

**ARJUNA'S ARGUMENT
AT
KURUKSHETRA
AND
SRI KRISHNA'S ANSWERS**



KIREET JOSHI

**ARJUNA'S ARGUMENT
AT KURUKSHETRA
AND
SRI KRISHNA'S ANSWER**

**ARJUNA'S ARGUMENT
AT KURUKSHETRA
AND
SRI KRISHNA'S ANSWER**

by

Kireet Joshi

The Mother's Institute of Research, New Delhi
mothersinstitute@hotmail.com

© Author

All rights reserved including translation into any Indian or Foreign language. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form, or by any means (electronic, photocopy or otherwise) without written permission of the author or the publisher.

First edition, 2011

ISBN: 978-81-909651-5-6

Published by:

POPULAR MEDIA, Jhilmil Industrial Area, Delhi-110095
E: popularmedia@gmail.com W: www.popularmedia.in

CONTENTS

Introduction

| | |
|---|----|
| 1. A Most Difficult Dilemma of Human Life and Gita's Solution | 4 |
| 2. Arjuna's Argument | 6 |
| 3. Sri Krishna's Answer | 10 |
| 4. Gita's Karma Yoga: Elimination of Desire from Action | 18 |
| 5. Significance of the Gita as a Synthesis of Yoga | 20 |
| 6. Relationship between Knowledge, Action and Devotion | 22 |
| 7. Primacy of Knowledge in the Synthesis | 26 |
| 8. Bhagavad Gita and the Contemporary Crisis | 30 |

Appendices

Selected chapters from '*Essays on the Gita*'
- Sri Aurobindo

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Our Demand and Need from the Gita | 49 |
| The Core of the Teaching | 60 |
| The Message of the Gita | 73 |

Introduction

The Age of the Vedas and the principal Upanishads was the Age of Intuition, but this Age was followed by the Age of Reason. Inspired texts of the Veda and the Upanishads made room for metaphysical philosophy, even as afterwards metaphysical philosophy had to give place to experimental Science. The study of the history of the metaphysical philosophy of India demonstrates the great heights to which the pure reason developed, and the study of the experimental Science that developed in India demonstrates multisided development of the mixed action of the reason in minute subtlety and complexity; this mixed action of the reason explored the domains of experimental and pragmatic knowledge, and this afforded extreme possibilities of the development of the experiences of the physical mind and senses. This process can be seen as a circle of progress, since the results of the Age of Intuition came to be critically examined and assimilated by the Age of Pure Reason, and similarly the results of metaphysical philosophy came to be critically tested by the experiences and experiments that were meant to meet the demands of the mixed action of Reason and the physical mind and senses. In retrospect, it can be said that this succession and this attempt to separate assimilation enlarged the scope of inquiry and prevented the exclusive domination of any particular part of human consciousness and nature. A more complete harmony of different parts of knowledge was prepared.

In the development of philosophy that we see in the post-Upanishadic period, two distinctive stages can be discerned. In the first stage, Indian philosophers recognized the earlier results of Intuition as an authority superior to Reason. But at the same time, they started from Reason and tested the results it gave them, holding only those conclusions to be valid which were supported by the supreme authority of intuitive experience. They proceeded with the united consent of the two great authorities, Reason and Intuition. But in the second stage, the natural trend of Reason to assert its own supremacy triumphed. This explains the rise of conflicting schools even among those which founded themselves in theory on the Veda but used its text as a weapon against each other. This only illustrates how Reason functions; it proceeds by analysis and division and assembles its facts to form a whole; but in the assemblage so formed there are opposite anomalies, logical incompatibilities. In order to form a flawlessly logical system, Reason tends to affirm some aspects and to negate others which conflict with its chosen conclusions. The synthesis of intuitional knowledge that was present in the Veda and the early Vedanta was thus broken up, and devices, methods and standards of varying value were employed by which entire freedom was acquired for metaphysical speculations conducted by Reason.

Nevertheless, efforts were made from time to time to recombine philosophical systems into some image of the old catholicity and unity. Three great declarations of the Upanishads have constantly remained prominent during the course of the development of Indian philosophy, namely, "I am He", "Thou art That, O Shvetaketu", "All this is the

Brahman; this Self is the Brahman.” The conceptions of Brahman, Purusha and Ishwara have remained alive, and they still carry something of the old burden of the inexpressible Reality. The questions which have always occupied the thought of India were concerning the relationship of the movement of becoming to any discoverable or realizable absolute Unity, and how the ego, whether generated by the movement or cause of the movement, can return to the true Self, Divinity, or Reality that was declared by the Vedanta.

A Most Difficult Dilemma of Human Life and Gita's Solution

The greatest significance of the Gita lies in the fact that it proposes a solution to a central typical problem of human life that presents itself at a certain critical stage of development. We may say that Arjuna to whom the teaching is addressed is a representative man, and the problem that he faced arose at a certain height of ethical concern in the midst of an actual and symbolic battlefield (Kurukshetra, which is also Dharmakshetra). He had come to the battlefield motivated by the ideal of a fight for justice. But as he gazed at the armies and looked in the face of the myriads of the champions of unrighteousness whom he had to meet and conquer and slay, the revelation of the meaning of a civil and domestic war came to him. He was then overcome suddenly by a violent, sensational, physical and moral crisis. "What after all," he asked himself in effect, "is this fight for justice when reduced to its practical terms, but just a fight for the interest of oneself, one's brothers and one's party for possession and enjoyment and rule?"

The entire train of argument that Arjuna presents to Sri Krishna is very instructive, and the premises and the conclusions of the argument lead to such a dilemma that the search for its solution necessitated a revolutionary change of perception and establishment in a new status of

yogic knowledge in the widest and integral sweep.

Yoga has many gates of entry, and moral experience at an acute point of development throws up such a dilemma that the standards of conduct erected by human consciousness collide with each other so critically that one is obliged to enter into the gates of yoga in search of a true solution. When we examine the argument of Arjuna, we shall find that the crisis that confronted Arjuna was no ordinary crisis; it arose at a point where Arjuna had striven his very best to fulfill the demands of the standards of conduct or standards of dharma with his utmost sincerity, and even at that point of crisis, he was prepared for a quest which promised the possibility of fullness of action which was to be totally free from blemish. It is in that quest that Sri Krishna found it indispensable to provide that vast and integral knowledge of the workings of the universe, of the deepest roots of those workings and of the relations of the divine consciousness with human will and human action; Sri Krishna went farther and showed the integral method of combining that integral knowledge with motivation of complete surrender to the divine consciousness, the surrender of human will and human action so that they may be uplifted, transformed and so divinized that the resultant would be fullness of spiritual action.

Arjuna's Argument

Let us state the argument of Arjuna: "I do not see any good by slaying my own people in the fight. O Krishna! I do not long for victory, nor kingdom, nor pleasures. O Govinda! Of what use is kingdom to us, or enjoyments, or even life? Those for whose sake we desire to gain kingdom, enjoyments and pleasures, they are arrayed in battle, not caring for their lives and riches...; even if they kill me, I do not want to kill them, even for the kingdom of the three worlds, — what then to speak of gaining this earth? What pleasures can be ours after we have killed the sons of Dhritarashtra? Sin will only accrue to us if we kill these evil ones. Even if they, whose minds are overpowered by greed, see no wrong in destruction of families and no crime in treachery to friends, why should we not have wisdom to refrain from this sin, — we who see the wrong in the destruction of the family? With the destruction of the families, the eternal family tradition of dharma is destroyed: with the destruction of dharma, the entire society is overcome by adharma, unrighteousness. When society is overcome by unrighteousness, the women of our entire tradition become impure. And as a result, perverse progeny is produced.... Those who destroy the dharma of the tradition will be responsible for the ruin of the race, the collapse of its high traditions and ethical degradation; hell for the authors of such a crime. Therefore, it is more for my

welfare that the sons of Dhritarashtra armed should slay me unarmed and unresisting. I will not fight." (I,32-46)

If we analyze this argument, we shall find the following steps:

In the first place, Arjuna argued that he would like to reject that aim of life which seeks enjoyment and happiness, or, in other words, the hedonistic aim;

Secondly, he declared that he would reject the aim which seeks to attain victory and rule and power and government of men, — the aim that was prescribed in Indian dharma for the kshatriya, the man of power and action.

Thirdly, he rejected the ethical element that was the main spring of the entire preparation for the war. The arguments in this connection could be summarized as follows:

- (a) What exactly is "justice" involved in fighting the war that was about to commence? Was it not, he asked, interest of himself, his brothers, and his party for possession, enjoyment and rule? And even if it be granted that these aims were justified, he raised the question as to what would be the means of securing that justice. Would it not mean, he asked, the sacrifice of right maintenance of social and national life which in person of the kin of race stood before him opposing him in the battlefield?
- (b) Turning to another line of argument, Arjuna felt that even if happiness and life were desirable, they were so only if they were shared with all others, particularly with "our own people". But here Arjuna argued, "our own people" are to be slain, and who would consent to slay

them for the sake of all the earth and even for the kingdom of the three worlds?

- (c) At this stage, Arjuna formulated even a more fundamental objection. He declared that slaughter is a heinous crime, in which there is no right and no justice. And further, the sin became graver when those who were to be slain were objects of love and reverence.
- (d) Formulating this ethical argument, Arjuna conceded that the sons of Dhritarashtra were guilty of great offences, of sins of greed, and selfish passion, but he argued that they were overpowered by ignorance and they had no sense of guilt. On the other hand, would it be right, he asked in effect, to enter into sinful act voluntarily with a clear knowledge that sin was to be committed?
- (e) Once again, Arjuna brought in another ethical consideration. Even if a sin was to be committed and even if that could be justified because that was inevitable in the performance of the dharma of the kshatriya, how could it be justified if that leads to the destruction of family morality, social law, law of the nation? Arjuna declared that family itself could be corrupted, race would be sullied, law of race, morality, and family would be destroyed. And who would be responsible for these crimes? Indeed, those, in particular, who would enter into the war with a knowledge and sense of guilt and sin.

These arguments led Arjuna to declare that he would not fight.

But even though he was categorical in his declaration,

he betrayed, in response to a remark of disapproval from Sri Krishna, not only his indecisiveness but a complete bankruptcy of all his views and all the notions of the right and the good and the duty and dharma which were till that time the foundations of the guidelines of his life. He asked Sri Krishna: "Tell me, how shall I attack with arrows the most venerable Bhishma, the grandfathers, and guru Dronacharya in the battlefield? It is better to live in this world by begging rather than killing the most venerable elders. Even if I kill these elders for worldly gains, all my enjoyments would be smeared with their blood. We are not sure who is stronger amongst us and who will win the war. Moreover, the sons of Dhritarashtra are arrayed against us, after killing whom we ourselves would not like to live any longer. I am confused about my dharma owing to the lapse of the grain of my nature. Therefore, I ask you to tell me what is certainly the best for me. I am your disciple, I have taken refuge in you. Do instruct me. Even if I were to attain undisputed sovereignty over the whole world and conquer even the gods, I do not see how I could remedy this grief which is consuming my senses."

Once again, Arjuna said, "O Krishna! I shall not fight." And he became silent.

The current standards of conduct were found by Arjuna in a hideous chaos where they were in violent conflict with each other and with themselves. No moral standing ground was left, nothing to lay hold of and walk by any dharma, — the law, the norm, the rule of nature, action and life. And for a moral agent like Arjuna, whose very soul was that of action, this can be regarded as a worst possible crisis, failure and overthrow.

Sri Krishna's Answer

The answer that Sri Krishna gives can be received and understood only if one realizes that even at the summit of the ordinary mental level of consciousness, there is no solution to the problem of the kind that Arjuna was confronted with. The mental consciousness is limited and remains confined perpetually in the state of egoism and duality, and even at its highest level, the strain and stress of the stains of ego and dualities do not get diminished; on the contrary, the acuteness of the strains is felt to be so drenched in grief that the only way in which one can cure that grief is to discover a higher level of consciousness, if such exists, and if in that state, a perfectly pure action devoid of any blemish can be possible. Sri Krishna, the Master of Yoga, has the key to that higher level of consciousness in the light of which a positive solution and a fully affirmative answer can be obtained. The entire statement of the answer that is expounded in the Gita is a gradual exposition in an ascending manner, even in a winding manner and often in a perplexing manner, which culminates in a living vision and experience of the Supreme Reality in action in the world, in every strand of which there is purity and divinity, and in attaining identity with which, one can share and one can be filled totally with that purity and divinity in every fibre of action that is demanded of human agency.

Gita is not a book of Practical Ethics but of the Spiritual life

But before we analyze Sri Krishna's answer in detail, it may be remarked that the upshot of this answer is that the Gita is not a book of practical ethics, but of the spiritual life which permits us to transcend the clash of all dharmas that the human mind can conceive, and to discover a new dharma, the law of divine action, *divyam karma*, by the attainment of divine freedom in which the nature of the individual transcends its limitations, the limitations of the nature subject to three gunas, — tamas, rajas, and sattva, — and attains to the divine nature (*sādharmyam*).

Gita's view of Duty for Duty's sake

Often this high pitch of the Gita is not grasped, and often the Gita is so interpreted as to teach us the disinterested performance of duty as the highest and all-sufficient law. It has been argued that the crisis of Arjuna arose because he happened to forget his duty, and the whole teaching of Sri Krishna was to remind him of that duty. It is true that in the winding development of the argument, Sri Krishna does point out to Arjuna to follow the duty of the kshatriya in the war, but Sri Krishna knew that Arjuna was quite aware of his duty, and the latter's argument showed quite clearly his awareness of the duty of the kshyatriya. In the course of his argument, Arjuna had conceded the value of that duty, but he had become aware of an equally imperative duty, namely, to ensure the tradition of dharma of the family and of the society and of the nation, and he had become aware, too, that both the duties violently clashed with each other

ending in the collapse of the whole useful intellectual and moral edifice erected by the human mind. Indeed, it was Arjuna's duty to fight. But that duty had now become to his mind a terrible sin. How does it help him or solve his difficulty to tell him that he must do his duty disinterestedly, dispassionately? For knowing the clash of duties, he would want to know which was his duty. Could it be his duty to destroy in a sanguinary massacre his kin, his race and the tradition of dharma that held the country in some kind of solidarity? Indeed, he was told that he had right on his side, but that does not and cannot satisfy him, because, as he argues, the justice of his legal claim does not justify him in supporting it by a pitiless massacre destructive of the future of his nation. Was it a solution for him to act dispassionately in the sense of not caring whether it is a sin and whether that sinful action will multiply sinfulness in the society?

