taint, is present among a greater number of the factors that compose a being than is apparent.

Krishna has reference to the three qualities of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. The first is of the nature of truth, pure and bright; the second partakes of truth in a lesser degree, is of the nature of action, and has also in it the quality of badness; the third, *tamas*, is wholly bad, and its essential peculiarity is *indifference*, corresponding to darkness, in which no action of a pure quality is possible.

These three great divisions — or as it is in the Sanskrit, *gunas* — comprehend all the combinations of what we call "qualities," whether they be moral, mental, or physical.

This passion, or desire, spoken of in the chapter is composed of the two last qualities, *rajas* and *tamas*. As Krishna says, it is intractable. It is not possible, as some teach, to bring desire of this sort into our service. It must be slain. It is useless to try to use it as a helper, because its tendency is more towards *tamas*, that is, downward, than towards the other.

It is shown to surround even knowledge. It is present, to a greater or lesser degree, in every action. Hence the difficulty encountered by all men who set out to cultivate the highest that is in them.

We are at first inclined to suppose that the field of action of this quality is the senses alone; but Krishna teaches that its empire reaches beyond those and includes the heart and the intellect also. The incarnated soul desiring knowledge and freedom finds itself snared continually by *tamas*, which, ruling also in the heart and mind, is able to taint knowledge and thus bewilder the struggler.

Among the senses particularly, this force has sway. And the senses include all the psychical powers so much desired by those who study occultism. It does not at all follow that a man is spiritual or knows truth because he is able to see through vast distances, to perceive the denizens of the astral world, or to hear with the inner ear. In this part of the human economy the dark quality is peculiarly powerful. Error is more likely to be present there than elsewhere, and unless the seer is self governed he gets no valuable knowledge, but is quite likely to fall at last, not only into far more grievous error, but into great wickedness.

We must therefore begin, as advised by Krishna, with that which is nearest to us, that is, with our senses. We cannot slay the foe there at first, because it is resident also in the heart and mind. By proceeding from the near to the more remote, we go forward with regularity and with certainty of conquest at last. Therefore he said, "In the first place, restrain thy senses." If we neglect those and devote ourselves wholly to the mind and heart, we really gain nothing, for the foe still remains undisturbed in the senses. By means of those, when we have devoted much time and care to the heart and mind, it may throw such obscurations and difficulties in the way that all the work done with the heart and mind is rendered useless.

It is by means of the outward senses and their inner counterparts that a great turmoil is set up in the whole system, which spreads to the heart and from there to the mind, and, as it is elsewhere said: "The restless heart then snatches away the mind from its steady place."

We thus have to carry on the cultivation of the soul by regular stages, never neglecting one part at the expense of another. Krishna advises his friend to restrain the senses, and then to "strengthen himself by himself." The meaning here is that he is to

rely upon the One Consciousness which, as differentiated in a man, is his higher self. By means of this higher self he is to strengthen the lower, or that which he is accustomed to call "myself."

It will not be amiss here to quote from some notes of conversation with a friend of mine.

"Our consciousness is *one* and not many, nor different from other consciousnesses. It is not *waking consciousness* or *sleeping consciousness*, or any other but *consciousness itself*.

"Now that which I have called consciousness is Being. The ancient division was:

Sat, or Being;

Chit, or Consciousness, Mind;

Ananda, or Bliss.

These together are called *Sat-chit-ananda*.

"But *Sat* — or Being — the first of the three, is itself both *Chit* and *Ananda*. The appearing together in full harmony of Being and Consciousness is Bliss or *Ananda*. Hence that harmony is called *Sat-chit-ananda*.

"But the one consciousness of each person is the Witness or Spectator of the actions and experiences of every state we are in or pass through. It therefore follows that the waking condition of the mind is not separate consciousness.

"The one consciousness pierces up and down through all the states or planes of Being, and serves to uphold the memory — whether complete or incomplete — of each state's experiences.

"Thus in waking life, *Sat* experiences fully and knows. In dream state, *Sat* again knows and sees what goes on there, while there may not be in the brain a complete memory of the waking state

just quitted. In Sushupti — beyond dream and yet on indefinitely, *Sat* still knows all that is done or heard or seen.

"The way to salvation must be entered. To take the first step raises the possibility of success. Hence it is said, 'When the first attainment has been won, Moksha (salvation) has been won.'

"The first step is giving up bad associations and getting a longing for knowledge of God; the second is joining good company, listening to their teachings and practicing them; the third is strengthening the first two attainments, having faith and continuing in it. Whoever dies thus, lays the sure foundation for ascent to adeptship, or salvation."

We have come to the end of the third chapter, which is that upon *Devotion through Action*, or in Sanskrit, *Karma-yoga*. It has in these three chapters been distinctly taught that devotion must be obtained, sought after, desired, cultivated. The disciple must learn to do every act with the Divine in view, and the Divine in everything. As it is said in the *Brihad Nandikesvara-Purana*:

While taking medicine one should think of Vishnu or the all-pervading; while eating, of Janardana, the All-Giver; while lying down, of Padmanabha; while marrying, of Prajapati, the Lord of Creatures; while fighting, of Chakradhara; while traveling in a foreign land, of Trivikrama; at the time of death, of Narayana; at the time of reunion with friends, of Sridhara; after dreaming bad dreams, of Govinda; at the time of danger, of Madhusudana; in the midst of a forest, of Narasinha; in the midst of fire, of Jalasaya, or the one lying on the water; in the midst of water, of Varaha; on the mountain, of Raghunandana; while going, of Varuma; and in all acts, of Madhava.

