

THE STRUGGLE FOR PERFECTION

*An Analysis of the Structure of Life
And the Yoga Way of Universal Integration
According to the Bhagavadgita*

Swami Krishnananda

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Sri Swami Krishnananda



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PREFACE

Human life may be regarded as a process of successive achievements, and every movement in this process is a step taken towards the actualisation of the ideal which beckons one to itself. All beings, whatever be in the cosmos, are comprehended by this single law—the law of a striving for higher achievements. In this struggle to achieve the higher, one realises pleasure. It is well said that man never is; he is always to be. We do not entirely live in the present. There is an element of the future in what we do, and we never confine ourselves to the present merely. This means to say that we identify ourselves, though in a covert manner, with an ideal to be achieved in the future, which, we hope, will bring us a larger satisfaction. If the future is not ingrained in the present, how could there be such a thing as hope? That we cannot keep quiet, that we always feel a duty before us, is enough indication that we are wound up with a future. It is also not true that we wholly live in the future, because the future cannot be contained in the consciousness of the present. Time cannot take a jump beyond the present, which is its core. We might hope for the future, but we cannot live in the future. Life is always a present.

If, then, it is impossible to have a ‘real’ satisfaction in the ‘future’, and if we cannot also live without a future, there would appear to be a tension, or contradiction,

in our life. Life is a battle between the present and the future, between our affairs of today and our future hopes. The present and future cannot join in time, and yet there seems to be a superhuman element, transcending human understanding which somehow connects the two together. With all this, still, we know that the present and the future never come together. All this may look like a logical untenability, but logic is not all, and science is not everything. What, to us, seems a possibility, need not exhaust all wisdom. We cannot understand how it is possible to reconcile our present difficulty with our longings of the future. We seem to be wanting something which is not within our present perception, and feel happy about what we know not. Are we not foolish in trying to achieve the impossible? We seem to be fighting with time itself, which bifurcates the present from the future. And what we want is not bifurcation but union of the present and future. Our souls cry for that which cannot be given in time. There is something in us which time cannot explain, for it is not in time. The one which 'asks' is not human, and so the human mind cannot understand the significance of this epic war. Where does this asking for 'more' and 'more' end? It does not end in time, because there is no end to time, just as there is no end to the horizon. As we proceed towards the horizon, it recedes from us. Whatever be our effort to probe into the future, it cannot be successful, even if we are to live for a thousand years. Are we then to conclude that we are bound only to hope and struggle, but achieve nothing? Is this our fate—to suffer for no reason? Or, is there some meaning in life?

Something in us voices that life has a significance, which makes us daily work so hard. A marvel indeed is human life!

What are we hoping to achieve then? Logically argued, the effort would appear to be a vain pursuit. If the life we have lived for so many years, so far, has not brought us anything worth the while, what is the guarantee that it is going to bring something in the future? This would be the result of an investigation of human life from the point of view of mind, psychology and logic. Though all this may be correct as far as it goes, something seems to be announcing another truth altogether, something which cannot reconcile itself with any of the above observations. A timeless Spirit seems to speak from within us. It defies time and we seem to be living a timeless existence. The difficulty in reconciling the present with the future is there only so long as we live in time. All that is in time is tantalising; it makes a promise which it never fulfils. The eternal seems to masquerade in time and we seem to have something in us more than what we appear to be to ourselves as well as to others. We are not mere humans, and our relations are not merely social. Our connections with others, our name, age, height, weight, etc., are not a real description of ourselves, because these have no relation to the eternal in us, which asks for what is not in time at all. We make artificial adjustments in our life to bring about a false satisfaction that our wish has been fulfilled, and that our future has been brought to the present. The realisation of a hope has a meaning when it identifies itself with the present, which is the nature of consciousness.

People generally complain: “We have made so much sacrifice, but they have brought us no recompense. Then, what is the good of all this?”