We also need to take into account a very important element that was present but not explicitly stated in the course of the argument of Arjuna. That element referred to a view which had become quite prominent, namely, the view of the Sankhya philosophy, which advocated that no action can be pure and devoid of the stain of the three gunas of nature, and that the highest good of the individual lay in sannyasa, in the renunciation of all motives of life and action and to seek liberation alone by renouncing action altogether. That this view had begun to guide him can be seen in his somewhat decisive declaration, "I shall not fight", and in the arguments that he advanced when Sri Krishna brought out in fullness the Sankhyan view of life and action and contrasted it with the view of yoga which, at that time, meant the Yoga of Action. In fact, the debate between

Sankhya and Yoga occupies a prominent place in Sri Krishna's answer, and this prominence is due to the fact that the Sankhyan view, which aimed at lifting human consciousness from the ordinary mental consciousness to a spiritual level of consciousness, advocated the gospel of renunciation or *sannyasa* and advocated, therefore, the inferiority and dispensability of the concepts of human duties and human responsibilities, which were supposed to be the results of the operations of ignorance. It was against this background that the final answer of the Gita goes beyond the higher level of consciousness indicated by Sankhya. The call of the Gita is not to subordinate the higher plane to the lower, but it calls us to rise higher and even to higher than the higher and to ascend to a supreme poise above the mainly practical, above the purely ethical, and even above the inactive Brahmic consciousness. In ultimate terms, it is in the integral static and dynamic Brahmic consciousness that the soul becomes free from works and is yet able to determine works by the intervention of the supreme divine consciousness and the Divine Lord within and above us; — it is by reference to that integral Brahmic Consciousness that Sri Krishna provides the final answer to Arjuna's question and demand for arriving at that action in which there is no stain of the ego, duality and conflict of the three *gunas* of our ordinary nature.

It is true that if one lays an almost exclusive stress on the first three or four chapters and on the idea of equality, and on the expression, *kartavyam karma*, the work that is to be done, and if one ignores the graduality of the exposition of the teaching, where the Teacher has to lead the disciple from one psychological level of understanding

to a higher one — a process in which subtleties and complexities of the ultimate richness of the teaching are to be developed, keeping also in view the psychological resonances which arise in the mind when words like dharma, karma, sankhya, sannyasa and yoga have to be used, — if all that is ignored, then one would feel justified to think that the Gita is a book of the Gospel of Duty, and one would read in it also the gospel of Kant's doctrine of Duty for Duty's sake. This sense is heightened when one refers to the phrase: "Thou hast a right to action, but none to the fruits of action", which is now popularly quoted as a great word, *mahāvākya*, of the Gita. One feels that one has grasped in this dictum in substance the entire teaching of the Gita. But when we read the Gita in all its complexity one finds that the great gospel of Karma yoga that we find in the Gita goes much farther than Kant. One has also to remember that Sri Krishna accepts the truth that lies behind the Sankhyan gospel of renunciation according to which all works have to be renounced, even though Sri Krishna's final answer transcends the Sankhyan solution. But both in the Sankhyan doctrine and in the vision that Sri Krishna presents in which the Sankhyan doctrine is transcended, there is no place for Kant's doctrine or other doctrines which assign supreme importance to the idea of duty. Indeed, the idea of duty has some relevance and appeal, and Sri Krishna himself refers to it, with justification, at the level at which that relevance has to be emphasized. But, then, we shall also find the counsel of Sri Krishna for hedonistic utilitarianism at a given stage of the development of the argument that Arjuna should fight for victory and for the enjoyment of the fruits of victory.

As Sri Krishna points out:

"If you are killed, you will attain heaven, or if you attain victory, you will enjoy kingship over the earth. Therefore, get up with determination to fight, O son of Kunti!" (II.37)

Thus, utilitarianism has also a place and justification and relevance at a certain stage of consciousness which rules man in his lower stages of ascent from the life of impulses to the life of reason, and from there to the life of higher and higher levels of consciousness. While evaluating the teaching of the Gita and, particularly, the doctrines of duty and utilitarianism, we have to note that Indian ethics respects gradations of consciousness and does not prescribe one law of conduct for all in any uniform manner. As one ascends from level to level, Indian ethics provides a guidance appropriate to each level, so that one can securely advance towards higher steps of ascent. In Indian ethics, therefore, there is place for *kama* and *artha*, provided they are restrained within limits by dharma that is prescribed for a regulated balance between indulgence and restraint. At a still higher level, it prescribes dharma for its own sake, but even there the idea of dharma is not limited to one rigid concept of duty. If Buddha renounces the duties of a prince, of a husband and of a father, he is not to be judged as having done something that is not prescribed. For the idea of dharma takes into account the ideal of response that one should give to a call, when that call issues from a level which is regarded as higher than what is restricted in a narrow scope of life and its activities. We can thus see towards the close of the teaching of the Gita a highest command that demands abandonment of all

Dharmas, *sarvadharmān parityajya*, in order to take refuge in the Supreme alone. The teaching of the Gita is based upon a vision of the Supreme and of a law of the Action of the Supreme in obedience to which alone the secret of freedom of the right action is discovered and in which, again, the secret of freedom from all action is also discovered.

Equality (*samatvam*) in the Gita

We also need to note that the equality which the Gita preaches is not disinterestedness; it is a state of inner poise and wideness which is the foundation of spiritual freedom, which is not only freedom of action but also freedom from action, a state in which the Supreme Himself acts in the world in such a way that He is at once non-doer and all-doer. All work is volition applied to a result, and karma yoga does not teach neglect in the performance of work that aims at the results of work. Sri Krishna defines Karma Yoga as skill in works (*yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*), and thus he lays down a principle that a karmayogin does every work with every due care and with such efficiency that the work shoots like an arrow so as to reach the precise point of the target. What the Gita teaches, however, is that even when the action is performed well, *one has no right to the fruits of action*, which is quite a different matter. In fact, Gita's teaching is that of inner renunciation of desire in which not only the desire for the enjoyment of fruits of action is to be renounced, but it goes farther. For Sri Krishna explains that even the sense of doership of action is a sign of ignorance of the entire machinery of action in the world and how ultimately action originates in the world. The aim of the

teaching is to show that the real origin of action is in the Supreme Consciousness, which is at once immobile and .nobile, as described often in the Upanishads (e.g. "It moves and It moves not"), and that all action originates from that state of consciousness which is entirely free from any necessity of action and which is for ever free from action even when from one ray of its consciousness the entire universe can be manifested. It is to lead the disciple to that state of consciousness by following a gradual and methodical process that Sri Krishna follows a tangled and difficult way.

Gita's Karma Yoga: Elimination of Desire from Action

The secret of Karma Yoga lies in the right dealing with the relationship between desire and action, and in eliminating from the psychological complex by pursuing a sustained method the operation of desire so that one can discover the real origin of all dynamism of action in that supreme will which is omnipotently free, and which is not only free to act or not to act but which at its origin remains permanently poised in the Inactive Brahman, even when, if it so wills, can constantly be engaged in full manifestation of action. Moreover, the seeker is enabled to discover and apply the methods by which the entire psychological complex can remain permanently united with that omnipotent will that is forever reposed in freedom from action.

In our ordinary psychological operation, all action appears to be tied up with desire, and if desire is eliminated, action also ceases to operate. According to the yoga of the Gita, there is no such inevitable connection between desire and action, and action can be united with that omnipotent will which has in it no want or lacuna to fulfill which the machinery of desire would be required. If that Will acts, it is because it is free to act or not to act and to act without losing that status and poise in which there is no vibration of action. It is the discovery of that free will and of the method

by which that will can be made operative through our individual consciousness that constitutes the methodology of Karma Yoga. It is because that operation is inconsistent with the vibration of desire that Karma Yoga proposes those steps by which desire can be eliminated from the human instrument which aspires to be free from the dualities and dilemmas of action and from the afflictions and disabilities for which there is no ordinary solution.

Significance of the Gita as a Synthesis of Yoga

The supreme significance of the Gita lies in the fact that in no text of yoga-shastra or the science of yoga do we find such a perfect system of karma yoga known to man in the past, and that it is the greatest gospel of spiritual works ever yet given to the race. The great basics of karma yoga are laid down in this text with an incomparable mastery and the infallible eye of an assured experience. It is true that at its close, we do find the possibilities of further development.

The yoga of the Gita is a synthesis of yoga, and although it aims at utilizing action as a constant method, and even though it leads to highest status of consciousness in which the perfection of action and fullness of spiritual action is attained, it synthesizes both in its methods and in its results a progressive synthesis of action, knowledge and devotion; and this synthesis is so wide and flexible that although it works out the full course of yoga by establishing the path of works as the starting-point, it admits that even the path of knowledge or the path of devotion can also be an equally effective starting-point. In fact, as Sri Krishna points out in course of his teaching, every path of yoga which has been developed is His path, and that the old or new path, depending upon how the

seeker seeks the highest union with the divine consciousness, the divine consciousness in response answers suitably and provides the right method of progression.

Relationship between Knowledge, Action and Devotion

At the root of the synthesis of the yoga of the Gita is a clear and indispensable relationship that exists between cognition, conation and affection. Knowledge, which is the fruit of cognition is always superior to mere action, since knowledge aims at the discovery of the ultimate foundation of all that is and all that becomes, and the attainment of knowledge is always foundational and nothing that vibrates in cognition, conation and affection can attain to perfection without the attainment of the foundation that can be seized by the processes of knowledge, *jñāna*. One of the basic truths of the karma yoga is, as Sri Krishna declares, that knowledge is far superior to works, and that all works culminate in knowledge:

*“jyāyasī karmaṇaḥ buddhiḥ”*¹

*“sarvaṁ karmākhilam jñāne parisamāpyate”*²

However, since all yoga is an endeavour and a mighty effort, there has to be in the human consciousness that need, that all-conscious imperative need, which provides perennial force of seeking, which is indispensable as a motive force at all stages of development. And this need must have its root not in mere desire, which is required to

¹ BG., III.1

² Ibid., IV.33

be eliminated in due course from the psychological complex of the seeker, or curiosity or quest which can at one stage or the other is satisfied and therefore gets arrested, but in the unveiling of that urge of love which can continue to operate not up to the point of union with the object of love but even after that object is attained, since there is no end of the intensity and permanence that love unabatedly seeks. Indeed, considering the urge of love and its place in the totality of human psychology, that urge is the unfailing and perennially fresh motive force of yoga as also its crown, the sovereignty of which is immortal in its constant flow. This is the reason why in the synthesis of the yoga of the Gita, the motive force of self-surrender and love has been assigned that indispensable place with such an emphasis that the yoga of divine love and the yoga of self-surrender is woven in the synthesis right from the beginning in some degree or the other, but gradually increases and ultimately ends in the crowning achievements of this great, vast and synthetic yoga.

It is true that the first step in the Gita's yoga is karma yoga, and yet in the first six chapters where karma yoga is particularly worked out in its main stages, the foundations of jnana yoga are also laid down in these chapters, and a preliminary synthesis of karma yoga and jnana yoga is underlined. Even though the yoga of divine love is not distinctly marked out, still in these six chapters, there is sufficient hint that emphasizes not only the discovery of the immobile Self but also of the Lord of works, and even of Him, who even being Impersonal is yet described in terms of Supreme Personality, *mām*,³ to whom one can approach

³ Vide., Ibid., II.61, III.30, IV.10

with love and increasing surrender, culminating in intenser and completer self-surrender. In the next six chapters there is insistence on knowledge, and the states and contents of self-realization, and knowledge of the true nature of the self and the world are described, not only in terms of essence but also in terms of fullness of essential details (*jñānam* and *vijñānam*).⁴ But the sacrifice of the works continues and the path of Works becomes one with but does not disappear into the path of Knowledge. In these six chapters (VII–XII), the yoga of divine love becomes more and more pronounced and the steps of Bhakti yoga are expounded with insistence on devotion, on adoration and seeking of the supreme Self as the Divine Lord. But the emphasis on the path of knowledge and the attainment of knowledge is not subordinated; only it is raised, vitalized and fulfilled; and still, the sacrifice of works continues; the path becomes the triune way of knowledge, works and devotion. The bhakta who is loved most is the bhakta who has true self-knowledge, God-knowledge and world-knowledge and who is engaged in works as an offering to the Master of self-energising and all-giving sacrifice. That is the path that leads to the state of immortality, the state of union with the divine Being, identity with the Self and oneness with the supreme dynamic divine Nature, and the state of transcendence of the three gunas of lower nature, — the state of *triguṇātīta*, and the state of *sādharmyam*.

In the last six chapters (XIII–XVIII), the entire synthesis of yoga of the Gita is reviewed from a special standpoint," the standpoint of the relationship between Purusha and Prakriti, and the precise relations between the supreme

⁴ Ibid., VII.2

Purusha (Purushottama),⁵ the immutable Self (Akshara Purusha),⁶ and the mobile Self (Kshara Purusha), as also the intimate relations between Purushottama and the higher nature, Para Prakriti, which manifests multiplicity of individual souls (*parāprakṛtir jīvaḥ*).⁷ This standpoint also clarifies the relationship between the Jiva (individual Soul) and lower Prakriti, *aparā prakṛiti*, and her Gunas. Finally, these chapters show action of gunas of the lower Prakriti, and how they can be transcended into the state of *triguṇātīta* or state beyond the three gunas. These chapters delineate the culminating method of the Gita's integral yoga, which is contained in the real *mahāvākya* of the Gita: "Become My minded, My lover and adorer, a sacrificer to Me, bow thyself to Me, to Me thou shalt come, this is My pledge and promise to thee, for dear art thou to Me. Abandon all Dharmas and take refuge in Me alone. I will deliver thee from all sin and evil, do not grieve."⁸ In other words, the constant and culminating method of the synthesis of this Yoga is to progressively take refuge in the indwelling Lord of all Nature and turn to Him with one's whole being, — with the life and body and sense and mind and heart and understanding, — with one's whole dedicated knowledge and will and action, *sarvabhāvena*, in every way of conscious self and instrumental nature. For all other Dharmas or norms of action are only a preparation for that highest Dharma which is the law of divine nature and divine action, and all processes of Yoga are only a means by which we can come first to some kind of union, and finally, to an

⁵ Ibid., XV.17

⁶ Ibid., XV.16

⁷ Ibid., VII.5

⁸ Ibid., XVIII.65, 66

integral union with the Master and supreme Soul and Self of our existence and with the Supreme Nature of the Supreme Lord.