All these names are the names of Vishnu in his various powers and appearances. It is seeing Krishna in everything, and everything in him. This at last we must do, for Isvara, the spirit in each of us, is none other than Krishna. Therefore let us think of him and fight; while entangled in this dense forest of existence, let us think of him, the Lion our guard, the Sage our guide, the Warrior our sure defense and shield.

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FOOTNOTES:

1. See *Lucifer* of April and May, 1888, in articles "Practical Occultism" and "Occultism and the Occult Arts." [Now included in *Studies in Occultism* by H. P. Blavatsky.] ([return to text](#))

2. It is to be noticed that Arjuna and Krishna constantly change the names by which they address each other. When Krishna is dwelling on one subject or upon something that has to do with a particular phase of Arjuna's nature, he gives him some name that has reference to the quality, subject, or other matter referred to, and Arjuna changes the name of Krishna whenever he has need. As in these first verses, the name used for the Blessed Lord is *Janardana*, which means "giver of all that men ask" — meaning thereby to refer to Krishna's potency in bringing to fulfillment all wishes. ([return to text](#))

3. My readers may not agree with me that this is the dark age, inasmuch as that is the term applied to a period now past. That time, however, was a part of this; and this is even darker than

that, as we think. ([return to text](#))

4. See *Man: His Nature and Destiny* (1802). ([return to text](#))

5. In India there are numerous religious observances having in view sanitary effects. For instance the cholera dance — a religious matter — in which, while disinfecting camphor is burned in heaps, a curious flower-umbrella-dance is engaged in with religious chants and music. ([return to text](#))

6. The ancient form of mirror is here referred to. It was made of metal and highly burnished. Of course it was constantly liable to get rusty. And our own silvered mirror is liable also to cloud, owing to the oxidizing of the coating. ([return to text](#))

Essay on Chapter IV of the Bhagavad-Gita

In the third chapter Krishna approached the subject of yoga — or union with the Supreme and the method of attainment — and now in the fourth openly speaks of it. He had told Arjuna that passion is greater than either heart or mind, having power to overthrow them, and advised Arjuna to strengthen his hold on his real self, for by means of that only could he hope to overcome passion.

In the opening of this chapter we come across something of importance — the doctrine that in the early part of a new creation, called manvantara in Sanskrit, a great Being descends among men and imparts certain ideas and aspirations which reverberate all through the succeeding ages until the day when the general dissolution — the night of Brahma — comes on. He says:

This deathless Yoga, this deep union,
I taught Vivaswata, the Lord of Light;
Vivaswata to Manu gave it; he
To Ikshvaku; so passed it down the line
Of all my royal Rishis. Then, with years,
The truth grew dim and perished, noble Prince!
Now once again to thee it is declared —
This ancient lore, this mystery supreme —
Seeing I find thee votary and friend.

Exoteric authorities agree that Vivasvat is a name for the sun; that after him came Manu, and his son was Ikshvaku. The latter founded the line of Solar Kings, who in early times in India were men of supreme knowledge. They were adepts every one, and ruled the land as only adepts could, for the darker ages had not

come on, and such great Beings could naturally live among men. Everyone respected them, and there was no rebellion even in thought, since there could be no occasion for complaint. Although Vivasvat as a name for the sun reveals nothing to our Western ears, there is a great truth hidden behind it, just as today there is as great a mystery behind our solar orb. He was the Being appointed to help and guide the race at its beginning. He had himself, ages before, gone through incarnation during other creations, and had mounted step by step up the long ladder of evolution, until by natural right he had become as a god. The same process is going on today, preparing some Being for similar work in ages to come. And it has gone on in the limitless past also; and always the Supreme Spirit as Krishna teaches the Being, so that he may implant those ideas necessary for our salvation.

After the race has grown sufficiently, the Being called the Sun leaves the spiritual succession to Manu — whether we know him by that name or another — who carries on the work until men have arrived at the point where they furnish out of the great mass some one of their own number who is capable of founding a line of Kingly Priest Rulers; then Manu retires, leaving the succession in the hands of the Royal Sage, who transmits it to his successors. This succession lasts until the age no longer will permit, and then all things grow confused spiritually, material progress increases, and the dark age, fully come, ushers in the time before dissolution. Such is the present time.

Up to the period marked by the first earthly king called Ikshvaku, the ruler was a spiritual Being whom all men knew to be such, for his power, glory, benevolence, and wisdom were evident. He lived an immense number of years, and taught men not only yoga but also arts and sciences. The ideas implanted then, having been set in motion by one who knew all the laws, remain as *inherent ideas* to this day. Thus it is seen that there is no foundation for the

pride of ideas felt by so many of us. They are not original. We never would have evolved them ourselves, unaided; and had it not been for the great wisdom of these planetary spirits in the beginning of things, we would be hopelessly drifting now.

The fables in every nation and race about great personages, heroes, magicians, gods, who dwelt among them in the beginning, living long lives, are due to the causes I have outlined. And in spite of all the sneers and labored efforts of scientific scoffers to show that there is no soul, and perhaps no hereafter, the innate belief in the Supreme, in heaven, hell, magic, and what not, will remain. They are preserved by the uneducated masses, who, having no scholastic theories to divert their minds, keep up what is left of the succession of ideas.

Arjuna is surprised to hear one whose birth he knew of declaring that Vivasvat was his contemporary, and so asks Krishna how that can happen. Krishna replies, asserting that he and Arjuna had had countless rebirths which he saw and recollected, but Arjuna, being not yet perfect in yoga, knew not his births, could not remember them. As in the poem Arjuna is also called *Nara*, which means Man, we here have an ancient postulation of reincarnation for all the human family in direct and unmistakable words.