But, this is one side of the picture. That our outer circumstances often look unattractive is a part of truth, and our wisdom does not consist in merely accepting this on its surface. The pains of life are due to the wrong adjustments we make between our inner personality and outer circumstances. We do make adjustments, but not always rightly. We may go wrong even in doing a right thing. Many of us do right things wrongly. Sacrifices alone are not sufficient; they should be done with wisdom. They should be performed not for any ulterior fruit but for that joy of the art of adjustment. Science may be a means to some end, but not art. Art is an end in itself. Self-adjustment is an art, and when carried to its perfection, it is called yoga. Even in its initial stages, an all-round adjustment becomes yoga. Even the very first step points to an eternal perfection, and so it transcends all learning; it is yoga, says the Bhagavadgita.

We have to make this adjustment from the point of view of the timeless element in us. The wrong we do in life’s adjustments is in not taking into consideration the superhuman element in us and thinking only in terms of the personality. It is not the body, the personality, that makes the sacrifice by this adjustment, but the ‘I’—which needs to be trained more than anything else in the conscious, subconscious and unconscious levels, in a sense deeper than what the psychologists generally understand. The timeless reality cannot be grasped through the apparatus of ordinary psychology, because

all these instruments are temporal, while that being within is spiritual. The spiritual reality which is the 'I' is indistinguishable in its ultimate essence from other entities or beings. Though we differ from one another in bodies and in social circumstances, we have a kinship of feeling from the standpoint of our essential nature. The adjustment that we have to make, which is the art of the yoga of the Bhagavadgita—so difficult to understand even with all our trained understandings is nothing but the simple act of attunement of oneself to the universal environment, not from the standpoint of time, but the inner reality. It is an organic adjustment, not a mechanical dovetailing. While mechanical adjustment is what we generally do in the hope of obtaining pleasure, organic adjustment is yoga. We often think that certain aspects of our personality can be hidden from people and only certain others can be projected outside and related to others, according to our desire. This is a mistake, and this is mechanical adjustment. There is a secret law which we forget—the law which connects our inner personalities with the inner personalities of others, even without our consciously knowing it. This inner act of spontaneous recognition is called 'prehension'. Prehension is a process by which we automatically relate ourselves to everything else in the cosmos. While apprehension is an outer act on the conscious level, prehension is deeper than even the subconscious function. There is no such thing as hiding things from other persons, because we are always related to others. When the prehensive activity within contradicts the

apprehensive activity outside, there is a psychological tension.

We have an inner personality and also an outer one. We usually exhibit the outer and hide the inner. We make sacrifices by the outer personality. We may appear unselfish in our outer conduct, while there is selfishness in the inner attitude. We are thus at war within ourselves. The malady of human life is not only of outer society but also of each one of us, individually. We are mostly busy in studying others, but not ourselves. Our present-day system of education pertains to the study of outer phenomena but not the inner truth of things. We never become the subject of study; the subject always remains an 'object'! Unless right education of the integral type is provided, humanity's suffering will not end. There must be a sympathy between ourselves and the outer world, and between our inner and outer personalities.

This is yoga—to establish peace in our relations with others as well as in our own selves. The system of yoga is meant to effect this inner attunement by a graduated process of self-transcendence. There seems to be no other wrong with us than an ignorance which has led us to a maladjustment of values. We have to learn the art of seeking the proper thing in the proper manner. Life is a process of education in the art of this proper seeking—morally, psychologically, socially and spiritually. To be at peace with ourselves, with society and the universe, for ever, is to realise the eternal value which vitalises all existence. Towards this knowledge, may we proceed with diligence.

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THE STRUGGLE FOR PERFECTION

INTRODUCTION

Life is characterised by effort at existence. This inherent urge within every human being is a permanent feature observable through history. Effort and struggle are directed towards the achieving of an end which is realised as one's ideal and which mostly remains as a future to the reality of the present state of affairs. The all-round struggle of humanity through the passage of history for achievements of different kinds in the various fields of activity is an indication that life is involved in a restlessness of the human spirit which is eager to overcome its barriers of action and limitations of understanding.