Primacy of Knowledge in the Synthesis

It is significant for the synthetic character of the teaching of the Gita that even though at the very outset when Arjuna declares, "I will not fight", and even though Sri Krishna begins his answer by appealing to him to act and to fight, the very first note that is sounded by Sri Krishna in his refutation of the argument of Arjuna is a note concerning the supremacy of knowledge. Sri Krishna points out that although Arjuna's argument had the appearance of a learned man and possessor of knowledge, the very first premise of knowledge was missing from his argument. Those who have knowledge, says Sri Krishna in effect, have at the root of their argument the knowledge of the self and of the immortality of the self, while in Arjuna's argument there was a constant refrain of death and of the consequences of killing those who had assembled in the battlefield. The entire argument of Arjuna, both in its root and in its development, was flawed and that the argument would take a completely different turn if it was to be based on true knowledge, knowledge of immortality of the self, and the knowledge of the right place of death in the cycle of development of man and his society, as also the knowledge of the place of work and highest law of work that would follow from the first premise of the stability and permanence of the self and its relationship with the world and with work. The very first part of Sri Krishna's answer consists of the

distinction between that which is permanent and that which is phenomenal. In fact, Sri Krishna points out: "The soul, not the body is the reality. All these kings of men for whose approaching death thou hast the sorrow, have lived before, they will live again in the human body; for as a soul passes physically through childhood, youth and old age, so it passes on to the changing of the body. The wise man looks beyond the apparent facts of the lives of the body and senses to the real fact of his being and rises beyond the emotional and physical desires of the ignorant nature to the true and only aim of the human existence. The occasion of the war which has been presented to Arjuna can be understood only when that highest aim of human life, individual and collective, can be known." It is towards that knowledge that Sri Krishna's answer leads Arjuna from step to step.

Sri Krishna reiterates the affirmations of the Upanishads in regard to immortality, which is not merely the survival of death, but the transcendence of life and death. Finite bodies have an end, but the soul is and cannot cease to be. It is not born nor does it die; it is not slain with the slaying of the body; who can slay the immortal spirit? Weapons cannot cleave it, nor the fire burn nor do the waters drench it nor the wind dry. All are that Self, that One, that Divine, whom we look on and speak and hear of as wonderful beyond our comprehension. One thing only is the truth in which we have to live, namely, the Eternal manifesting itself as the soul of man in the great cycle of its pilgrimage, where all the circumstances of life, happy or unhappy, are to be seen or used as a means of progress, and with immortality as a constant underlying fact and as the home to which the soul

travels as it gradually unfolds and recovers from ignorance its knowledge of its true being, nature and aim.

But should then one live by constant killing? How does this knowledge of the immortal Spirit justify the action demanded of Arjuna and the slaughter at Kurukshetra? The war is a result of the way and degree to which human life has progressed so far and is struggling to attain the aim that is placed before human life. The way in which the world has progressed so far has been continuously a struggle between right and wrong, justice and injustice, the force that protects and the force that violates and oppresses. This process has been brought to the issue of physical strife, and the present stage of human society has not yet discovered a better arrangement than the instrumentality of war for the champion and standard bearer of the Right to ensure that the standard of Right and Justice is not allowed to trail in the dust and be trampled into mire by the blood-stained feat of the oppressor. A day may come, must surely come, Sri Krishna has already declared it by his unceasing effort to avoid the physical strife, when humanity will be ready, — spiritually, morally, socially for the reign of universal peace. But at the present stage, where Arjuna stands in the battlefield, that day has not yet come and the method of physical strife cannot yet be avoided. If humanity has to move forward for the eventual fulfillment of the highest aim of life in which the immortal Spirit will manifest fully, the present stage of physical strife has to be unavoidably accepted for the present, and Arjuna, given his background, his upbringing and his own path towards his own higher development and for the development of the human kind, has to stand out in battle and not permit the sliding back of

the human civilization and allow the oppressor to trample upon the standards of Right and Justice. For the highest good, in that state of human progress, Arjuna must not abstain from battle.⁹

⁹ Vide., Ibid., II.16, II.30

Bhagavadgita and Contemporary Crisis

Bhagavadgita has this uniqueness that, unlike other great religious books of the world, it does not stand apart as a work by itself. It is given as an episode in an epic history of India and of a great war fought in it. This episode focuses on a critical moment in the soul of one of the leading personages of this epic history, Mahabharata. It is also a moment of the crowning action of his life, where he faces a work which is terrible, violent and sanguinary. And he is confronted with a critical choice when he must either recoil from it altogether or carry it through to its inexorable execution. The criticality of the situation forces this great leader, Arjuna, to raise some of the deepest questions that compel an answer at the deepest level. The answer that we find in the Bhagavadgita is, therefore, important not merely in the light of general philosophy or ethical doctrine, but it has also a bearing upon a practical crisis and the application of the highest knowledge to human life.

The reason why the Bhagavadgita reads almost as fresh and still in its real substance even today as ever is because it is directly connected with the questions of highest importance in human life and attempts to apply the most absolute and integral realisation to the outer actualities of man's life and action. The relevance of the Gita has been in a sense perennial right from the time it first appeared or was written into the frame of the Mahabharata. But

considering that humanity is passing today through a grim and unprecedented crisis, we are bound to look into this great book with fresh eyes and compelling concern. It has been said sometimes that all we need to do is to be found in the Gita today. This is, we must say, an exaggeration and if we took that view too literally, it would encourage the superstition of the book. The highest truth, we might say, is infinite and cannot be circumscribed in that manner. While approaching the Gita or any other similar great work, we must be ready to accept that Truth is everywhere and cannot be the sole monopoly of one single book. It will also be dogmatic to declare that the truth that this book gives is *the* supreme knowledge, while some similar books have missed it or only imperfectly grasped it. Our approach should be impartial and our concern should be to look for the actual living truths that the Gita or any other similar work contains, to extract from it what can help us or the world at large. As students of life and seekers of the science and art of life, we should avoid academic disputation or assertions of mere theological dogma.

An impartial study of the Gita will show that it contains a very rich and many-sided thought, it manifests a synthetic grasp of different aspects of the ethical and spiritual life, and that it takes us to some of the highest possible experiences of which human mind is capable. It can even be said that it contains most of the main clues of the secret of reconciliation of the supreme states of consciousness and dynamic demands of the battles of life in which we find ourselves all the time, but particularly, at critical moments.

The setting in which the teaching of the Gita emerges is typical. The setting is that the *Kurukshetra*, the

field of battle, which is also the battle of life, the battle that we face in our life, visibly or invisibly, in our own times. Arjuna, the leading hero of the battle, is the representative man of the great world struggle, and he typifies the human soul of action brought face to face through that action in its highest and most violent crisis. And the crisis itself is ridden with the problem of human life where all standards of action fail and where a new basis of the action must be found at any cost. As we all know, the crisis that gripped Arjuna can come upon any one of us, and if we examine the contemporary situation we can clearly see how we ourselves are gripped by that crisis. Perhaps the dimensions of our crisis are even deeper and vaster.

It has sometimes been suggested that the crisis of Arjuna arose because, confronted with his duty, he felt compulsion of emotions and ideas which induced him to escape from his duty and to take resort to the gospel of renunciation of worldly pursuits and actions. This is a misreading of Arjuna's crisis. It cannot be said that Arjuna did not know his duty as a *kshatriya* or as a warrior whose aim was to ensure the rule of the right and justice. But his crisis arose from the fact that he saw an inextricable clash of the various related conceptions of duty; one concept clashing with another concept; one level of perception clashing with another level of perception. In other words, Arjuna's crisis arose from the collapse of the whole intellectual and moral edifice erected by the human mind. Arjuna knew that his duty was to fight, but what happens when that duty becomes to his mind a terrible sin? He knew that he had right on his side, but that does not and cannot satisfy him because, as he argues, the justice of his legal

claim does not justify him in supporting it by pitiless massacre destructive of the future of a nation. He feels that he must refrain from what his conscience abhors, though a thousand duties were shattered to pieces. And yet, who knows or how to know whether one should follow one or the other, the first alternative or the second alternative? Is there, it is effectively asked, a possible compromise or a radical solution?

There are several possible answers, and we find them all presented during the course of the answer that Sri Krishna presents. One answer is that of the performance of the social duty imposed by the creed of the Aryan fighter. Another answer is that the spiritualised ethics, which insists on *ahimsa*, on non-injuring and non-killing. According to the argument of this answer, the battle, if it is to be fought at all, must be fought on the spiritual plane and by some kind of non-resistance or refusal of participation. It may also advocate participation in the battle by taking recourse to non-violence and to soul resistance. (Non-violence has been considered by Sri Krishna as one of the divine gifts.¹) It may be that the soul resistance does not succeed on the external plane and the force of injustice conquers; even then, the argument would be that the individual will still have preserved his virtue and vindicated by his example the highest ideals. In a third possible answer, one may advocate a more insistent extreme of the inner spiritual direction, passing beyond this struggle between social duty and an absolutist ethical ideal; one would then favour the ascetic turn which points to get away from life and all its aims and standards of action, declaring that not here in this world of

¹ BG., XVI.2

dualities but somewhere in celestial or supra-cosmic stage, one can find an effective exit from the problem. The Gita rejects none of these things in their place; it insists on the performance of social duty, the following of the *dharma* for the man who has to take his share in the common action; it accepts *ahimsa* as a part of the highest spiritual-ethical ideal; it recognises also the ascetic renunciation as an effective way, if not as a solution of the problem, yet as a way of coming out of the problem. But the Gita goes boldly beyond these conflicting positions. It justifies all life to the spirit, and asserts the compatibility of a complete human action and a complete spiritual life lived in reunion with the highest states of knowledge and consciousness.

Let us state clearly Arjuna's arguments.

In the first place, Arjuna argued that he would like to reject that aim of life which seeks enjoyment and happiness.

Secondly, he declared that he would reject the aim which seeks to attain victory and rule and power and government of men, — the aim that was described in the Indian *dharma* for the *kshatriya*, the man of power and action.

Thirdly, he rejected the ethical element that was the main spring of the entire preparation for the war. His arguments in this connection could be summarised as follows:

- (a) What exactly is "justice" involved in fighting the war that was about to commence? Was it not, he asked, interest of himself, his brothers, and of his party for possession, enjoyment and rule? And even if it be granted that these aims were justified, he raised the question as to what would be the means for securing that justice. Would it

not mean, he asked, the sacrifice of the right maintenance of social and national life which in person of the kin of the race stood before him opposing him in the battlefield?

- (b) Turning to another line of argument, Arjuna felt that even if happiness and life were desirable, they were so only if they were shared with all others, particularly with "our own people". But here, Arjuna argued, "our own people" are to be slain, and who would consent to slay them for the sake of all the earth and even for the kingdom of the three worlds?
- (c) At this stage, Arjuna formulated even a more fundamental objection. He declared that slaughter is a heinous crime, in which there is no right and no justice. And further, the sin became graver when those who were to be slain were objects of love and reverence.
- (d) Formulating this ethical argument further, Arjuna conceded that the sons of *Dhritarashtra* were guilty of grave offences, of sins of greed, and selfish passion, but he argued that they were overpowered by ignorance and they had no sense of guilt. On the other hand, would it be right, he asked in effect, to enter into a sinful act voluntarily with a clear knowledge that sin was to be committed?
- (e) Once again, Arjuna brought in another ethical consideration. Even if a sin was to be committed, and even if that could be justified in one way or the other, how could it be justified if that leads to the destruction of family morality, social law, law of the nation? Arjuna declared that the family itself would be corrupted, race

would be sullied, laws of race, morality, and family would be destroyed. And who would be responsible for these crimes? Indeed, those, in particular, who would enter into the war with the knowledge and sense of guilt and sin.

These arguments led Arjuna to declare that he would not fight.

The most salutary thing that Arjuna did was, however, to turn to Sri Krishna with deep humility for advice. Like a pupil, he sought from Sri Krishna some decisive word by which his confusion could be dispelled and he could be enabled to act in the right way. And Sri Krishna's help was unfailing.

Sri Krishna perceived clearly that behind the refusal of Arjuna was a mixture and confusion and that there was a tangled error of ideas and impulsions of the *sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic* ego. He also perceived that Arjuna was overcome by the fear of sin and its personal consequences and that his heart had recoiled from consequences and that his heart had recoiled from individual grief and suffering. Sri Krishna also detected that Arjuna's reasoning was an attempt to cover his egoistic impulses by self-deceptive specious pleas of right and virtue.

In the first brief reply, Sri Krishna referred to the highest ideas of the general Aryan culture in which Arjuna had been educated. In that context, Sri Krishna pointed out, "There is no greater good for a *kshatriya* than a righteous battle and if thou dost not this battle for the right, then thou hast abandoned thy duty and virtue and thy glory and sin shall be thy portion."²

² BG., II.31,33

With reference to Arjuna's appeal to the consequences of action, Sri Krishna pointed out that if he (Arjuna) were to be slain in the battle, he would win Heaven and if he were to be victorious, he would enjoy the earth. "Therefore arise", asked Sri Krishna, "resolved upon battle."³

Sri Krishna was, however, aware that this answer would not satisfy Arjuna for he was thinking of the slaughter of the battle as a cause of sorrow and sin. Sri Krishna, therefore, asked Arjuna to rise to a higher and not sink to a lower ideal. In doing so, Sri Krishna distinguishes the path of renunciation which leads to inaction and that path of renunciation which leads to inner freedom even in the midst of performance of action. While admitting the effectivity of the first alternative, Sri Krishna explains why the latter is preferable. In that context, Sri Krishna told him:

"Know thyself, and source of thyself; help man and protect Right; do without fear or weakness or faltering thy work of battle in the world. Look not at thy own pleasure and gain and profit, but above and around, above at the shining summits and around on this world of battle and trial in which good and evil, progress and retrogression are locked in stern conflict. Destroy, when by destruction the world must advance but hate not which thou destroyest, neither grieve for those who perish. Know everywhere the one Self, know all to be immortal souls and the body to be but dust. Do thy work with a calm, strong and equal spirit; fight and fall nobly or conquering mightily. For this is the work that God and thy nature (*swabhava* and *swadharma*) have given to thee to accomplish."

³ BG., II.37

This higher answer of Sri Krishna consists of three steps:

(a) Realise that one has the right to action but not to consequences; hence one should give up desire for the fruits of action;

(b) Realise, in a larger vision of the world, that even in regard to action, there is a mutual giving and receiving, and all action must be a part of one's sacrifice to cosmic powers, who in return, sacrifice themselves for the production of action;

(c) Sacrifice done with knowledge is the highest sacrifice and that alone brings the perfect working.

It is at this stage that one begins to realise that one should do one's action, but not by impulsion of desire and ego-sense; one should discover the impersonal Will that is at work behind the universe, a Will that does not proceed from desire to acquire and possess, but which proceeds from inner fullness of being as an expression of inner unity.

The Will that proceeds from inner unity manifests unity in the outer world; the unity of the world is *lokasangraha*, holding together of the people.