Then very naturally he opens the doctrine, well known in India, of the reappearances of Avatars. There is some little dispute among the Hindus as to what an Avatar is; that is, whether he is the Supreme Spirit itself or only a man overshadowed by the Supreme to a greater extent than other men. But all admit that the true doctrine is stated by Krishna in the words:

I come, and go, and come. When Righteousness
Declines, O Bharata! when Wickedness
Is strong, I rise, from age to age, and take

Visible shape, and move a man with men,
Succouring the good, thrusting the evil back,
And setting Virtue on her seat again.

These appearances among men for the purpose of restoring the equilibrium are not the same as the rule of Vivasvat and Manu first spoken of, but are the coming to earth of Avatars or Saviors. That there is a periodicity to them is stated in the words "from age to age." He is here speaking of the great cycles about which hitherto the Masters have been silent except to say that there are such great cycles. It is very generally admitted now that the cyclic law is of the highest importance in the consideration of the great questions of evolution and man's destiny. But the coming of an Avatar must be strictly in accordance with natural law — and that law demands that at the time of such an event there also appears a being who represents the other pole — for, as Krishna says, the great law of the two opposites is eternally present in the world. So we find in the history of India that, when Krishna appeared so long ago, there was also a great tyrant, a black magician named Kansa, whose wickedness equaled the goodness of Krishna. And to such a possibility the poem refers, where it says that Krishna comes when wickedness has reached a maximum development. The real meaning of this is that the bad karma of the world goes on increasing with the lapse of the ages, producing at last a creature who is, so to say, the very flower of all the wickedness of the past, counting from the last preceding Avatar. He is not only wicked, but also wise, with magic powers of awful scope, for magic is not alone the heritage of the good. The number of magicians developed among the nations at such a time is very great, but one towers above them all, making the rest pay tribute. It is not a fairy tale but a sober truth, and the present prevalence of self-seeking and money-getting is exactly the sort of training of certain qualities that black magicians will exemplify in

ages to come. Then Krishna — or howsoever named — appears "in visible shape, a man with men." His power is as great as the evil one, but he has on his side what the others have not — spirit, preservative, conservative forces. With these he is able to engage in conflict with the black magicians, and in it is assisted by all of us who are really devoted to brotherhood. The result is a victory for the good and destruction for the wicked. The latter lose all chance of salvation in that manvantara, and are precipitated to the lower planes, on which they emerge at the beginning of the next new creation. So not even they are lost, and of their final salvation Krishna speaks thus:

Whoso worship me,
Them I exalt; *but all men everywhere*
Shall fall into my path; albeit, those souls
Which seek reward for works, make sacrifice
Now, to the lower gods.

He also declares that the right and full comprehension of the mystery of his births and work on earth confers upon us nirvana, so that rebirth occurs no more. This is because it is not possible for a man to understand the mystery unless he has completely liberated himself from the chains of passion and acquired entire concentration. He has learned to look beneath the shell of appearances that deceives the unthinking mind.

This brings us to a rock upon which many persons fall to pieces. It is personality. Personality is always an illusion, a false picture hiding the reality inside. No person is able to make his bodily environment correspond exactly to the best that is within him, and others therefore continually judge him by the outward show. If we try, as Krishna directs, to find the divine in everything, we will soon learn not to judge by appearances, and if we follow the advice given in this chapter to do our duty without hope of

reward and without trimming ourselves with a desired result in view, the end will be peace.

Krishna then adverts to various systems of religious practice, and shows Arjuna that they all lead at last, but after many births, to him, by reason of the tendency set up. The different schools are taken up in a few sentences. His dictum is that they "destroy sins," meaning that a certain purification of the nature is thus accomplished, which is followed upon death by a longer stay in devachan, but it is only to one single practice he awards the distinction of being that which will bring about union with the Supreme Spirit. After enumerating all, not only the performance but also the omitting of sacrifice, he shows Arjuna that spiritual knowledge includes all actions and burns to ashes the binding effects of all work, conferring upon us the power to take nirvana by reason of emancipation from the delusion that the lower self was the actor. The perfection of this spiritual knowledge is reached by strengthening faith and expelling doubt through devotion and restraint. Then occurs a verse, almost the same as one in the New Testament, "the man of doubtful mind enjoys neither this world nor the other, nor final beatitude."

He that, being self-contained, hath vanquished doubt,
Disparting self from service, soul from works,
Enlightened and emancipate, my Prince!
Works fetter him no more! Cut then atwain
With sword of wisdom, Son of Bharata!
This doubt that binds thy heart-beats! cleave the bond
Born of thy ignorance! Be bold and wise!
Give thyself to the field with me! Arise!

These strong words end the chapter. They are addressed to those who can be strong, and not to the ever-doubting one who believes

neither his own thoughts nor the words of others, but who is forever asking for more. But there can be no uncertainty about the cause of doubt. As Krishna says:

It springs from ignorance, and all we have to do is to take the sword of knowledge and cut all doubts at once.

Many will say that they have been always looking for this that they may have peace, and that so many systems are presented for their consideration they are unable to come to any conclusion whatever. This would seem very true on a view of the thousand and one philosophies placed before us with varying degrees of clearness by the exponents of them. But it has appeared to us that they can all be easily sifted and divided into classes where they will range themselves under two great heads — those which permit nothing to be believed until the miserable mass of mediocre minds have said that they at last accept this or that, and those which have each a little of what may possibly be true and a great deal that is undeniable nonsense. The doubter is a devotee of the first school, or he is an adherent partly of one and partly of the other; and in the latter case is torn almost asunder by the numberless conventional ideas which bear the stamp of authority coercing him into an acceptance of that which revolts his judgment whenever he permits it to have free exercise. If you tell him that the much-lauded mind is not the final judge, and that there are higher faculties which may be exercised for the acquirement of knowledge, he disputes on the lines laid down by learned professors of one school or another, and denies the validity of proofs offered on the ground that they are instances of "double cerebration," and what not.