Life's struggle has been, at least at its lowest level, for the overcoming of difficulties in the form of hunger and thirst, heat and cold and the fear of death, all which ever remain as the invariable concomitants of life in general. These features of life's limitations have been never known to change, and they have existed always. There is no hope that they will ever change or cease. Man has also been obsessed with a curiosity to know more and more of himself and the world outside, and this urge for knowledge, too, has not reached its limit as yet. The problems of history are the problems of life, and they are always the same, wherever one is, or whatever one be.

To avoid the turmoils incumbent upon these pressures which come upon him in spite of himself, man has been contemplating in various ways to find a solution and means of encountering them with proper method and technique. From birth to death, it is a long chain of unending effort to fight the difficulties which seem to be preventing him from being at peace with himself and living in ease, with freedom from fear. But these efforts of his have not been of avail in the ultimate sense, for the problems that were besetting him centuries ago are the same to him even today. By no Herculean means has man succeeded in becoming immune to the onslaughts and the urges of hunger and thirst, or heat and cold. He also lives in a perpetual state of anxiety and fear. The uncertainty concerning oneself comes from three sources: nature, other living beings, and one's own self. One may within oneself develop complexes and diseases, and none can be completely free from this contingency. There are the fundamental facts of life weighing heavy on one's head, in spite of the limits of education that one might have reached. There is bound to be the dread of death which can unhinge a person at any moment. The fear of death can be occasioned by three factors: viz., errors committed by oneself, attacks from others outside, and calamities caused by the wrath of nature itself. For all these things there is no remedy anywhere, though social laws and governmental systems based on ethical and political structures have been framed by the ingenuity of man. But man-made things have never lasted for long. That

which had a beginning did also have an end. He who is born has to die.

This frightening atmosphere has not, however, deterred man from endeavouring to face oppositions at every stage they came. Though it would appear that all his attempts were almost akin to the effort at pushing the horizon beyond its boundaries—a futile adventure bringing no result whatsoever—the hopes of man have never ceased, and they will never cease. There is, at the background of his personality, an inkling of his being capable of breaking boundaries and overstepping limitations of understanding and gaining sway over all things. Though he has never done this in all history, the passage of history itself is a testimony of human aspiration to reach unlimited suzerainty over everything. It is not merely this much; human desire goes further into the deep longing to make the world one's own—nay, to enjoy it. This is a profound psychological secret behind effort and activity.

Man's longing to exercise power, possess things and enjoy pleasure is ostensibly the hidden aim behind every form of his effort both in his private and public life. But it is surprising that this goal is lost sight of in the process of the struggle, and the struggle itself is deified, in some way or other, the means getting confused with the end. This, obviously, is a travesty of affairs, for nothing can be worse than mistaking the toil of the journey for the delight of having reached the destination. Notwithstanding the cautious and investigative processes adopted by man with various

techniques of working, he has not been able to avoid this common mistake of humanity in general—the mistake of taking the process for the goal. The reason for this persisting error in all activity is the inability on one's part to distinguish between the *form* and the *content* of experience. While the form is identical with the tedium and effort involved in any kind of adventure or activity, the content is the principle of satisfaction in the achievement, which is immanent though invisible in the process. It is true that man struggles for bread and most of his life is spent in finding ways of earning it. Now, this need to earn one's bread is easily mistaken for the important end to be achieved in life. Unfortunately, the purpose behind earning of one's bread is quite different, it being a novel type of satisfaction of one's being able to keep one's body and soul together. This is the aim of the search for food, clothing and shelter and the various amenities of life that are regarded as unavoidable essentials to everyone. But, as long as the *content* is not discovered in the *form*, life in the world will ever remain a hopeless and unending conflict of conditions and vicissitudes. The significance of this curious difficulty does not come to the surface of man's consciousness, due to which he continues fighting against odds and suffering in his life from inception to the grave. The seeking of the *meaning* implicit in life's processes is philosophy. The working out of philosophy in one's life is the practice of yoga.