The solution that Sri Krishna presents has three layers; at each layer, Sri Krishna presents a secret, a secret not of outward conduct or of any belief which can be easily but vainly practised by the ethical or religious mentality, but of a living transformation of consciousness attainable by application of the truths of higher possibilities of psychology. The first secret, *guhyam rahasyam*, is to find out how the field of circumstances in which one is placed can be apprehended or comprehended and mastered. This secret

is the knowledge of the distinction between the field of circumstances and the knower of the field, *kshetra* and *kshetrajñā*. There is behind and above the field of circumstances the secret consciousness that can be experienced as a silent witness, *purusha* or as a transcendental immobility, *Brahman* or as the controlling and ruling giver of sanction and master, *anumanta* and *Ishwara*. One of these experiences or all of them together can provide a sure basis of freedom from the tangles of the problems that the field of circumstances and the battle of life present to us by means of an interplay of the three *gunas* of Nature, *sattwa*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. But at this level of experience, although there is here freedom *from* action and its problems, one does not yet have the key to the freedom *of* action, freedom *in* action and freedom to disentangle the knots from the problems and their gripping difficulties. For that we need to have a deeper secret, *guhya-taram rahasyam*, the secret of the origin of Nature in a higher Nature, the origin of *apara prakriti* in the *parā prakriti*, where is also to be found the origin of multiple individualities which are the centres of the Supreme Self, *Purushottama*, who at once reconciles and synthesises the status of *Purusha*, *Brahman* and *Ishwara*. And the knowledge of this higher Nature not only librates us from the tangle of Nature, but gives us also the capacity to harmonise various threads of Nature which would even allow the transmission of the dynamic and creative action that would resolve the knots and problems of all our activities of life. This is the knowledge by which the cognitive, affective and conative powers of our psychology can be perfected and synthesis of *karmayoga*, *jñānayoga* and *bhaktiyoga* can be effected. But there is still a

culmination of this deeper secret; there is still the deepest secret, *guhyaatam rahasyam*. This secret is that of the possibility of the transmutation of lower nature by higher nature, of the attainment of *sadharmyam*, where human law of action is substituted by the divine law of action. And the secret method is to move at a stage where all that one is or one has is reposed unconditionally in the hands and in the being of the Supreme, as a result of which all that flows through the individuality is the incorruptible breath of the Supreme which unites the Truth, Beauty and Goodness and constantly creates conditions suitable for the unity and harmony of the people, *lokasangraha*.

In terms of our dealings with action in the process of rising out of the human into the higher and highest planes, there are three great steps. In the first step, there is insistence on renunciation of desire and a perfect equality even when works are performed; but works have to be done as a sacrifice, *yajña*. In the second step, there is not only the renunciation of the desire of the fruits of actions but also the renunciation of the claim to be the doer of works in the realisation of the Self as the equal and the immutable principle and of all works as simply the operation of universal Force of the *prakriti*. In the last step, the Supreme Self is to be seen as the governor of *prakriti*, both lower and higher, of whom the individual self is a partial manifestation, by whom all works are directed, in a perfect transcendence through Nature. Here whole being has to be surrendered to the Supreme and the whole consciousness raised up to dwell in this divine consciousness so that the human soul may share in His Divine transcendence and act in a perfect spiritual liberty.

Sri Aurobindo sums up the entire core of the teaching in the following words:

"The first step is Karmayoga, the selfless sacrifice of works, and here the Gita's insistence is on action. The second is Jnanayoga, the self-realisation and knowledge of the true nature of the self and the world, and here the insistence is on knowledge; but the sacrifice of works continues and the path of Works becomes one with but does not disappear into the path of Knowledge. The last step is Bhaktiyoga, adoration and seeking of the supreme Self as the Divine Being, and here the insistence is on devotion; but the knowledge is not subordinated, only raised, vitalised and fulfilled, and still the sacrifice of works continues; the double path becomes the triune way of knowledge, works and devotion. And the fruit of the sacrifice, the one fruit still placed before the seeker, is attained, union with the divine Being and oneness with the supreme divine Nature."⁴

The solution that is offered by the Gita can be found applicable also to the contemporary crisis, if not fully in all details, but still by employing all the clues that are given here. Whereas the *kshetra* of the Gita was the local field of a large but still local battle, the present world has become, since the outbreak of the First World War, a global field of global war, whether that War breaks out in world-wide physical configuration or it remains simmering in conditions of a cold war, or else burning in the minds of men, as it is today, with huge piles of nuclear warheads that have the potentiality of destroying the world many times again and again. The *kshetra* of today is also great battle with the

⁴ Sri Aurobindo: *Collected Works*, Vol.13, Centenary Edition, p.35

entire nature and environment which is being constantly eroded and, as it is feared, which might endanger the survival of various species including the human species. Just as Arjuna was the lead personage of *kshetra* desirous of protecting and establishing the claims of the right and justice, even so, each one of us is, if not a leading personage, at least a participating soldier in the army of men and women all over the world who are filled with aspiration to uphold the causes of survival, peace and unity, and also engaged in one way or the other in the battle to fulfil that aspiration.

Just as Arjuna felt gripped by the sense of crisis, we too feel gripped by a sense of crisis. We belong to that stage of human progress which stands today intellectually sceptical, morally weakened and spiritually bankrupt. We started with the Renaissance with the affirmation that Truth can be discovered by pure Reason and that truth can be known with certainty. After numerous experimentations, we are still debating the notion of the Truth and the only certainty we have is that all knowledge is only probable in character. We began at that time with the idea that human life can be lived in harmony with effectivity and fruitfulness because both the individuals and the collectivity can be harmonised by the ethical and social principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. Today we find increasing force of the idea that morality is a matter of emotional responses and that there is no rational justification for one set of moral values against the other. Again, after various experimentations, we have found that when liberty is promoted, equality has to be sacrificed; and when equality is to be promoted, liberty requires to be strangled; and fraternity has as yet no chance of

flowering except in terms of Sovietic comradeship or capitalistic association of interests. As far as spirituality is concerned, while India had the knowledge but lost it and compounded this loss by neglecting Life and Matter, in spite of the fact that for a long period it had cultivated to great heights material and cultural efflorescence, the West has the knowledge of matter and life, but in spite of having a powerful tradition of spirituality neglected spirit; as a result, there is today deplorable spiritual poverty or even bankruptcy. The total result is that of uncertainty, confusion and incapacity to answer the dilemmas of life. There is a collapse of the edifice of standards of action, and one does not know in what direction and how we should move forward.

Time has come when it is perfectly possible for humanity to develop a comprehensive and integral culture where both spirit and matter can join together and create a spiritualised society that can at last answer to the perennial aspiration of humanity expressed in terms of a new earth and a new heaven, of the City of God and of the Kingdom of God on the earth. But precisely at this time, the crisis can be seen acutely in the fact that rational powers which can be a powerful lever to uplift humanity from its lower aims and pursuits to higher heights of ethical and spiritual objects, are today gripped by the currents of scepticism and disabling compromises that build up arguments against the upward effort to break the limitations of the modes and structures of life that have been built up. The major difficulty of the present modes and structures of life is the machinery of standardisation, mechanisation, and dehumanisation. A structure has been raised up in the services of the mental, vital, physical claims and urges and this structure has

become so huge that it is unmanageable; it is a structure of great complexity meant to provide political, social, administrative, economic and cultural machinery; and its focus is on providing collective means for intellectual, sensational, aesthetic and material satisfactions. This system of civilisation has become too big for the limited mental capacity and understanding and for the still more limited spiritual and moral capacity; it has become a too dangerous servant of the blundering ego and its appetites.

At a time when an upward effort towards the ethical and spiritual perfection is both possible and imperative, just at that time, means have been made available readily to humanity for it to create and sustain machineries which can keep it arrested by the downward gravitational pull of animal desires and satisfactions.

What is needed is the transition of humanity from the pulls of lower nature towards the liberating powers of higher nature, the transition from *apara prakriti* to *para prakriti* to use the suggestive words of the Bhagavadgita. The solution that has been suggested by the Bhagavadgita by means of which the needed transition can be effected is directly relevant to it. It is true that while the Bhagavadgita has described in full the path, it has only hinted at the perfect fulfilment and the secret of it. For, the fulfilment is, in any case, a method of experience and no teaching can express it. It cannot be described in a way that can really be understood when we have not yet entered into the portals of the effulgent transmuting experience. And yet, Gita's secret of dynamic, and not only static identity with the inner Presence, its highest mystery of absolute surrender to the

Divine Guide, is the central secret. It is by pursuit of this secret that the needed change can be effected, and it is by the pursuit of this path that the crisis of humanity can be resolved.

Fortunately, what is needed is a decisive turn in humanity and even if the major changes that we expect can take a long time before fruition, if we are moved by the conviction that it is for the upward movement whereby human life can be transformed, we shall have contributed to the decisive beginning that is of capital importance. Fortunately, again, the aspiration to move upward seems to be gathering the force of burning fire, and both in the East and in the West, experiences of the new realms of spiritual and supramental manifestation seem to be breaking a new ground. Therefore, even though the path is difficult and obstacles are formidable, we need not fear to aspire and to work for the triumph of the Divine Will in securing for the earth a life of liberty suffused with the spirit of fraternity and designed for equal upliftment of all members of the human society.

At the same time, we need to underline the imperative need of constant effort of research in a constant enlargement of horizons of knowledge. Knowledge is always power, and it is the constant journey of developing knowledge that will give us increasing powers to break our limitations which would enable us not only to survive but also to arrive at the highest goals that humanity can conceive.

We stand today at the head of a new age which is bound to be marked by a very vast synthesis. A mass of new material is flowing into us. We are required to assimilate the

influences of the great theistic religions of India and similarly of the great theistic religions of the world; we have also to assimilate the recovered sense of the meaning of Buddhism. Relevance of Jainism has also to be underlined. We have to take into account the potent, though limited, revelations of modern knowledge and seeking. A fresh and widely embracing harmonisation of our gains in both intellectual and spiritual areas is the necessity of the future. In the task of this comprehensive harmonisation, the understanding of the Gita and its contemporary relevance is perhaps one of our major needs.

Let us recall a Vedic prayer which inspires discovery of new knowledge:

युगेयुगे विदथ्यं गृणद्भ्यो ग्ने रयिं यशसं धेहि नव्यसीम्⁵

“Found for those who from age to age speak the word that is new, the word that is a discovery of knowledge, O Fire, their glorious treasure.”

⁵ *Rigveda*, VI.8.5

APPENDICES

Selected chapters from '*Essays on the Gita*'

- Sri Aurobindo

Our Demand and Need from the Gita

The world abounds with scriptures sacred and profane, with revelations and half-revelations, with religions and philosophies, sects and schools and systems. To these the many minds of a half-ripe knowledge or no knowledge at all attach themselves with exclusiveness and passion and will have it that this or the other book is alone the eternal Word of God and all others are either impostures or at best imperfectly inspired, that this or that philosophy is the last word of the reasoning intellect and other systems are either errors or saved only by such partial truth in them as links them to the one true philosophical cult. Even the discoveries of physical Science have been elevated into a creed and in its name religion and spirituality banned as ignorance and superstition, philosophy as frippery and moonshine. And to these bigoted exclusions and vain wranglings even the wise have often lent themselves, misled by some spirit of darkness that has mingled with their light and overshadowed it with some cloud of intellectual egoism or spiritual pride. Mankind seems now indeed inclined to grow a little modester and wiser; we no longer slay our fellows in the name of God's truth or because they have minds differently trained or differently constituted from ours; we are less ready to curse and revile our neighbour because he is wicked or presumptuous enough to differ from us in opinion; we are ready even to admit that Truth is everywhere

and cannot be our sole monopoly; we are beginning to look at other religions and philosophies for the truth and help they contain and no longer merely in order to damn them as false or criticise what we conceive to be their errors. But we are still apt to declare that our truth gives us *the* supreme knowledge which other religions or philosophies have missed or only imperfectly grasped so that they deal either with subsidiary and inferior aspects of the truth of things or can merely prepare less evolved minds for the heights to which we have arrived. And we are still prone to force upon ourselves or others the whole sacred mass of the book or gospel we admire, insisting that all shall be accepted as eternally valid truth and no iota or underline or diaeresis denied its part of the plenary inspiration.

It may therefore be useful in approaching an ancient Scripture, such as the Veda, Upanishads or Gita, to indicate precisely the spirit in which we approach it and what exactly we think we may derive from it that is of value to humanity and its future. First of all, there is undoubtedly a Truth one and eternal which we are seeking, from which all other truth derives, by the light of which all other truth finds its right place, explanation and relation to the scheme of knowledge. But precisely for that reason it cannot be shut up in a single trenchant formula, it is not likely to be found in its entirety or in all its bearings in any single philosophy or scripture or uttered altogether and for ever by any one teacher, thinker, prophet or Avatar. Nor has it been wholly found by us if our view of it necessitates the intolerant exclusion of the truth underlying other systems; for when we reject passionately, we mean simply that we cannot appreciate and explain. Secondly, this Truth, though it is

one and eternal, expresses itself in Time and through the mind of man; therefore every Scripture must necessarily contain two elements, one temporary, perishable, belonging to the ideas of the period and country in which it was produced, the other eternal and imperishable and applicable in all ages and countries. Moreover, in the statement of the Truth the actual form given to it, the system and arrangement, the metaphysical and intellectual mould, the precise expression used must be largely subject to the mutations of Time and cease to have the same force; for the human intellect modifies itself always; continually dividing and putting together it is obliged to shift its divisions continually and to rearrange its syntheses; it is always leaving old expression and symbol for new or, if it uses the old, it so changes its connotation or at least its exact content and association that we can never be quite sure of understanding an ancient book of this kind precisely in the sense and spirit it bore to its contemporaries. What is of entirely permanent value is that which besides being universal has been experienced, lived and seen with a higher than the intellectual vision.

I hold it therefore of small importance to extract from the Gita its exact metaphysical connotation as it was understood by the men of the time, — even if that were accurately possible. That it is not possible, is shown by the divergence of the original commentaries which have been and are still being written upon it; for they all agree in each disagreeing with all the others, each finds in the Gita its own system of metaphysics and trend of religious thought. Nor will even the most painstaking and disinterested scholarship and the most luminous theories of the historical

development of Indian philosophy save us from inevitable error. But what we can do with profit is to seek in the Gita for the actual living truths it contains, apart from their metaphysical form, to extract from it what can help us or the world at large and to put it in the most natural and vital form and expression we can find that will be suitable to the mentality and helpful to the spiritual needs of our present-day humanity. No doubt in this attempt we may mix a good deal of error born of our own individuality and of the ideas in which we live, as did greater men before us, but if we steep ourselves in the spirit of this great Scripture and, above all, if we have tried to live in that spirit, we may be sure of finding in it as much real truth as we are capable of receiving as well as the spiritual influence and actual help that, personally, we were intended to derive from it. And that is after all what Scriptures were written to give; the rest is academical disputation or theological dogma. Only those Scriptures, religions, philosophies which can be thus constantly renewed, relived, their stuff of permanent truth constantly reshaped and developed in the inner thought and spiritual experience of a developing humanity, continue to be of living importance to mankind. The rest remain as monuments of the past, but have no actual force or vital impulse for the future.