To such as these the chapter will not appeal, but there are many students who have sincere doubts, and with those the difficulty arises from ignorance. They are afraid to admit to themselves that

the ancients could have found out the truth; and the reason would appear to be that this judgment is passed from a consideration of the merely material state of those people or of the present nations who in any degree follow such philosophies. Our civilization glorifies material possessions and progress, and those who have not these boons cannot be the possessors of either truth or the way to it. But the keepers of truth have never said that we will be neither rich nor civilized if we follow their system. On the contrary, in the days when Krishna lived and taught his system there was more material glory and power than now, and more knowledge of all the laws of nature than every one of our scientists put together have in their reach. Hence if anyone teaches that the reign of the doctrines of the Masters will be the knell of all material comfort and progress, he errs, and sows the seeds of trouble for himself and his friends. Why, then, is it not wise to at once admit that there may be truth in these doctrines, throw away all doubt, and enjoy the light coming from the East?

So long as doubt remains there will be no peace, no certainty, nor any hope of finding it in this world or the lives upon it hereafter, and not even in the vast reaches of other universes on which we may live in future ages; the doubter now will be the doubter then, and so on while the wheel revolves for the millions of years yet before us.

If we follow the advice of the great Prince, our next step will be to assume, in view of patent facts of evolution, that certain great Beings exist who long ago must have trod the same road, and now possess the knowledge with the power to impart as much as we are able to take. To this Krishna refers in these words:

Seek this knowledge by doing honor, by prostration, by strong search, and by service; those gifted with this

knowledge, who perceive the truth of things, will teach this knowledge to thee.

And such are the exact words of the Masters. They do not reward or teach merely because we so wish it to be, nor because we value ourselves at so much; our valuation of ourselves is not theirs. They value us at the real and just rate, and cannot be moved by tears or entreaties not followed by acts, and the acts that delight them are those performed in their service, and no others.

What, then, is the work in which they wish to be served?

It is not the cultivation of our psychic powers, nor the ability to make phenomena, nor any kind of work for self when that is the sole motive.

The service and the work are in the cause of humanity, by whomsoever performed. And all those now standing with their mouths open, waiting for what they are pleased to call food, may as well know that they will get nothing unless the work is done or attempted.

Let this right attitude be taken, and what follows is described in this chapter:

A man who perfects himself in devotion finds springing up in himself in the progress of time this spiritual knowledge, which is superior to and comprehends every action without exception.

The fourth chapter is ended. Let all our doubts come to an end!

"What room for doubt and what for sorrow can there be in him who knows that all spiritual beings are the same in kind, differing only in degree."

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Essay on Chapter V of the *Bhagavad-Gita*

The name of this chapter in Sanskrit is "Karmasannyasayoga," which means "The Book of Religion by Renouncing Fruit of Works." It has always seemed to me to be one of the most important in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. As the poem is divided into eighteen parts, this one is just beyond the first division, for the whole number are to be put into six groups of three chapters each, and we have finished four.

Arjuna is supposed to bring forward the objections raised by, or views belonging to, the two great Indian schools called the Sankhya and the Yoga, one of which advised its votaries to renounce all works and to do nothing whatever, while the other called for the performance of works. The divergent views naturally caused great differences in practice, for the followers of one would be found continually working, and those of the other continually doing nothing. Hence we find, in India, even at the present day, great numbers of ascetics who remain inert, and encounter on the other hand those who go on making karma with a view to salvation.

A very little reflection will show the student that the only result of action, as such, will be a continuation of action, and hence that no amount of mere works will in themselves confer nirvana or rest from karma. The only direct product of karma is karma. And this difficulty rose before Arjuna in the fifth conversation. He says:

Thou praisest, Krishna, the renunciation of works; on the other hand, devotion through them. Declare to me with precision that one only which is the better of these two.

Whereupon Krishna replies:

To cease from works
Is well, and to do works in holiness
Is well; and both conduct to bliss supreme;
But of these twain the better way is his
Who working piously refraineth not.
That is the true Renouncer, firm and fixed,
Who — seeking nought, rejecting nought — dwells proof
Against the "opposites."

The meaning of the teacher has been by some suggested to be that, inasmuch as the life of the ascetic is very hard, almost impossible for the majority of men, it is wiser to now perform good acts in the hope that they will lead one hereafter to a favorable birth in such surroundings that complete renunciation of action — outwardly — will be an easy task, and that the two sorts of practice were not intended to be laid before the student for selection, nor is he put in a dilemma compelling him to choose. I think such is not the meaning, but that, on the contrary, the seemingly easy alternative of performing actions properly is in reality the most difficult of all tasks. And no matter how much we may wait for a favorable birth, for a much hoped-for environment which will not only permit the new sort of life but, in fact, urge it upon us, it will never arrive for us until we have learned what is the right performance of action. This learning can never be acquired by a renunciation of works now. Indeed, it may be taken for granted that no person will be able to renounce the world unless he has passed through the other experience in some life. A few may be found who attempt to do so, but if they have not been through all action they cannot proceed. The character of the man himself inwardly is the real test. No matter how many times during countless births he has renounced the world, if his inner nature has not renounced, he will be the same man during the entire period, and whenever, in any one of his ascetic lives,

the new, the appropriate temptation or circumstance arises, he will fall from his high outward asceticism.

That our view as to the extreme difficulty of *right renunciation through action* is correct, we may refer to what Krishna says further on in the chapter.

Yet such abstraction, Chief!

Is hard to win without much holiness.