THE STRUCTURE OF EXISTENCE

The path of yoga is a journey towards the attainment of perfection. Students eager to tread this inner way of life are often found to be over-enthusiastic and incapable of judging the pros and cons of the steps they have to take in the proper direction. An uprise of emotional fervour suddenly takes it for granted that the realisation of God is the goal of life and that the one thing that they have to be after is to be wholly engaged in continuous meditation on God, or taking His Name, reciting His glories, etc., throughout the day. While this is precisely the ideal way of living the spiritual life and this is exactly what one is supposed to endeavour to achieve in one's day-to-day life, it will be realised, on a correct assessment of values, that the notion is misty and miscalculated, and it is not so easy as it might appear on the surface. As is the case with military operations, so with the practice of yoga. A famous saying of the Mahabharata, that the *sannyasin* engaged in yoga and the warrior fighting in the field are the two heroes fit for the attainment of salvation, should confirm that the practice of yoga is as many-sided and complicated a procedure as are the operations of the army in the war-field. Just as a soldier enters the field with an idea to win victory and not merely with an intention to die there, the yogi takes to his practice with a will to succeed in the achievement and not with a diffident mood of the possibility of retrogression or failure.

The General of an army, who is acquainted with the facts of warfare, does not at once make a frontal attack on the enemy, though this is his intention in the end. The preparations for this final confrontation are many. The General has to know the extent of the military equipment and the moral courage of his own men. He has also to make enough provisions for emergency that may arise when the battle actually breaks out. He has to assess the strength of the enemy in a similar manner. He has to know the nature of his allies as well as the nature of his enemy's allies. Above all, he has to be fully up to date with the tactics that the enemy might employ as well as those that he intends to unleash, apart from being awake to the physical, strategic and armamental powers. The way of yoga is hazardous and full of dangers. It would be sheer folly on the part of an amateur in yoga to imagine that he would catch God by dint of mere will to meditate, with which he might be fired for the time being. For, the fire can cool down when the opposition forces rain down arrows of temptation as well as threats of many kinds. It is better to take more time to guard oneself with precautionary measures than go headlong into the thick of the array, unprepared.

The goal which one wishes to realise is not far removed from oneself. This marvel of being is everywhere and in everything, and hence the difficulty in coming to a direct experience of it. That which is everywhere seems to be almost like that which is nowhere. Errors in the operation of consciousness are mostly the gravest errors of mankind. One's own mistakes are seen in the faces of others. One detests and

criticises in others the weaknesses and evils which are enshrined in one's own self. This is the psychological malady from which no one can easily escape. A thief always suspects others and cannot trust them fully, because of his simmering conscience which keeps him restless at all times. The student of yoga is not in a better plight, for human foibles cannot leave him. The mistakes of the politicians, the warriors, the rulers, the heads of states and the institutions are also the mistakes of individuals, whether they be scholars, teachers, traders or even seekers of Truth. The universal law working everywhere, uniformly, does not spare anyone from the enforcement of its principles. The mistake of consciousness is taken for the mistake of the world. Here is the seed of world problems.

If God is one and the Absolute is the only reality,* the seeker of such an experience should naturally be included within its being. Then, where does the question of seeking arise? The very idea of seeking or endeavouring to achieve is the outcome of a split in consciousness itself. The necessity to find a medicine appears to have arisen on account of the disease being already there. Else, there would be no need for the remedy. This division of consciousness within itself is not detectable, for consciousness is already involved in it. If it were not so involved, anyone would have easily known where the problem lies. The whole of

*For a philosophical proof of this principle, see the author's *Resurgent Culture*.

humanity seems to be no better today than it was centuries before, because its errors cannot be detected: the errors are, unfortunately for it, in its consciousness itself. It looks, for a moment, that there is no solution for this surprising situation. But the solution, too, comes as another surprise, perhaps a greater one than the problem itself. The wondrous solution to this universal problem of man is the great philosophy of life. No one can be a successful student of yoga, who is not properly instructed in this philosophy.