In the Gita there is very little that is merely local or temporal and its spirit is so large, profound and universal that even this little can easily be universalised without the sense of the teaching suffering any diminution or violation; rather by giving an ampler scope to it than belonged to the country and epoch, the teaching gains in depth, truth and power. Often indeed the Gita itself suggests the wider scope

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

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

Nor shall we deal in any other spirit with the element of philosophical dogma or religious creed which either enters into the Gita or hangs about it owing to its use of the philosophical terms and religious symbols current at the time. When the Gita speaks of Sankhya and Yoga, we shall not discuss beyond the limits of what is just essential for our statement, the relations of the Sankhya of the Gita with its one Purusha and strong Vedantic colouring to the non-theistic or "atheistic" Sankhya that has come down to us bringing with it its scheme of many Purushas and one Prakriti, nor of the Yoga of the Gita, many-sided, subtle, rich and flexible to the theistic doctrine and the fixed, scientific, rigorously defined and graded system of the Yoga of Patanjali. In the Gita the Sankhya and Yoga are evidently only two convergent parts of the same Vedantic truth or rather two concurrent ways of approaching its realisation, the one philosophical, intellectual, analytic, the other intuitional, devotional, practical, ethical, synthetic, reaching

knowledge through experience. The Gita recognises no real difference in their teachings. Still less need we discuss the theories which regard the Gita as the fruit of some particular religious system or tradition. Its teaching is universal whatever may have been its origins.

The philosophical system of the Gita, its arrangement of truth, is not that part of its teaching which is the most vital, profound, eternally durable; but most of the material of which the system is composed, the principal ideas suggestive and penetrating which are woven into its complex harmony, are eternally valuable and valid; for they are not merely the luminous ideas or striking speculations of a philosophic intellect, but rather enduring truths of spiritual experience, verifiable facts of our highest psychological possibilities which no attempt to read deeply the mystery of existence can afford to neglect. Whatever the system may be, it is not, as the commentators strive to make it, framed or intended to support any exclusive school of philosophical thought or to put forward predominantly the claims of any one form of Yoga. The language of the Gita, the structure of thought, the combination and balancing of ideas belong neither to the temper of a sectarian teacher nor to the spirit of a rigorous analytical dialectics cutting off one angle of the truth to exclude all the others; but rather there is a wide, undulating, encircling movement of ideas which is the manifestation of a vast synthetic mind and a rich synthetic experience. This is one of those great syntheses in which Indian spirituality has been as rich as in its creation of the more intensive, exclusive movements of knowledge and religious realisation that follow out with an absolute concentration one clue, one path to its extreme

issues. It does not cleave asunder, but reconciles and unifies.

The thought of the Gita is not pure Monism although it sees in one unchanging, pure, eternal Self the foundation of all cosmic existence, nor Mayavada although it speaks of the Maya of the three modes of Prakriti omnipresent in the created world; nor is it qualified Monism although it places in the One his eternal supreme Prakriti manifested in the form of the Jiva and lays most stress on dwelling in God rather than dissolution as the supreme state of spiritual consciousness; nor is it Sankhya although it explains the created world by the double principle of Purusha and Prakriti; nor is it Vaishnava Theism although it presents to us Krishna, who is the Avatara of Vishnu according to the Puranas, as the supreme Deity and allows no essential difference nor any actual superiority of the status of the indefinable relationless Brahman over that of this Lord of beings who is the Master of the universe and the Friend of all creatures. Like the earlier spiritual synthesis of the Upanishads this later synthesis at once spiritual and intellectual avoids naturally every such rigid determination as would injure its universal comprehensiveness. Its aim is precisely the opposite to that of the polemist commentators who found this Scripture established as one of the three highest Vedantic authorities and attempted to turn it into a weapon of offence and defence against other schools and systems. The Gita is not a weapon for dialectical warfare; it is a gate opening on the whole world of spiritual truth and experience and the view it gives us embraces all the provinces of that supreme region. It maps out, but it does not cut up or build walls or hedges to confine our vision.

There have been other syntheses in the long history of Indian thought. We start with the Vedic synthesis of the psychological being of man in its highest flights and widest rangings of divine knowledge, power, joy, life and glory with the cosmic existence of the gods, pursued behind the symbols of the material universe into those superior planes which are hidden from the physical sense and the material mentality. The crown of this synthesis was in the experience of the Vedic Rishis something divine, transcendent and blissful in whose unity the increasing soul of man and the eternal divine fullness of the cosmic godheads meet perfectly and fulfil themselves. The Upanishads take up this crowning experience of the earlier seers and make it their starting-point for a high and profound synthesis of spiritual knowledge; they draw together into a great harmony all that had been seen and experienced by the inspired and liberated knowers of the Eternal throughout a great and fruitful period of spiritual seeking. The Gita starts from this Vedantic synthesis and upon the basis of its essential ideas builds another harmony of the three great means and powers, Love, Knowledge and Works, through which the soul of man can directly approach and cast itself into the Eternal. There is yet another, the Tantric,¹ which though less subtle and spiritually profound, is even more bold and forceful than the synthesis of the Gita, — for it seizes even upon the obstacles to the spiritual life and compels them to become the means for a richer spiritual conquest and enables us to embrace the whole of Life in our divine scope as the Lila²

¹ All the Puranic tradition, it must be remembered, draws the richness of its contents from the Tantra.

² The Cosmic Play.

of the Divine; and in some directions it is more immediately rich and fruitful, for it brings forward into the foreground along with divine knowledge, divine works and an enriched devotion of divine Love, the secrets also of the Hatha and Raja Yogas, the use of the body and of mental askesis for the opening up of the divine life on all its planes, to which the Gita gives only a passing and perfunctory attention. Moreover it grasps at that idea of the divine perfectibility of man, possessed by the Vedic Rishis but thrown into the background by the intermediate ages, which is destined to fill so large a place in any future synthesis of human thought, experience and aspiration.

We of the coming day stand at the head of a new age of development which must lead to such a new and larger synthesis. We are not called upon to be orthodox Vedantins of any of the three schools or Tantrics or to adhere to one of the theistic religions of the past or to entrench ourselves within the four corners of the teaching of the Gita. That would be to limit ourselves and to attempt to create our spiritual life out of the being, knowledge and nature of others, of the men of the past, instead of building it out of our own being and potentialities. We do not belong to the past dawns, but to the noons of the future. A mass of new material is flowing into us; we have not only to assimilate the influences of the great theistic religions of India and of the world and a recovered sense of the meaning of Buddhism, but to take full account of the potent though limited revelations of modern knowledge and seeking; and, beyond that, the remote and dateless past which seemed to be dead is returning upon us with an effulgence of many luminous secrets long lost to the consciousness of mankind

but now breaking out again from behind the veil. All this points to a new, a very rich, a very vast synthesis; a fresh and widely embracing harmonisation of our gains is both an intellectual and a spiritual necessity of the future. But just as the past syntheses have taken those which preceded them for their starting-point, so also must that of the future, to be on firm ground, proceed from what the great bodies of realised spiritual thought and experience in the past have given. Among them the Gita takes a most important place.

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

— Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita*, pp. 3-11.

The Core of the Teaching

We Know the divine Teacher, we see the human disciple; it remains to form a clear conception of the doctrine. A clear conception fastening upon the essential idea, the central heart of the teaching is especially necessary here because the Gita with its rich and many-sided thought, its synthetical grasp of different aspects of the spiritual life and the fluent winding motion of its argument lends itself, even more than other scriptures, to one-sided misrepresentations born of a partisan intellectuality. The unconscious or half-conscious wresting of fact and word and idea to suit a preconceived notion or the doctrine or principle of one's preference is recognised by Indian logicians as one of the most fruitful sources of fallacy; and it is perhaps the one which it is most difficult for even the most conscientious thinker to avoid. For the human reason is incapable of always playing the detective upon itself in this respect; it is its very nature to seize upon some partial conclusion, idea, principle, become its partisan and make it the key to all truth, and it has an infinite faculty of doubling upon itself so as to avoid detecting in its operations this necessary and cherished weakness. The Gita lends itself easily to this kind of error, because it is easy, by throwing particular emphasis on one of its aspects or even on some salient and emphatic text and putting all the rest of the eighteen chapters into the background or

making them a subordinate and auxiliary teaching, to turn it into a partisan of our own doctrine or dogma.

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

Others again speak of the Gita as if the doctrine of devotion were its whole teaching and put in the background its monistic elements and the high place it gives to quietistic immergence in the one self of all. And undoubtedly its emphasis on devotion, its insistence on the aspect of the Divine as Lord and Purusha and its doctrine of the Purushottama, the Supreme Being who is superior both to the mutable Being and to the Immutable and who is what in His relation to the world we know as God, are the most striking and among the most vital elements of the Gita. Still, this Lord is the Self in whom all knowledge culminates and the Master of sacrifice to whom all works lead as well as the Lord of Love into whose being the heart of devotion enters,

and the Gita preserves a perfectly equal balance, emphasising now knowledge, now works, now devotion, but for the purposes of the immediate trend of the thought, not with any absolute separate preference of one over the others. He in whom all three meet and become one, He is the Supreme Being, the Purushottama.

But at the present day, since in fact the modern mind began to recognise and deal at all with the Gita, the tendency is to subordinate its elements of knowledge and devotion, to take advantage of its continual insistence on action and to find in it a scripture of the Karmayoga, a Light leading us on the path of action, a Gospel of Works. Undoubtedly, the Gita is a Gospel of Works, but of works which culminate in knowledge, that is, in spiritual realisation and quietude, and of works motivated by devotion, that is, a conscious surrender of one's whole self first into the hands and then into the being of the Supreme, and not at all of works as they are understood by the modern mind, not at all an action dictated by egoistic and altruistic, by personal, social, humanitarian motives, principles, ideals. Yet this is what present-day interpretations seek to make of the Gita. We are told continually by many authoritative voices that the Gita, opposing in this the ordinary ascetic and quietistic tendency of Indian thought and spirituality, proclaims with no uncertain sound the gospel of human action, the ideal of disinterested performance of social duties, nay, even, it would seem, the quite modern ideal of social service. To all this I can only reply that very patently and even on the very surface of it the Gita does nothing of the kind and that this is a modern misreading, a reading of the modern mind into an ancient book, of the present-day European or Euro-

peanised intellect into a thoroughly antique, a thoroughly Oriental and Indian teaching. That which the Gita teaches is not a human, but a divine action; not the performance of social duties, but the abandonment of all other standards of duty or conduct for a selfless performance of the divine will working through our nature; not social service, but the action of the Best, the God-possessed, the Master-men done impersonally for the sake of the world and as a sacrifice to Him who stands behind man and Nature.

In other words, the Gita is not a book of practical ethics, but of the spiritual life. The modern mind is just now the European mind, such as it has become after having abandoned not only the philosophic idealism of the highest Graeco-Roman culture from which it started, but the Christian devotionism of the Middle Ages; these it has replaced by or transmuted into a practical idealism and social, patriotic and philanthropic devotion. It has got rid of God or kept Him only for Sunday use and erected in His place man as its deity and society as its visible idol. At its best it is practical, ethical, social, pragmatic, altruistic, humanitarian. Now all these things are good, are especially needed at the present day, are part of the divine Will or they would not have become so dominant in humanity. Nor is there any reason why the divine man, the man who lives in the Brahmic consciousness, in the God-being should not be all of these things in his action; he will be, if they are the best ideal of the age, the Yugadharma, and there is no yet higher ideal to be established, no great radical change to be effected. For he is, as the Teacher points out to his disciple, the best who has to set the standard for others; and in fact Arjuna is called upon to live according to the

highest ideals of his age and the prevailing culture, but with knowledge, with understanding of that which lay behind, and not as ordinary men, with a following of the merely outward law and rule.

But the point here is that the modern mind has exiled from its practical motive-power the two essential things, God or the Eternal and spirituality or the God-state, which are the master conceptions of the Gita. It lives in humanity only, and the Gita would have us live in God, though for the world in God; in its life, heart and intellect only, and the Gita would have us live in the spirit; in the mutable Being who is "all creatures", and the Gita would have us live also in the Immutable and the Supreme; in the changing march of Time, and the Gita would have us live in the Eternal. Or if these higher things are now beginning to be vaguely envisaged, it is only to make them subservient to man and society; but God and spirituality exist in their own right and not as adjuncts. And in practice the lower in us must learn to exist for the higher, in order that the higher also may in us consciously exist for the lower, to draw it nearer to its own altitudes.

Therefore it is a mistake to interpret the Gita from the standpoint of the mentality of today and force it to teach us the disinterested performance of duty as the highest and all-sufficient law. A little consideration of the situation with which the Gita deals will show us that this could not be its meaning. For the whole point of the teaching, that from which it arises, that which compels the disciple to seek the Teacher, is an inextricable clash of the various related conceptions of duty ending in the collapse of the whole

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

But here there is this farther difficulty that the action which Arjuna must do is one from which his moral sense recoils. It is his duty to fight, you say? But that duty has now become to his mind a terrible sin. How does it help him or

solve his difficulty, to tell him that he must do his duty disinterestedly, dispassionately? He will want to know which is his duty or how it can be his duty to destroy in a sanguinary massacre his kin, his race and his country. He is told that he has right on his side, but that does not and cannot satisfy him, because his very point is that the justice of his legal claim does not justify him in supporting it by a pitiless massacre destructive to the future of his nation. Is he then to act dispassionately in the sense of not caring whether it is a sin or what its consequences may be so long as he does his duty as a soldier? That may be the teaching of a State, of politicians, of lawyers, of ethical casuists; it can never be the teaching of a great religious and philosophical Scripture which sets out to solve the problem of life and action from the very roots. And if that is what the Gita has to say on a most poignant moral and spiritual problem, we must put it out of the list of the world's Scriptures and thrust it, if anywhere, then into our library of political science and ethical casuistry.

Undoubtedly, the Gita does, like the Upanishads, teach the equality which rises above sin and virtue, beyond good and evil, but only as a part of the Brahmic consciousness and for the man who is on the path and advanced enough to fulfil the supreme rule. It does not preach indifference to good and evil for the ordinary life of man, where such a doctrine would have the most pernicious consequences. On the contrary it affirms that the doers of evil shall not attain to God. Therefore if Arjuna simply seeks to fulfil in the best way the ordinary law of man's life, disinterested performance of what he feels to be a sin, a thing of Hell, will not help him, even though that sin be his duty as a soldier.

He must refrain from what his conscience abhors though a thousand duties were shattered to pieces.