Krishna praises both schools, telling Arjuna that the disciples of each will arrive at a like end; but he says that right performance of action is the better. Now we must reconcile these two. If one is better than the other and yet both conduct to the same goal, there must be some reason for making the comparison, or hopeless confusion results. Acting upon his apparent equal endorsement, many seekers have abandoned action, thereby hoping to gain salvation. They ignored the sixth verse, which reads:

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

Here again is a higher place assigned to performance of action. It seems clear that what Krishna meant was that renunciation of action in any one life, followed by the same conduct in all the subsequent lives thereby affected, would at last lead the renouncer to see how he must begin to stop that kind of renunciation and take up the performance of actions while he renounced the fruit of them. This is thought by many occultists to be the true view. It is well known that the ego returning to regeneration is affected by the actions of his previous births, not only circumstantially in the various vicissitudes of a life, but also in the tendency of the nature to any particular sort of religious

practice, and this effect operates for a length of time or number of births exactly commensurate with the intensity of the previous practice. And naturally in the case of one who deliberately renounced all in the world, devoting himself to asceticism for many years, the effect would be felt for many lives and long after other temporary impressions had worn off. In going on thus for so many births, the man at last acquires that clearness of inner sight which brings him to perceive what method he really ought to follow. Besides also the natural development, he will be assisted by those minds whom he is sure to encounter, who have passed through all the needed experience. Additional support for these suggestions is found in the sixth chapter, in the verses referring to the rebirth of such disciples:

So hath he back again what heights of heart
He did achieve, and so he strives anew
To perfectness, with better hope, dear Prince!
*For by the old desire he is drawn on
Unwittingly.*

What we are to endeavor to understand, then, is how to renounce the fruit of our actions, which is what Krishna means when he tells us to perform actions as a renunciation. The polluting effect of an act is not in the nature of the mere thing done, nor is the purifying result due to what work we may do, but on either hand the sin or the merit is found in the inner feeling that accompanies the act. One may donate millions in alms, and yet not thereby benefit his real character in the least. It is very true that he will reap material rewards, perhaps in some other life, but those even will be of no benefit, since he will be still the same. And another may only give away kind words or small sums, because that is all he has to give, and be so much benefited by the feeling accompanying each act that his progress up the ascending arc toward union with spirit is rapid. We find in the Christian

Testament Jesus of Nazareth enforcing this view in the parable of the widow's mite, which he regarded as of more value than all that had been given by others. He could not have referred to the intrinsic value of the coin given, nor to the act as thus measured, for that quantity was easily ascertained; he only looked to the inner feeling of the poor woman when she gave all that she had.

No matter in what direction we see ourselves acting, we perceive how difficult it is to be true renouncers. And we cannot hope to reach the perfection of this better sort of renunciation through action, in the present life, be it the one in which we have begun, or be it the twentieth of such effort. However, we can *try*, and such is our duty; if we persevere, the tendency toward the right understanding will increase with each life more rapidly than would otherwise be possible.

And even in the high aim found in aspiration to discipleship under a master, or even to adeptship, we encounter the same difficulty. This aspiration is commendable above most that we can formulate, but when we coldly ask ourselves soon after that aspiration has been formed, "Why am I thus aspiring; why do I want to be near in sense to the Master?", we are obliged to admit that the impelling motive for acquiring the aspiration was tinged with selfishness. We can easily prove this by inquiring in the forum of our own conscience if we had the aspiration for ourself or for the great mass of men, rich and poor, despicable and noble; would we be able to feel content were we suddenly told that our deep longing had given the boon to others and that we must wait ten lives more? It is safe to say that the answer would be that we were very sorry. In the twelfth verse we find the remedy for the difficulty, as well as the difficulty itself, clearly stated thus:

The right performer of action, abandoning fruit of action, attains to rest through devotion; the wrong performer of

action, attached to fruit thereof on account of desire, remains bound.

These instructions will be very difficult for all who are living for themselves and who have not in some small degree begun to believe that they are not here for their own sake. But when we feel that there is no separation between us and any other creature, and that our higher self is leading us through all the experiences of life to the end that we shall recognize the unity of all, then, instead of continually acting contrary to that object of the higher self, we try to acquire the right belief and aspiration. Nor need we be deterred, as some are, by the extreme difficulty of eliminating the selfish desire for progress. That will be the task during many lives, and we should begin it voluntarily as soon as it is known, instead of waiting for it to be forced in upon us through suffering and many defeats.

A common mistake made by students is corrected in this chapter. It is the habit of many to say that, if these doctrines are followed to the letter, the result is a being who cares for nothing but the calmness which comes from extinction in the Supreme Spirit — that is, the extreme of selfishness. And popular writers contribute to this ridiculous impression, as we can see in the numerous articles on the subject. Among those writers it is the sequence of the "personal aggrandizement idea," which is the bane of the present age, as occultists think, but the chief beauty of it in the eyes of those to whom we refer. Krishna puts it clearly enough in the twenty-fifth verse:

Effacement in the Supreme Spirit is gained by the right-seeing sage whose sins are exhausted, who hath cut asunder all doubts, whose senses and organs are under control, and *who is devoted to the well-being of all creatures.*

If the last qualification is absent, then he is not a "right-seeing sage" and cannot reach union with the Supreme. It must follow that the humblest imitator, everyone who desires to come to that condition, must try to the best of his ability to imitate the sage who has succeeded. And such is the word of the Master; for he says in many places that, if we expect to have his help, we must apply ourselves to the work of helping humanity — to the extent of our ability. No more than this is demanded.

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Essay on Chapter VI of the *Bhagavad-Gita*

More than one subject is treated in this chapter. It ends what I call the first series, as the whole eighteen chapters should be divided into three groups of six each.