As consciousness is spread out everywhere, it being universal, the problem also presents itself from every corner of the world, every walk of life, and every field of activity. However, in tackling this problem, a systematic procedure has to be adopted, with great caution and logical consistency. The usual method is to start from the external towards the internal, and then rise from the internal, gradually, to the universal. The reason for this procedure is that consciousness, which is essentially universal, seems to have got localised into individual centres of internality of concepts and then slowly moved outward into percepts of objective situations in a world of physical entities. The process of the return to the original condition of reality has to be a systematic reversal, stage by stage, of the process of the descent of consciousness into its lowest forms. On a dispassionate analysis—psychologically and scientifically—we would realise that we have no troubles from persons or things, but from certain states of consciousness involved in relationships with persons and things. Hence, an analysis of the world situation and

of world problems would ultimately be an analysis of the universal involvement of consciousness in a long series of objectivity.

The lowest form of this involvement may be said to be what is known as the political consciousness, by which we mean a network of mechanised relationships contrived to bring about a harmony among individuals. In every stage of development the effort is to rise from a state of opposition to that of harmony. Thus we have, in its crudest form, the human endeavour to rise from political opposition to political harmony. Even wars which are embarked upon have at their background the intention to bring about political harmony and stability. But this is only an extreme step which is taken when the more normal methods fail—methods such as promises of mutual understanding and cooperation based on humanitarian grounds. The political consciousness does not rise above the humanitarian level, for its standpoint is of the *visible immediacy* of the needs of human beings as *individuals* or *groups of individuals*. But the visible is not always the real. The real man is behind what is seen with the eyes. Hence, political relationships of the nations promising a possibility of international harmony do not always end in the satisfaction of human minds, which remain still in a state of insecurity and anxiety, because political harmony can be broken up at any moment, as pieces of glass glued together can never be said to form a real whole. The split forms of political consciousness have not been really united; they have only been temporarily welded together with the strength

of the cement used to make them stick together. The unnaturalness of this unity is obvious.

Consciousness struggles to rise again from this state of affairs and we see people who are tired of political life taking to social work or social service as a way of being nearer to the truth of human nature than political activity. This stride of consciousness is now observed to be tending towards an inwardisation by one stage. But here, too, dissatisfaction does not end. Just as political heads, though they may be in the height of their power, can have a sudden fall overnight, making them get disillusioned with all politically manoeuvred efforts, social workers, also, do not remain happy people. They realise one day, at their cost, that society can never be satisfied, and it is like a dog's tail which cannot be straightened always. The defects seen in the field of politics are visible here, once again, as old wine in a new bottle. People cannot be made happy by any amount of service rendered to them, and one who has dedicated himself to social service stands dazed at the futility of his efforts, in the end. The reason is that peoples' happiness does not so much depend on what they get from outside as what they realise personally in their own minds and feelings. The impact of external events and objects upon the mind has much to do with the state of the mind at the given moment. Hearts which are aggrieved with psychological rifts cannot be happy even if heaven itself were to descend upon earth. On the other hand, pleasures of people, within their own concerned circles, totally ignore even a state of chaos outside if only it is not to interfere with these

satisfactions with which they identify their whole life. The good that is done is not always remembered, while a small error committed is never forgotten. Man, being what he is, has proved himself more untrustworthy at times than those who follow the law of the jungle. It is only in one's maturity of age that one comes face to face with the startling discovery of the irrefutable position that no one can ultimately be satisfied, or even made friends with, for an indefinite period.

When this wisdom dawns, man betakes himself to the purely subjective arts and sciences as the only things worth striving after in life. People confine themselves to their academic circles or laboratories for the sheer satisfaction of knowledge for knowledge's sake. Study and research in the several branches of learning engage all their attention. We have, thus, had prodigies of knowledge, both in the arts and sciences, as well as masters in the technique of public oration. These, indeed, become highly revered personalities, and the infinitude that extends beyond what they know seems to be a source of their personal happiness. Study and teaching are innocuous pleasures. Yet, with all this, these geniuses of learning see a limitless expanse of the unknown yawning before them, and rarely does one die with a feeling of conviction that one has known what is really worth the while, as the secret of life.