We must remember that duty is an idea which in practice rests upon social conceptions. We may extend the term beyond its proper connotation and talk of our duty to ourselves or we may, if we like, say in a transcendent sense that it was Buddha's duty to abandon all, or even that it is the ascetic's duty to sit motionless in a cave! But this is obviously to play with words. Duty is a relative term and depends upon our relation to others. It is a father's duty, as a father, to nurture and educate his children; a lawyer's to do his best for his client even if he knows him to be guilty and his defence to be a lie; a soldier's to fight and shoot to order even if he kill his own kin and countrymen; a judge's to send the guilty to prison and hang the murderer. And so long as these positions are accepted, the duty remains clear, a practical matter of course even when it is not a point of honour or affection, and overrides the absolute religious or moral law. But what if the inner view is changed, if the lawyer is awakened to the absolute sinfulness of falsehood, the judge becomes convinced that capital punishment is a crime against humanity, the man called upon to the battlefield feels, like the conscientious objector of today or as a Tolstoy would feel, that in no circumstances is it permissible to take human life any more than to eat human flesh? It is obvious that here the moral law which is above all relative duties must prevail; and that law depends on no social relation or conception of duty but on the awakened inner perception of man, the moral being.

There are in the world, in fact, two different laws of

conduct each valid on its own plane, the rule principally dependent on external status and the rule independent of status and entirely dependent on the thought and conscience. The Gita does not teach us to subordinate the higher plane to the lower, it does not ask the awakened moral consciousness to slay itself on the altar of duty as a sacrifice and victim to the law of the social status. It calls us higher and not lower; from the conflict of the two planes it bids us ascend to a supreme poise above the mainly practical, above the purely ethical, to the Brahmic consciousness. It replaces the conception of social duty by a divine obligation. The subjection to external law gives place to a certain principle of inner self-determination of action proceeding by the soul's freedom from the tangled law of works. And this, as we shall see, — the Brahmic consciousness, the soul's freedom from works and the determination of works in the nature by the Lord within and above us, — is the kernel of the Gita's teaching with regard to action.

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

are given a secondary importance, except indeed the great vision in the eleventh. This is natural enough for the modern mind which is, or has been till yesterday, inclined to be impatient of metaphysical subtleties and far-off spiritual seekings, eager to get to work and, like Arjuna himself, mainly concerned for a workable law of works, a *dharmā*. But it is the wrong way to handle this Scripture.

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

of being the doer; it must necessarily disappear from the mind like the claim to the fruit, as soon as we cease to be to our own consciousness the doer of our works. All pragmatic egoism, whether of the claim to fruits or of the right to action, is then at an end.

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

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

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

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

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

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

— Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita*, pp. 29-38.

The Message of the Gita

“The secret of action,” so we might summarise the message of the Gita, the word of its divine Teacher, “is one with the secret of all life and existence. Existence is not merely a machinery of Nature, a wheel of law in which the soul is entangled for a moment or for ages; it is a constant manifestation of the Spirit. Life is not for the sake of life alone, but for God, and the living soul of man is an eternal portion of the Godhead. Action is for self-finding, for self-fulfilment, for self-realisation and not only for its own external and apparent fruits of the moment or the future. There is an inner law and meaning of all things dependent on the supreme as well as the manifested nature of the self; the true truth of works lies there and can be represented only incidentally, imperfectly and disguised by ignorance in the outer appearances of the mind and its action. The supreme, the faultless largest law of action is therefore to find out the truth of your own highest and inmost existence and live in it and not to follow any outer standard and dharma. All life and action must be till then an imperfection, a difficulty, a struggle and a problem. It is only by discovering your true self and living according to its true truth, its real reality that the problem can be finally solved, the difficulty and struggle overpassed and your doings perfected in the security of the discovered self and spirit turn into a divinely authentic action. Know then your self;

know your true self to be God and one with the self of all others; know your soul to be a portion of God. Live in what you know; live in the self, live in your supreme spiritual nature, be united with God and Godlike. Offer, first, all your actions as a sacrifice to the Highest and the One in you and to the Highest and the One in the world; deliver last all you are and do into his hands for the supreme and universal spirit to do through you his own will and works in the world. This is the solution that I present to you and in the end you will find that there is no other."

Here it is necessary to state the Gita's view of the fundamental opposition on which like all Indian teaching it takes its position. This finding of the true self, this knowledge of the godhead within us and all is not an easy thing; nor is it an easy thing either to turn this knowledge, even though seen by the mind, into the stuff of our consciousness and the whole condition of our action. All action is determined by the effective state of our being, and the effective state of our being is determined by the state of our constant self-seeing will and active consciousness and by its basis of kinetic movement. It is what we see and believe with our whole active nature ourselves to be and our relations with the world to mean, it is our faith, our *śraddhā*, that makes us what we are. But the consciousness of man is of a double kind and corresponds to a double truth of existence; for there is a truth of the inner reality and a truth of the outer appearance. According as he lives in one or the other, he will be a mind dwelling in human ignorance or a soul founded in divine knowledge.

In its outer appearance the truth of existence is solely what we call Nature or Prakriti, a Force that operates as the

whole law and mechanism of being, creates the world which is the object of our mind and senses and creates too the mind and senses as a means of relation between the creature and the objective world in which he lives. In this outer appearance man in his soul, his mind, his life, his body seems to be a creature of Nature differentiated from others by a separation of his body, life and mind and especially by his ego-sense — that subtle mechanism constructed for him that he may confirm and centralise his consciousness of all this strong separateness and difference. All in him, his soul of mind and its action as well as the functioning of his life and body, is very evidently determined by the law of his nature, cannot get outside of it, cannot operate otherwise. He attributes indeed a certain freedom to his personal will, the will of his ego; but that in reality amounts to nothing, since his ego is only a sense which makes him identify himself with the creation that Nature has made of him, with the varying mind and life and body she has constructed. His ego is itself a product of her workings, and as is the nature of his ego, so will be the nature of its will and according to that he must act and he can no other.

This then is man's ordinary consciousness of himself, this his faith in his own being, that he is a creature of Nature, a separate ego establishing whatever relations with others and with the world, making whatever development of himself, satisfying whatever will, desire, idea of his mind may be permissible in her circle and consonant with her intention or law in his existence.

There is, however, something in man's consciousness

which does not fall in with the rigidity of this formula; he has a faith, which grows greater as his soul develops, in another and an inner reality of existence. In this inner reality the truth of existence is no longer Nature but Soul and Spirit, Purusha rather than Prakriti. Nature herself is only a power of Spirit, Prakriti the force of the Purusha. A Spirit, a Self, a Being one in all is the master of this world which is only his partial manifestation. That Spirit is the upholder of Nature and her action and the giver of the sanction by which alone her law becomes imperative and her force and its ways operative. That Spirit within her is the Knower who illuminates her and makes her conscient in us; his is the immanent and superconscient Will that inspires and motives her workings. The soul in man, a portion of this Divinity, shares his nature. Our nature is our soul's manifestation, operates by its sanction and embodies its secret self-knowledge and self-consciousness and its will of being in her motions and forms and changes.

The real soul and self of us is hidden from our intelligence by its ignorance of inner things, by a false identification, by an absorption in our outward mechanism of mind, life and body. But if the active soul of man can once draw back from this identification with its natural instruments, if it can see and live in the entire faith of its inner reality, then all is changed to it, life and existence take on another appearance, action a different meaning and character. Our being then becomes no longer this little egoistic creation of Nature, but the largeness of a divine, immortal and spiritual Power. Our consciousness becomes no longer that of this limited and struggling mental and vital creature, but an infinite, divine and spiritual consciousness.

And our will and action too are no longer that of this bounded personality and its ego, but a divine and spiritual will and action, the will and power of the Universal, the Supreme, the All-Self and Spirit acting freely through the human figure.

"This is the great change and transfiguration," runs the message of the Godhead in man, the Avatar, the divine Teacher, "to which I call the elect, and the elect are all who can turn their will away from the ignorance of the natural instruments to the soul's deepest experience, its knowledge of the inner self and spirit, its contact with the Godhead, its power to enter into the Divine. The elect are all who can accept this faith and this greater law. It is difficult indeed to accept for the human intellect attached always to its own cloud-forms and half lights of ignorance and to the yet obscurer habits of man's mental, nervous and physical parts; but once received it is a great and sure and saving way, because it is identical with the true truth of man's being and it is the authentic movement of his inmost and supreme nature.

"But the change is a very great one, an enormous transformation, and it cannot be done without an entire turning and conversion of your whole being and nature. There will be needed a complete consecration of your self and your nature and your life to the Highest and to nothing else but the Highest; for all must be held only for the sake of the Highest, nothing accepted except as it is in God and a form of God and for the sake of the Divine. There will be needed an admission of new truth, an entire turn and giving of your mind to a new knowledge of self and others and

world and God and soul and Nature, a knowledge of oneness, a knowledge of universal Divinity, which will be at first an acceptance by the understanding but must become in the end a vision, a consciousness, a permanent state of the soul and the frame of its movements.

“There will be needed a will that shall make this new knowledge, vision, consciousness a motive of action and the sole motive. And it must be the motive not of an action grudging, limited, confined to a few necessary operations of Nature or to the few things that seem helpful to a formal perfection, apposite to a religious turn or to an individual salvation, but rather all action of human life taken up by the equal spirit and done for the sake of God and the good of all creatures. There will be needed an uplifting of the heart in a single aspiration to the Highest, a single love of the Divine Being, a single God-adoration. And there must be a widening too of the calmed and enlightened heart to embrace God in all beings. There will be needed a change of the habitual and normal nature of man as he is now to a supreme and divine spiritual nature. There will be needed in a word a Yoga which shall be at once a Yoga of integral knowledge, a Yoga of the integral will and its works, a Yoga of integral love, adoration and devotion and a Yoga of an integral spiritual perfection of the whole being and of all its parts and states and powers and motions.

“What then is this knowledge that will have to be admitted by the understanding, supported by the soul's faith and made real and living to the mind, heart and life? It is the knowledge of the supreme Soul and Spirit in its oneness and its wholeness. It is the knowledge of One who is for

ever, beyond Time and Space and name and form and world, high beyond his own personal and impersonal levels and yet from whom all this proceeds, One whom all manifests in manifold Nature and her multitude of figures. It is the knowledge of him as an impersonal eternal immutable Spirit, the calm and limitless thing we call Self, infinite, equal and always the same, unaffected and unmodified and unchanged amid all this constant changing and all this multitude of individual personalities and soul powers and Nature powers and the forms and forces and eventualities of this transitory and apparent existence. It is the knowledge of him at the same time as the Spirit and Power who seems ever mutable in Nature, the Inhabitant who shapes himself to every form and modifies himself to every grade and degree and activity of his power, the Spirit who, becoming all that is even while he is for ever infinitely more than all that is, dwells in man and animal and thing, subject and object, soul and mind and life and matter, every existence and every force and every creature.

“It is not by insisting on this or that side only of the truth that you can practise this Yoga. The Divine whom you have to seek, the Self whom you have to discover, the supreme Soul of whom your soul is an eternal portion, is simultaneously all these things; you have to know them simultaneously in a supreme oneness, enter into all of them at once and in all states and all things see Him alone. If he were solely the Spirit mutable in Nature, there would be only an eternal and universal becoming. If you limit your faith and knowledge to that one aspect, you will never go beyond your personality and its constant changeful figures; on such a foundation you would be bound altogether in the

revolutions of Nature. But you are not merely a succession of soul moments in Time. There is an impersonal self in you which supports the stream of your personality and is one with God's vast and impersonal spirit. And incalculable beyond this impersonality and personality, dominating these two constant poles of what you are here, you are eternal and transcendent in the Eternal Transcendence.

"If, again, there were only the truth of an eternal impersonal self that neither acts nor creates, then the world and your soul would be illusions without any real basis. If you limit your faith and knowledge to this one lonely aspect, the renunciation of life and action is your only resource. But God in the world and you in the world are realities; the world and you are true and actual powers and manifestations of the Supreme. Therefore accept life and action and do not reject them. One with God in your impersonal self and essence, an eternal portion of the Godhead turned to him by the love and adoration of your spiritual personality for its own Infinite, make of your natural being what it is intended to be, an instrument of works, a channel, a power of the Divine. That it always is in its truth, but now unconsciously and imperfectly, through the lower nature, doomed to a disfigurement of the Godhead by your ego. Make it consciously and perfectly and without any distortion by ego a power of the Divine in his supreme spiritual nature and a vehicle of his will and his works. In this way you will live in the integral truth of your own being and you will possess the integral God-union, the whole and flawless Yoga.

"The Supreme is the Purushottama, eternal beyond all manifestation, infinite beyond all limitation by Time or Space

or Causality or any of his numberless qualities and features. But this does not mean that in his supreme eternity he is unconnected with all that happens here, cut off from world and Nature, aloof from all these beings. He is the supreme ineffable Brahman, he is impersonal self, he is all personal existences. Spirit here and life and matter, soul and Nature and the works of Nature are aspects and movements of his infinite and eternal existence. He is the supreme transcendent Spirit and all comes into manifestation from him and are his forms and his self-powers. As the one self he is here all-pervasive and equal and impersonal in man and animal and thing and object and every force of Nature. He is the supreme Soul and all souls are tireless flames of this one Soul. All living beings are in their spiritual personality deathless portions of the one Person or Purusha. He is the eternal Master of all manifested existence, Lord of the worlds and their creatures. He is the omnipotent originator of all actions, not bound by his works, and to him go all action and effort and sacrifice. He is in all and all are in him; he has become all and yet too he is above all and not limited by his creations. He is the transcendent Divine; he descends as the Avatar; he is manifest by his power in the Vibhuti; he is the Godhead secret in every human being. All the gods whom men worship are only personalities and forms and names and mental bodies of the one Divine Existence.

“The Supreme has manifested the world from his spiritual essence and in his own infinite existence and manifested himself too variously in the world. All things are his powers and figures and to the powers and figures of him there is no end, because he himself is infinite. As a

pervading and containing impersonal self-existence he informs and sustains equally and without any partiality, preference or attachment to any person or thing or happening or feature all this infinite manifestation in Time and the universe. This pure and equal Self does not act, but supports impartially all the action of things. And yet it is the Supreme, but as the cosmic Spirit and the Time Spirit, who wills and conducts and determines the action of the world through his multitudinous power-to-be, that power of the Spirit which we call Nature. He creates, sustains and destroys his creations. He is seated too in the heart of every living creature and from there as a secret Power in the individual, no less than from his universal presence in the Cosmos, he originates by force of Nature, manifests some line of his mystery in quality of nature and in executive energy of nature, shapes each thing and being separately according to its kind and initiates and upholds all action. It is this transcendent first origination from the Supreme and this constant universal and individual manifestation of Him in things and beings which makes the complex character of the cosmos.