Renunciation, equal-mindedness, true meditation, the golden mean in action, the unity of all things, the nature of rebirth and the effect of devotion upon it and devachan, are all touched upon.

It is a most practical chapter which would benefit students immensely if fully grasped and followed. The mistakes made many thousand years ago by disciples were the same as those of today. Today, just as then, there are those who think true renunciation consists in doing nothing except for themselves, in retiring from active duties, and in devoting their attention to what they are pleased to call self-development. On the other hand are those who mistake incessant action for true devotion. The true path is between these two.

The forsaking of worldly action — called *sannyasa* — is the same as what is known in Europe as the monastic life, especially in some very ascetic orders. Adopted selfishly under a mistaken notion of duty it cannot be true devotion. It is merely an attempt to save oneself. The course adopted by some theosophical students very much resembles this erroneous method, although it is practiced in the freedom of the world and not behind monastery walls.

To be a true renouncer of action and a devotee one must put the problem on another plane. On the physical brain plane there is no way of reconciling a contradiction such as appears to exist in the direction to perform actions and yet renounce their

performance. It is exactly here that many readers of the *Bhagavad-Gita* stop and are confused. They have for so long been accustomed to thinking of the physical and living in it, the terms used for their thought are so material in their application, that, seeing this contradiction, they say that the book will not benefit them. But considering the difficulty from the view that the real actor is the mind, that acts are not the dead outward expressions of them, but are the thoughts themselves, we can see how one can be both a renouncer and a devotee, how we can outwardly perform every action, multitudes of them, being as active as anyone who is wrapped up in worldly pursuits, and yet be ourselves unattached and unaffected.

Duty and the final imperative — the "what ought I to do" — comes in here and becomes a part of the process. The actions to be performed are not any and every one. We are not to go on heedlessly and indiscriminately doing everything that is suggested. We must discover what actions ought to be performed by us and do them for that reason and not because of some result we expect to follow. The fact that we may be perfectly certain of the result is no reason for allowing our interest to fasten upon that. Here again is where certain theosophists think they have a great difficulty. They say that knowing the result one is sure to become interested in it. But this is the very task to be essayed — to so hold one's mind and desires as not to be attached to the result.

By pursuing this practice true meditation is begun and will soon become permanent. For one who watches his thoughts and acts, so as to perform those that ought to be done, will acquire a concentration in time which will increase the power of real meditation. It is not meditation to stare at a spot on the wall for a fixed period, or to remain for another space of time in a perfectly vacuous mental state which soon runs into sleep. All those things

are merely forms which in the end will do no lasting good. But many students have run after these follies, ignoring the true way. The truth is that the right method is not easy; it requires thought and mental effort, with persistency and faith. Staring at spots and such miscalled occult practices are very easy in comparison with the former.

However, we are human and weak. As such we require help, for the outer self cannot succeed in the battle. So Krishna points out that the lower self is to be raised up by the help of the higher; that the lower is, as it were, the enemy of the higher, and we must not allow the worse to prevail. It will all depend upon self-mastery. The self below will continually drag down the man who is not self-conquered. This is because that lower one is so near the thick darkness that hangs about the lower rungs of evolution's ladder it is partly devil. Like a heavy weight it will drag into the depths the one who does not try to conquer himself. But on its other side the self is near to divinity, and when conquered it becomes the friend and helper of the conqueror. The Sufis, the Mohammedan mystical sect, symbolize this in their poetry relating to the beautiful woman who appears but for a moment at the window and then disappears. She refuses to open the door to her lover as long as he refers to their being separate; but when he recognizes their unity then she becomes his firm friend.

The next few verses in the *Gita* outline that which is extremely difficult — equal-mindedness, and intentness upon the Supreme Being in heat and cold, pleasure and pain, success and failure. We cannot reach to this easily, perhaps not in many lives, but we can try. Every effort we make in that direction will be preserved in the inner nature and cannot be lost at death. It is a spiritual gain, the riches laid up in heaven to which Jesus referred. To describe the perfection of equal-mindedness is to picture an adept of the highest degree, one who has passed beyond all worldly

considerations and lives on higher planes. Gold and stones are the same to him. The objects he seeks to accomplish are not to be reached through gold, and so it and the pebbles have the same value. He is also so calm and free from delusion of mind and soul that he remains the same whether with enemies or friends, with the righteous or the sinners.

This high condition is therefore set before us as an ideal to be slowly but steadfastly striven after so that in the course of time we may come near it. If we never begin we will never accomplish, and it is far better to adopt this high ideal, even though failing constantly, than to have no ideal whatever.

But some are likely to make a mistake herein. Indeed they have done so. They set up the ideal, but in a too material and human manner. Then they thought to walk on the chosen path by outward observance, by pretending to regard gold and stones as the same to them, while in their hearts they preferred the gold. Their equal-mindedness they confined to other people's affairs, while they displeased and alarmed all relatives and friends by the manner of riding this hobby and by wrong neglect of obvious duty. Truly they sought for equal-mindedness, but failed to see that it can only be acquired through right performance of duty, and not by selecting the duties and environments that please us.

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Essay on Chapter VII of the *Bhagavad-Gita*

This chapter is devoted to the question of that spiritual discernment by means of which the Supreme Spirit can be discerned in all things, and the absence of which causes a delusion constantly recurring, the producer of sorrow. Krishna says that this sort of knowledge leaves nothing else to be known, but that to attain it the heart — that is, every part of the nature — must be fixed on the Spirit, meditation has to be constant, and the Spirit made the refuge or abiding-place. He then goes on to show that to have attained to such a height is to be a mahatma.