“There are always these three eternal states of the Divine Being. There is always and for ever this one eternal immutable self-existence which is the basis and support of existent things. There is always and for ever this Spirit mutable in Nature manifested by her as all these existences. There is always and for ever this transcendent Divine who can be both of these others at once, can be a pure and silent Spirit and at the same time the active soul and life of the cycles of the universe, because he is something other and more than these two whether taken

separately or together. In us is the Jiva, a spirit of this Spirit, a conscious power of the Supreme. He is one who carries in his deepest self the whole of the immanent Divine and in Nature lives in the universal Divine, — no temporary creation but an eternal soul acting and moving in the eternal Self, in the eternal Infinite.

“This conscient soul in us can adopt either of these three states of the Spirit. Man can live here in the mutability of Nature and in that alone. Ignorant of his real self, ignorant of the Godhead within him, he knows only Nature: he sees her as a mechanical executive and creative Force and sees himself and others as her creations, — egos, separated existences in her universe. It is thus, superficially, that he now lives and, while it is so and until he exceeds this outer consciousness and knows what is within him, all his thought and science can only be a shadow of light thrown upon screens and surfaces. This ignorance is possible, is even imposed, because the Godhead within is hidden by the veil of his own power. His greater reality is lost to our view by the completeness with which he has identified himself in a partial appearance with his creations and images and absorbed the created mind in the deceptive workings of his own Nature. And it is possible also because the real, the eternal, the spiritual Nature which is the secret of things in themselves is not manifest in their outward phenomena. The Nature which we see when we look outwards, the Nature which acts in our mind and body and senses is a lower Force, a derivation, a Magician who creates figures of the Spirit but hides the Spirit in its figures, conceals the truth and makes men look upon masks, a Force which is only capable of a sum of secondary and depressed values,

not of the full power and glory and ecstasy and sweetness of the manifestation of the Divine. This Nature in us is a Maya of the ego, a tangle of the dualities, a web of ignorance and the three gunas. And so long as the soul of man lives in the surface fact of mind and life and body and not in his self and spirit, he cannot see God and himself and the world as they really are, cannot overcome this Maya, but must do what he can with its terms and figures.

“It is possible by drawing back from the lower turn of his nature in which man now lives, to awake from this light that is darkness and live in the luminous truth of the eternal and immutable self-existence. Man then is no longer bound up in his narrow prison of personality, no longer sees himself as this little I that thinks and acts and feels and struggles and labours for a little. He is merged in the vast and free impersonality of the pure spirit; he becomes the Brahman; he knows himself as one with the one self in all things. He is no longer aware of ego, no longer troubled by the dualities, no longer feels anguish of grief or disturbance of joy, is no longer shaken by desire, is no longer troubled by sin or limited by virtue. Or if the shadows of these things remain, he sees and knows them only as Nature working in her own qualities and does not feel them to be the truth of himself in which he lives. Nature alone acts and works out her mechanical figures: but the pure spirit is silent, inactive and free. Calm, untouched by her workings, it regards them with a perfect equality and knows itself to be other than these things. This spiritual state brings with it a still peace and freedom but not the dynamic divinity, not the integral perfection; it is a great step, but it is not the integral God-knowledge and self-knowledge.

“A perfect perfection comes only by living in the supreme and the whole Divine. Then the soul of man is united with the Godhead of which it is a portion; then it is one with all beings in the self and spirit, one with them both in God and in Nature; then it is not only free but complete, plunged in the supreme felicity, ready for its ultimate perfection. He still sees the self as an eternal and changeless Spirit silently supporting all things; but he sees also Nature no longer as a mere mechanical force that works out things according to the mechanism of the gunas, but as a power of the Spirit and the force of God in manifestation. He sees that the lower Nature is not the inmost truth of the spirit's action; he becomes aware of a highest spiritual nature of the Divine in which is contained the source and the yet to be realised greater truth of all that is imperfectly figured now in mind, life and body. Arisen from the lower mental to this supreme spiritual nature, he is delivered there from all ego. He knows himself as a spiritual being, in his essence one with all existences and in his active nature a power of the one Godhead and an eternal soul of the transcendent Infinite. He sees all in God and God in all; he sees all things as Vasudeva. He is delivered from the dualities of joy and grief, from the pleasant and the unpleasant, from desire and disappointment, from sin and virtue. All henceforth is to his conscious sight and sense the will and working of the Divine. He lives and acts as a soul and portion of the universal consciousness and power; he is filled with the transcendent divine delight, a spiritual Ananda. His action becomes the divine action and his status the highest spiritual status.

“This is the solution, this the salvation, this the perfection that I offer to all those who can listen to a divine voice within them and are capable of this faith and knowledge. But to climb to this pre-eminent condition the first necessity, the original radical step is to turn away from all that belongs to your lower Nature and fix yourself by concentration of the will and intelligence on that which is higher than either will or intelligence, higher than mind and heart and sense and body. And first of all you must turn to your own eternal and immutable self, impersonal and the same in all creatures. So long as you live in ego and mental personality, you will always spin endlessly in the same rounds and there can be no real issue. Turn your will inward beyond the heart and its desires and the sense and its attractions; lift it upward beyond the mind and its associations and attachments and its bounded wish and thought and impulse. Arrive at something within you that is eternal, ever unchanged, calm, unperturbed, equal, impartial to all things and persons and happenings, not affected by any action, not altered by the figures of Nature. Be that, be the eternal self, be the Brahman. If you can become that by a permanent spiritual experience, you will have an assured basis on which you can stand delivered from the limitations of your mind-created personality, secure against any fall from peace and knowledge, free from ego.

“Thus to impersonalise your being is not possible so long as you nurse and cherish and cling to your ego or anything that belongs to it. Desire and the passions that arise from desire are the principal sign and knot of ego. It is desire that makes you go on saying I and mine and subjects you through a persistent egoism to satisfaction and

dissatisfaction, liking and disliking, hope and despair, joy and grief, to your petty loves and hatreds, to wrath and passion, to your attachment to success and things pleasant and to the sorrow and suffering of failure and of things unpleasant. Desire brings always confusion of mind and limitation of the will, an egoistic and distorted view of things, a failure and clouding of knowledge. Desire and its preferences and violences are the first strong root of sin and error. There can be while you cherish desire no assured stainless tranquillity, no settled light, no calm pure knowledge. There can be no right being — for desire is a perversion of the spirit — and no firm foundation for right thought, action and feeling. Desire, if permitted to remain under whatever colour, is a perpetual menace even to the wisest and can at any moment subtly or violently cast down the mind from even its firmest and most surely acquired foundation. Desire is the chief enemy of spiritual perfection.

“Slay then desire; put away attachment to the possession and enjoyment of the outwardness of things. Separate yourself from all that comes to you as outward touches and solicitations, as objects of the mind and senses. Learn to bear and reject all the rush of the passions and to remain securely seated in your inner self even while they rage in your members, until at last they cease to affect any part of your nature. Bear and put away similarly the forceful attacks and even the slightest insinuating touches of joy and sorrow. Cast away liking and disliking, destroy preference and hatred, root out shrinking and repugnance. Let there be a calm indifference to these things and to all the objects of desire in all your nature. Look on them with the silent and tranquil regard of an impersonal spirit.

“The result will be an absolute equality and the power of unshakable calm that the universal spirit maintains in front of its creations, facing ever the manifold action of Nature. Look with equal eyes; receive with an equal heart and mind all that comes to you, success and failure, honour and dishonour, the esteem and love of men and their scorn and persecution and hatred, every happening that would be to others a cause of joy and every happening that would be to others a cause of sorrow. Look with equal eyes on all persons, on the good and the wicked, on the wise and the foolish, on the Brahmin and the outcaste, on man at his highest and every pettiest creature. Meet equally all men whatever their relations to you, friend and ally, neutral and indifferent, opponent and enemy, lover and hater. These things touch the ego and you are called to be free from ego. These are personal relations and you have to observe all with the deep regard of the impersonal spirit. These are temporal and personal differences which you have to see but not be influenced by them; for you must fix not on these differences but on that which is the same in all, on the one self which all are, on the Divine in every creature and on the one working of Nature which is the equal will of God in men and things and energies and happenings and in all endeavour and result and whatever outcome of the world's labour.

“Action will still be done in you because Nature is always at work; but you must learn and feel that your self is not the doer of the action. Observe simply, observe unmoved the working of Nature and the play of her qualities and the magic of the gunas. Observe unmoved this action in yourself; look on all that is being done around you and see

that it is the same working in others. Observe that the result of your works and theirs is constantly other than you or they desired or intended, not theirs, not yours, but omnipotently fixed by a greater Power that wills and acts here in universal Nature. Observe too that even the will in your works is not yours but Nature's. It is the will of the ego sense in you and is determined by the predominant quality in your composition which she has developed in the past or else brings forward at the moment. It depends on the play of your natural personality and that formation of Nature is not your true person. Draw back from this external formation to your inner silent self; you will see that you the Purusha are inactive, but Nature continues to do always her works according to her gunas. Fix yourself in this inner inactivity and stillness: no longer regard yourself as the doer. Remain seated in yourself above the play, free from the perturbed action of the gunas. Live secure in the purity of an impersonal spirit, live untroubled by the mortal waves that persist in your members.

"If you can do this, then you will find yourself uplifted into a great release, a wide freedom and a deep peace. Then you will be aware of God and immortal, possessed of your dateless self-existence, independent of mind and life and body, sure of your spiritual being, untouched by the reactions of Nature, unstained by passion and sin and pain and sorrow. Then you will depend for your joy and desire on no mortal or outward or worldly thing, but will possess inalienably the self-sufficient delight of a calm and eternal spirit. Then you will have ceased to be a mental creature and will have become spirit illimitable, the Brahman. And into this eternity of the silent self, rejecting from your mind

all seed of thought and all root of desire, rejecting the figure of birth in the body, you can pass at your end by concentration in the pure Eternal and a mighty transference of your consciousness to the Infinite, the Absolute.

* * *

“This however is not all the truth of the Yoga and this end and way of departure, though a great end and a great way, is not the thing I propose to you. For I am the eternal Worker within you and I ask of you works. I demand of you not a passive consent to a mechanical movement of Nature from which in your self you are wholly separated, indifferent and aloof, but action complete and divine, done as the willing and understanding instrument of the Divine, done for God in you and others and for the good of the world. This action I propose to you, first no doubt as a means of perfection in the supreme spiritual Nature, but as a part too of that perfection. Action is a part of the integral knowledge of God, of his greater mysterious truth and of an entire living in the Divine; action can and should be continued even after perfection and freedom are won. I ask of you the action of the Jivanmukta, the works of the Siddha. Something has to be added to the Yoga already described, — for that was only a first Yoga of knowledge. There is also a Yoga of action in the illumination of God-experience; works can be made one spirit with knowledge. For works done in a total self-vision and God-vision, a vision of God in the world and of the world in God are themselves a movement of knowledge, a movement of light, an indispensable means and an intimate part of spiritual perfection.

“Therefore now to the experience of a high imper-

sonality add too this knowledge that the Supreme whom one meets as the pure silent Self can be met also as a vast dynamic Spirit who originates all works and is Lord of the worlds and the Master of man's action and endeavour and sacrifice. This apparently self-acting mechanism of Nature conceals an immanent divine Will that compels and guides it and shapes its purposes. But you cannot feel or know that Will while you are shut up in your narrow cell of personality, blinded and chained to your viewpoint of the ego and its desires. For you can wholly respond to it only when you are impersonalised by knowledge and widened to see all things in the self and in God and the self and God in all things. All becomes here by the power of the Spirit; all do their works by the immanence of God in things and his presence in the heart of every creature. The Creator of the worlds is not limited by his creations; the Lord of works is not bound by his works; the divine Will is not attached to its labour and the results of its labour: for it is omnipotent, all-possessing and all-blissful. But still the Lord looks down on his creations from his transcendence; he descends as the Avatar; he is here in you; he rules from within all things in the steps of their nature. And you too must do works in him, after the way and in the steps of the divine nature, untouched by limitation, attachment or bondage. Act for the best good of all, act for the maintenance of the march of the world, for the support or the leading of its peoples. The action asked of you is the action of the liberated Yogin; it is the spontaneous output of a free and God-held energy, it is an equal-minded movement, it is a selfless and desireless labour.

“The first step on this free, this equal, this divine way of

action is to put from you attachment to fruit and recompense and to labour only for the sake of the work itself that has to be done. For you must deeply feel that the fruits belong not to you but to the Master of the world. Consecrate your labour and leave its returns to the Spirit who manifests and fulfils himself in the universal movement. The outcome of your action is determined by his will alone and whatever it be, good or evil fortune, success or failure, it is turned by him to the accomplishment of his world purpose. An entirely desireless and disinterested working of the personal will and the whole instrumental nature is the first rule of Karmayoga. Demand no fruit, accept whatever result is given to you; accept it with equality and a calm gladness: successful or foiled, prosperous or afflicted, continue unafraid, untroubled and unwavering on the steep path of the divine action.

“This is no more than the first step on the path. For you must be not only unattached to results, but unattached also to your labour. Cease to regard your works as your own; as you have abandoned the fruits of your work, so you must surrender the work also to the Lord of action and sacrifice. Recognise that your nature determines your action; your nature rules the immediate motion of your Swabhava and decides the expressive turn and development of your spirit in the paths of the executive force of Prakriti. Bring in no longer any self-will to confuse the steps of your mind in following the Godward way. Accept the action proper to your nature. Make of all you do from the greatest and most unusual effort to the smallest daily act, make of each act of your mind, each act of your heart, each act of your body, of every inner and outer turn, of every thought and will and

feeling, of every step and pause and movement, a sacrifice to the Master of all sacrifice and Tapasya.

“Next know that you are an eternal portion of the Eternal and the powers of your nature are nothing without him, nothing if not his partial self-expression. It is the Divine Infinite that is being progressively fulfilled in your nature. It is the supreme power-to-be, it is the Shakti of the Lord that shapes and takes shape in your swabhava. Give up then all sense that you are the doer; see the Eternal alone as the doer of the action. Let your natural being be an occasion, an instrument, a channel of power, a means of manifestation. Offer up your will to him and make it one with his eternal will: surrender all your actions in the silence of your self and spirit to the transcendent Master of your nature. This cannot be really done or done perfectly so long as there is any ego sense in you or any mental claim or vital clamour. Action done in the least degree for the sake of the ego or tinged with the desire and will of the ego is not a perfect sacrifice. Nor can this great thing be well and truly done so long as there is inequality anywhere or any stamp of ignorant shrinking and preference. But when there is a perfect equality to all works, results, things and persons, a surrender to the Highest and not to desire or ego, then the divine Will determines without stumbling or deflection and the divine Power executes freely without any nether interference or perverting reaction all works in the purity and safety of your transmuted nature. To allow your every act to be shaped through you by the divine Will in its immaculate sovereignty is the highest degree of the perfection that comes by doing works in Yoga. That done, your nature will follow its cosmic walk in a complete and

constant union with the Supreme, express the highest Self, obey the Ishwara.

"This way of divine works is a far better release and a more perfect way and solution than the physical renunciation of life and works. A physical abstention is not entirely possible and is not in the measure of its possibility indispensable to the spirit's freedom; it is besides a dangerous example, for it exerts a misleading influence on ordinary men. The best, the greatest set the standard which the rest of humanity strive to follow. Then since action is the nature of the embodied spirit, since works are the will of the eternal Worker, the great spirits, the master minds should set this example. World-workers should they be, doing all works of the world without reservation, God-workers free, glad and desireless, liberated souls and natures.

* * *

"The mind of knowledge and the will of action are not all; there is within you a heart whose demand is for delight. Here too in the heart's power and illumination, in its demand for delight, for the soul's satisfaction your nature must be turned, transformed and lifted to one conscious ecstasy with the Divine. The knowledge of the impersonal self brings its own Ananda; there is a joy of impersonality, a singleness of joy of the pure spirit. But an integral knowledge brings a greater triple delight. It opens the gates of the Transcendent's bliss; it releases into the limitless delight of a universal impersonality; it discovers the rapture of all this multitudinous manifestation: for there is a joy of the Eternal in Nature. This Ananda in the Jiva, a portion here of the Divine, takes the form of an ecstasy founded in the

Godhead who is his source, in his supreme self, in the Master of his existence. An entire God-love and adoration extends to a love of the world and all its forms and powers and creatures; in all the Divine is seen, is found, is adored, is served or is felt in oneness. Add to knowledge and works this crown of the eternal triune delight; admit this love, learn this worship; make it one spirit with works and knowledge. That is the apex of the perfect perfection.

“This Yoga of love will give you a highest potential force for spiritual largeness and unity and freedom. But it must be a love which is one with God-knowledge. There is a devotion which seeks God in suffering for consolation and succour and deliverance; there is a devotion which seeks him for his gifts, for divine aid and protection and as a fountain of the satisfaction of desire; there is a devotion that, still ignorant, turns to him for light and knowledge. And so long as one is limited to these forms, there may persist even in their highest and noblest Godward turn a working of the three gunas. But when the God-lover is also the God-knower, the lover becomes one self with the Beloved; for he is the chosen of the Most High and the elect of the Spirit. Develop in yourself this God-engrossed love; the heart spiritualised and lifted beyond the limitations of its lower nature will reveal to you most intimately the secrets of God’s immeasurable being, bring into you the whole touch and influx and glory of his divine Power and open to you the mysteries of an eternal rapture. It is perfect love that is the key to a perfect knowledge.

“This integral God-love demands too an integral work for the sake of the Divine in yourself and in all creatures.

The ordinary man does works in obedience to some desire sinful or virtuous, some vital impulse low or high, some mental choice common or exalted or from some mixed mind and life motive. But the work done by you must be free and desireless; work done without desire creates no reaction and imposes no bondage. Done in a perfect equality and an unmoved calm and peace, but without any divine passion, it is at first the fine yoke of a spiritual obligation, *kartavyam karma*, then the uplifting of a divine sacrifice; at its highest it can be the expression of a calm and glad acquiescence in active oneness. The oneness in love will do much more: it will replace the first impassive calm by a strong and deep rapture, not the petty ardour of egoistic desire but the ocean of an infinite Ananda. It will bring the moving sense and the pure and divine passion of the presence of the Beloved into your works; there will be an insistent joy of labour for God in yourself and for God in all beings. Love is the crown of works and the crown of knowledge.

“This love that is knowledge, this love that can be the deep heart of your action, will be your most effective force for an utter consecration and complete perfection. An integral union of the individual's being with the Divine Being is the condition of a perfect spiritual life. Turn then altogether towards the Divine; make one with him by knowledge, love and works all your nature. Turn utterly towards him and give up ungrudgingly into his hands your mind and your heart and your will, all your consciousness and even your very senses and body. Let your consciousness be sovereignly moulded by him into a flawless mould of his divine consciousness. Let your heart

become a lucid or flaming heart of the Divine. Let your will be an impeccable action of his will. Let your very sense and body be the rapturous sensation and body of the Divine. Adore and sacrifice to him with all you are; remember him in every thought and feeling, every impulsion and act. Persevere until all these things are wholly his and he has taken up even in most common and outward things as in the inmost sacred chamber of your spirit his constant transmuting presence.

* * *

“This triune way is the means by which you can rise entirely out of your lower into your supreme spiritual nature. That is the hidden superconscient nature in which the Jiva, a portion of the high Infinite and Divine and intimately one in law of being with him, dwells in his Truth and not any longer in an externalised Maya. This perfection, this unity can be enjoyed in its own native status, aloof in a supreme supracosmic existence: but here also you may and should realise it, here in the human body and physical world. It is not enough for this end to be calm, inactive and free from the gunas in the inner self and to watch and allow indifferently their mechanical action in the outer members. For the active nature as well as the self has to be given to the Divine and to become divine. All that you are must grow into one law of being with the Purushottama, *sādharmya*; all must be changed into my conscious spiritual becoming, *mad-bhāva*. A completest surrender must be there. Take refuge with Me in all the many ways and along all the living lines of your nature; for that alone will bring about this great change and perfection.

“This high consummation of the Yoga will at once solve or rather it will wholly remove and destroy at its roots the problem of action. Human action is a thing full of difficulties and perplexities, tangled and confused like a forest with a few more or less obscure paths cut into it rather than through it; but all this difficulty and entanglement arises from the single fact that man lives imprisoned in the ignorance of his mental, vital and physical nature. He is compelled by its qualities and yet afflicted with responsibility in his will because something in him feels that he is a soul who ought to be what now he is not at all or very little, master and ruler of his nature. All his laws of living, all his dharmas must be under these conditions imperfect, temporary and provisional and at best only partly right or true. His imperfections can cease only when he knows himself, knows the real nature of the world in which he lives and, most of all, knows the Eternal from whom he comes and in whom and by whom he exists. When he has once achieved a true consciousness and knowledge, there is no longer any problem; for then he acts freely out of himself and lives spontaneously in accordance with the truth of his spirit and his highest nature. At its fullest, at the highest height of this knowledge it is not he who acts but the Divine, the One eternal and infinite who acts in him and through him in his liberated wisdom and power and perfection.

“Man in his natural being is a sattwic, rajasic and tamasic creature of Nature. According as one or other of her qualities predominates in him, he makes and follows this or that law of his life and action. His tamasic, material, sensational mind subject to inertia and fear and ignorance either obeys partly the compulsion of its environment and

partly the spasmodic impulses of its desires or finds a protection in the routine following of a dull customary intelligence. The rajasic mind of desire struggles with the world in which it lives and tries to possess always new things, to command, battle, conquer, create, destroy, accumulate. Always it goes forward tossed between success and failure, joy and sorrow, exultation or despair. But in all, whatever law it may seem to admit, it follows really only the law of the lower self and ego, the restless, untired, self-devouring and all-devouring mind of the Asuric and Rakshasic nature. The sattwic intelligence surmounts partly this state, sees that a better law than that of desire and ego must be followed and erects and imposes on itself a social, an ethical, a religious rule, a Dharma, a Shastra. This is as high as the ordinary mind of man can go, to erect an ideal or practical rule for the guidance of the mind and will and as faithfully as possible observe it in life and conduct. This sattwic mind must be developed to its highest point where it succeeds in putting away the mixture of ego motive altogether and observes the Dharma for its own sake as an impersonal social, ethical or religious ideal, the thing disinterestedly to be done solely because it is right, *kartavyam karma*.

“The real truth of all this action of Prakriti is, however, less outwardly mental and more inwardly subjective. It is this that man is an embodied soul involved in material and mental nature, and he follows in it a progressive law of his development determined by an inner law of his being; his cast of spirit makes out his cast of mind and life, his swabhava. Each man has a swadharma, a law of his inner being which he must observe, find out and follow. The action

determined by his inner nature, that is his real Dharma. To follow it is the true law of his development; to deviate from it is to bring in confusion, retardation and error. That social, ethical, religious or other law and ideal is best for him always which helps him to observe and follow out his Swadharma.

“All this action however is even at its best subject to the ignorance of the mind and the play of the gunas. It is only when the soul of man finds itself that he can overpass and erase from his consciousness the ignorance and the confusion of the gunas. It is true that even when you have found yourself and live in your self, your nature will still continue on its old lines and act for a time according to its inferior modes. But now you can follow that action with a perfect self-knowledge and can make of it a sacrifice to the Master of your existence. Follow then the law of your Swadharma, do the action that is demanded by your Swabhava whatever it may be. Reject all motive of egoism, all initiation by self-will, all rule of desire, until you can make the complete surrender of all the ways of your being to the Supreme.

“And when you are once able to do that sincerely, that will be the moment to renounce the initiation of your acts without exception into the hands of the supreme Godhead within you. Then you will be released from all laws of conduct, liberated from all dharmas. The Divine Power and Presence within you will free you from sin and evil and lift you far above human standards of virtue. For you will live and act in the absolute and spontaneous right and purity of the spiritual being and the immaculate force of the divine

nature. The Divine and not you will enact his own will and works through you, not for your lower personal pleasure and desire, but for the world-purpose and for your divine good and the manifest or secret good of all. Inundated with light, you will see the form of the Godhead in the world and in the works of Time, know his purpose and hear his command. Your nature will receive as an instrument his will only whatever it may be and do it without question, because there will come with each initiation of your acts from above and within you an imperative knowledge and an illumined assent to the divine wisdom and its significance. The battle will be his, his the victory, his the empire.

“This will be your perfection in the world and the body, and beyond these worlds of temporal birth the supreme eternal superconsciousness will be yours and you will dwell for ever in the highest status of the Supreme Spirit. The cycles of incarnation and the fear of mortality will not distress you; for here in life you will have accomplished the expression of the Godhead, and your soul, even though it has descended into mind and body, will already be living in the vast eternity of the Spirit.

“This then is the supreme movement, this complete surrender of your whole self and nature, this abandonment of all dharmas to the Divine who is your highest Self, this absolute aspiration of all your members to the supreme spiritual nature. If you can once achieve it, whether at the outset or much later on the way, then whatever you are or were in your outward nature, your way is sure and your perfection inevitable. A supreme Presence within you will take up your Yoga and carry it swiftly along the lines of your

swabhava to its consummate completion. And afterwards whatever your way of life and mode of action, you will be consciously living, acting and moving in him and the Divine Power will act through you in your every inner and outer motion. This is the supreme way because it is the highest secret and mystery and yet an inner movement progressively realisable by all. This is the deepest and most intimate truth of your real, your spiritual existence."

— Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita*. pp. 572-594.

Kireet Joshi (b. 1931) studied philosophy and law at the Bombay University. He was selected for the I.A.S. in 1955 but in 1956, he resigned in order to devote himself at Pondicherry to the study and practice of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. He taught Philosophy and Psychology at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education at Pondicherry and participated in numerous educational experiments under the direct guidance of The Mother.

In 1976, the Government of India invited him to be Education Advisor in the Ministry of Education. In 1983, he was appointed Special Secretary to the Government of India, and he held the post until 1988. He was Member-Secretary of Indian Council of Philosophical Research from 1981 to 1990. He was also Member-Secretary of Rashtriya Veda Vidya Pratishthan from 1987 to 1993. He was the Vice-Chairman of the UNESCO Institute of Education, Hamburg, from 1987 to 1989.

From 1999 to 2004, he was the Chairman of Auroville Foundation. From 2000 to 2006, he was Chairman of Indian Council of Philosophical Research. From 2006 to 2008, he was Editorial Fellow of the Project of History of Indian Science, Philosophy and Culture (PHISPC).

Currently, he is Education Advisor to the Chief Minister of Gujarat.

Authored by Kireet Joshi
on
Synthesis of Yoga and Allied Themes

The New Synthesis of Yoga - An Introduction

Varieties of Yogic Experience and Integral Realisation

Significance of Indian Yoga - An Overview

A Pilgrim's Quest for the Highest and the Best

Synthesis of Yoga in the Veda

Synthesis of Yoga in the Upanishads

The Gita and its Synthesis of Yoga

Integral Yoga: Major Aims, Processes, Methods and Results

Integral Yoga of Transformation:

Psychic, Spiritual and Supramental

Supermind in the Integral Yoga

Integral Yoga and Evolutionary Mutation

Integral Yoga, Evolution and the Next Species

Authored by Kireet Joshi on
Philosophy, Indian Culture and Education

A Philosophy of the Role of the Contemporary Teacher

A Philosophy of Evolution for the Contemporary Man

A Philosophy of Education for the Contemporary Youth

Philosophy and Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and Other Essays

Sri Aurobindo and Integral Yoga

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

On Materialism (Compilation)

Towards Universal Fraternity (Compilation)

Towards a New Social Order (Compilation)

Let us Dwell on Human Unity (Compilation)

Landmarks of Hinduism

The Veda and Indian Culture

Glimpses of Vedic Literature

The Portals of Vedic Knowledge

Stories for Youth in search of a Higher Life

Education for Character Development

Education for Tomorrow

Education at Crossroads

A National Agenda for Education

Teachers' Training Programme in the light of Value-oriented Education

Innovations in Education

Edited by Kireet Joshi

The Aim of Life

The Good Teacher and the Good Pupil

Mystery and Excellence of Human Body

Parvati's Tapasya

Nachiketas

Taittiriya Upanishad

Sri Rama

Sri Krishna in Brindavan

Nala and Damayanti

Raghuvamsham of Kalidasa

Svapna Vasavadattam

The Siege of Troy

Gods & the World

Homer and the Iliad -Sri Aurobindo and Ilion

Socrates

Alexander the Great

The Crucifixion

Joan of Arc

Catherine the Great

Uniting Men – Jean Monnet

Arguments for the Existence of God

Marie Sklodowska Curie

The peculiarity of the Gita among the great religious books of the world is that it does not stand apart as a work by itself, the fruit of the spiritual life of a creative personality like Christ, Mahomed or Buddha or of an epoch of pure spiritual searching like the Veda and Upanishads, but it is given as an episode in an epic history of nations and their wars and men and their deeds and arises out of a critical moment in the soul of one of its leading personages face to face with the crowning action of his life, a work terrible, violent and sanguinary, at the point when he must either recoil from it altogether or carry it through to its inexorable completion... the teaching of the Gita must therefore be regarded not merely in the light of a general spiritual philosophy or ethical doctrine, but as bearing upon a practical crisis in the application of ethics and spirituality to human life.

- Sri Aurobindo