Among thousands of mortals a single one perhaps strives for perfection, and among those so striving perhaps *a single one knows me as I am.*

This points out the difficulty to be met in any one life, but is not cause for discouragement. It simply makes clear the fact, and thus also punctures the boastful claims of those who would pretend to have reached perfection but do not show it in their acts.

He then gives an eightfold division of his inferior nature, or that part of the Universal One which can be known. This is not the nature of man, and does not oppose the theosophical sevenfold system of human principles. No particular theosophical classification for the divisions of nature has been given out. It would, on the one hand, not be understood, and on the other, disputes leading to no good end would follow. He might as well have stated the twenty-fivefold division held by some other school. This "inferior nature" is only so relatively. It is the phenomenal and transient which disappears into the superior at the end of a kalpa. It is that part of God, or of the Self, which chose to assume the phenomenal and transient position, but is, in

essence, as great as the superior nature. The inferiority is only relative. As soon as objective material, and subjective spiritual, worlds appear, the first-named has to be denominated inferior to the other, because the spiritual, being the permanent base, is in that sense superior; but as an absolute whole all is equal.

Included in the inferior nature are all the visible, tangible, invisible and intangible worlds; it is what we call nature. The invisible and intangible are nonetheless actual; we know that poisonous gas, though invisible and intangible, is fatally actual and potential. Experiment and induction will confer a great deal of knowledge about the inferior nature of God and along that path the science of the modern West is treading, but before knowing the occult, hidden, intangible realms and forces —often called spiritual, but not so in fact — the inner astral senses and powers have to be developed and used. This development is not to be forced, as one would construct a machine for performing some operation, but will come in its own time as all our senses and powers have come. It is true that a good many are trying to force the process, but at last they will discover that human evolution is universal and not particular; one man cannot go very far beyond his race before the time.

Krishna points out to Arjuna a gulf between the inferior and the superior. This latter is the Knower and that which sustains the whole universe, and from it the inferior nature springs. So the materialistic and scientific investigator, the mere alchemist, the man who dives into the occult moved by the desire for gain to himself, will none of them be able to cross the gulf at all, because they do not admit the indwelling Spirit, the Knower.

The superior nature can be known because it is in fact the Knower who resides in every human being who has not degraded himself utterly. But this must be admitted before any approach to

the light can be made. And but few are really willing, and many are unable, to admit the universal character of the Self. They sometimes think they do so by admitting the Self as present, as contiguous, as perhaps part tenant. This is not the admission, it leaves them still separate from the Self. All the phenomenal appearances, all the different names, and lives, and innumerable beings, are hung suspended, so to say, on the Self. Thus:

And all things hang on me as precious gems upon a string.

A number of pre-eminently great and precious things and powers are here enumerated and declared to be the Self; while next the very delusions and imperfections of life and man are included. Nothing is left out. This is certainly better than an illogical religion which separates God from the delusions and cruelties of nature, and then invents a third thing, in the person of a devil, who is the source of human wickedness. All this further accentuates the difficulties in the way. Krishna says the illusion is difficult to surmount, but that success can be attained by taking refuge in the Self — for he is the Self. The entire congregation of worshipers who are righteous find favor with the Self, but those who are spiritually wise are on the path that leads to the highest, which is the Self.

This means, as Krishna says, that those who with the eye of spiritual wisdom see that the Self is all, begin to reincarnate with that belief ingrained in them. Hitherto they had come back to earth without that single idea, but possessed of many desires and of ideas which separated them from the Self. Now they begin to return fully at rest in the Self and working out their long-accumulated karma. And at last they become what was mentioned in the opening verses, a mahatma or great soul.

There is, however, a large number of persons who are in the class which has been deprived of spiritual discernment "through

diversity of desires" or who have not yet had discernment for the same reason. The verse reads as follows:

Those who through diversity of desires are deprived of spiritual wisdom adopt particular rites subordinated to their own natures, and worship other Gods.

Although these words, like the rest of the colloquy, were spoken in India and to a Hindu, they are thoroughly applicable in the West. Every mode of thought and of living may be called a rite gone over by each one as his conscious or unconscious religion. A man adopts that which is conformable, or subordinate, to his own nature, and being full of desires he worships or follows other gods than the Supreme Self. In India the words would more particularly mean the worship, which is quite common, of idols among those who are not educated out of idolatry; but they would also mean what is said above. In the West these "other gods" are the various pleasures, objects, aims and modes of life and thought, be they religious or not, which the people adopt. They have not the many thousands of gods of the Hindu pantheon, each one for some particular purpose, but it comes to the same thing. The idol-worshiper bows to the god visible so that he may attain the object of his heart which that god is supposed to control. The Western man worships his object and strives after it with all his heart and mind and thus worships something else than the Supreme Imperishable One. The god of one is political advancement, of another — and generally of most — the possession of great wealth. One great god is that of social advancement, the most foolish, hollow and unsatisfactory of all; and with it in America is yoked the god of money, for without wealth there is no social preeminence possible except in those cases where official position confers a temporary glory. The mother often spends sleepless nights inventing means for pushing her daughter into social success; the father lies wakefully

calculating new problems for the production of money. The inheritors of riches bask in the radiance coming from their own gold, while they strive for new ways to make, if possible, another upward step on that road, founded on ashes and ending at the grave, which is called social greatness. And out of all this striving many and various desires spring up so that their multiplicity and diversity completely hide and obstruct all spiritual development and discernment.

But many who are not so carried away by these follies attend to some religion which they have adopted or been educated into. In very few cases, however, is the religion adopted: it is born with the child; it is found with the family and is regularly fastened on as a garment. If in this religion, or cult, there is faith, then the Supreme Self, impartial and charitable, makes the faith strong and constant so that thereby objects are attained. In whatever way the devotee chooses to worship with faith it is the Supreme which, though ignored, brings about the results of faith.

A curious speculation rises here; it may be true, it may be not. It can be noticed that millions of prayers are recited every month addressed to the One God, all through Christendom, asking various favors. Millions were offered for the conversion to a better life of the Prince of Wales — they failed. The rain ceases and prayers are made, but the dryness continues. Candles are lighted and prayers said to stop the earthquake which is destroying the city — the quakings go on until the impulse is ended and the city ruined. It is perfectly impossible to prove answers to prayer in enough cases to convince the thoughtful. Now the speculative thought is that perhaps the prayers offered to an unmanifested God have no effect, for to be effectual the Being appealed to must have a separate existence so as to be able to intervene in separated manifested things. Christians do not possess the statistics of results from prayer offered to gods in

Oriental countries. The usual cases brought forward in the West are such as the orphan asylum, for which nothing is asked except in prayer. But in India they have institutions similarly — but not so lavishly — supported and no asking alone save to the particular patron god. It is a matter of strong, constant faith which carries the thoughts of the prayer into the receptive minds of other people, who are then moved by the subconscious injected thought to answer the request. Now if the prayer is offered to an unseen and unknown God the faith of the person is not firm, whereas perhaps in the case of the idol-worshiper or of the Roman Catholic addressing himself to the Mother of God with her image before him, the very presence of the representative is an aid to constancy in faith. All this applies of course to prayers for personal and selfish ends. But that prayer or aspiration which is for spiritual light and wisdom is the highest of all, no matter to whom or what addressed. All religions teach that sort of prayer; all others are selfish and spiritually useless.

Although the strength of the devotee's devotion and faith for any God or object is due entirely to the Supreme Self, no matter if the faith be foolish and the God false, yet the reward obtained is said to be temporary, transitory, sure to come to an end. But unlike Western religious systems this is declared to be a matter of law instead of being determined by sentiment or arbitrarily. The sentences in which I find this are as follows:

But the reward of such short-sighted men is temporary.
Those who worship the Gods go to the Gods, and those who
worship me come unto me.

Man, made of thought, occupant only of many bodies from time to time, is eternally thinking. His chains are through thought, his release due to nothing else. His mind is immediately tinted or

altered by whatever object it is directed to. By this means the soul is enmeshed in the same thought or series of thoughts as is the mind. If the object be anything that is distinct from the Supreme Self then the mind is at once turned into that, becomes that, is tinted like that. This is one of the natural capacities of the mind. It is naturally clear and uncolored, as we would see if we were able to find one that had not gone through too many experiences. It is movable and quick, having a disposition to bound from one point to another. Several words would describe it. Chameleon-like it changes color, sponge-like it absorbs that to which it is applied, sieve-like it at once loses its former color and shape the moment a different object is taken up. Thus, full of joy from an appropriate cause, it may suddenly become gloomy or morose upon the approach of that which is sorrowful or gloomy. We can therefore say it becomes that to which it is devoted.

Now "the Gods" here represent not only the idols of idol-worshippers, but all the objects and desires people run after. For the idols are but the representatives of the desired object. But all these gods are transitory. If we admit the existence of Indra or any other god, even he is impermanent. Elsewhere it is said that all the gods are subject to the law of death and rebirth — at the time of the great dissolution they disappear. The vain things which men fix their minds on and run after are of the most illusory and transitory character. So whether it be the imaginary gods or the desires and objects the mind is fixed on, it — that is, those who thus act — has only a temporary reward because the object taken is in itself temporary. This is law and not sentiment.

Pushing into details a little further it is said that after death the person, compelled thereto by the thoughts of life, becomes fixed in this, that or the other object or state. That is why the intermediate condition of kama-loka is a necessity. In that state they become what they thought. They were bigots and tortured

others: those thoughts give them torture. Internal fires consume them until they are purified. The varieties of their different conditions and appearances are as vast in number as are all the immense varieties of thoughts. I could not describe them.

But those who worship or believe in the Self as all-in-all, not separate from any, supreme, the container, the whole, go to It, and, becoming It, know all because of its knowledge, and cease to be subject to change because It is changeless. This also is law, and not sentiment.

The chapter concludes by showing how the ignorant who believe in a Supreme Being with a form, fall into error and darkness at the time of their birth because of the hold which former life-recollections have upon the mind. This includes the power of the skandhas or aggregates of sensations and desires accumulated in prior lives. At birth these, being a natural part of us, rush to us and we to them, so that a new union is made for another lifetime. In the other life, not having viewed the Self as all and in all, and having worshiped many gods, the sensations of liking and disliking are so strong that the darkness of rebirth is irresistible. But the wise man died out of his former life with a full knowledge of the Self at the hour of death, and thus prevented the imprinting upon his nature of a set of sensations and desires that would otherwise, upon reincarnation, lead him into error.

This is the chapter on Unity, teaching that the Self is all, or if you like the word better, God: that God is all and not outside of nature, and that we must recognize this great unity of all things and beings in the Self. It and the next chapter are on the same subject and are only divided by a question put by Arjuna.

* * *

The remaining chapters deal with universal cosmical truths as

well as with philosophy and ethics. They all enforce the great doctrine of unity or non-separateness. In going over them we find such references as require us to know and to believe in the Wisdom-religion. The rise and destruction of races is given, the obscurities and darkness between evolutionary periods, the universal great destructions and the minor ones are there. Through all these the Self sits calmly looking on as the spectator, the witness, the receptacle.

Where Arjuna. the Archer is, he who was taught by Krishna, with him is glory, honor, fortune and success. He who knows Arjuna knows himself.

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