On the path of the spirit which the seeker of Truth treads, the maladies which characterise these strata of human life are not really absent. One may enter the field of spiritual life wanting to make an honest enquiry into

the nature of reality, but the human side that expresses itself through public relationships and private hopes—as in politics, sociology and the academies—seeps into the interior of one's efforts, even without one's knowing what is happening. It is this general pervasive character of human nature that makes even those who thought they heard the call of God succumb to the involvements and attractions of public life and assume roles of leadership in political and social circles, or immerse themselves in ponderous tomes and make scholarship a career in their lives. These are lurking foes on the path of the sincere seeker, which appear in the front due to his not having been vigilant enough to detect the entanglement of consciousness in the artificial satisfactions of the phenomenal world. It is only with the hard effort of thinking and experience through the passage of living that one stumbles upon the central pivot of all problems, viz., the psychological structure of man.

It is these seasoned souls who get tired of the mere outward pursuit of perfection that turn to seek it in inward austerity known as *tapas*, or restraint of the total personality from its external ramifications, through society and the ego-principle. In this effort at self-restraint, the powers within get revealed. But the powers which initially come out into the surface are the urges of the lower individual nature—such as the passion for sex, the greed for wealth, the craving for name, fame and authority, and a hidden susceptibility to the sensory lure of the fine arts. While the treasure may be hidden deep inside the earth, what one sees coming out while

digging the surface is stone that hurts and dust that blinds the eye. Consciousness gets identified again with this situation and there is the fear of a fall, once more, into undesirable circles. When the mind is pressurised by efforts at restraint of self, it releases energies which tend towards the object of sense. Often, it is seen that the chances of retrogression into the older moods and instincts are greater in those who try to control the mind than those who give a long rope to it. A satisfied enemy is less likely to launch an attack than a dissatisfied one. The love for God can easily flow along channels of name, fame, power and material gain. The majority of even sincere souls goes this way, on account of indiscretion and overestimation of one's capacity to understand oneself in a dispassionate manner. The effort either ends in physical mortification continuing till one's bodily death, mistaken for a genuine practice of yoga, or in a side-tracking of one's interests along the lines of sensory and egoistic gratification. One can see the world abounding in many such instances of those who 'know not, and know not they know not'.

But there are more fortunate ones who 'know not, and know they know not'. These are people who have a hope of being saved through instruction and by example. These rigorous souls on the path of yoga rise up to the occasion and quickly realise where exactly the trouble lies. They come to grasp the secret that these instincts which press themselves forward through the senses and the ego cannot easily be overcome by mere pressure exerted on them, even as a disease cannot be cured by the use of suppressive drugs. The instincts are

only the outer symptom of an inner error of consciousness, which has all along been there without being diagnosed as the root disease. Fasts and vigils, fierce penances of the body and starving of the senses and the mind are not remedies for the upsurge of instincts of the lower nature. These practices merely suppress these instincts and make them more violent in their efforts to come out with a vengeance. True yoga begins when this essential of human psychology is known and turned towards a higher self-analysis and contemplation of a purely spiritual character.

The pressure that objects exert on the consciousness which observes them is weighty enough to cause an organic involvement of the latter in the set-up of the former. There is a mutual determination of form and character between consciousness and its objects. This is almost like two contending parties influencing each other in such a way that neither of them can think or work independent of the other. In some such sense as this we call the world a relative phenomenon. Due to this factor of consciousness and object operating as the warp and woof of every kind of experience, the individual remains for ever a fluctuating centre of perplexity and indecision in regard to the ultimate truth of life. Until the consciousness aspect and the object aspect in experience are separated from each other and judged correctly, from their own standpoints, there would not be freedom or independence, deathlessness or eternal life. The purpose of yoga is to achieve this difficult analysis and experience and come to a definite conclusion, valid for all times. The revolutionary

character of the instinctive urges in human nature is due to the influence of objects on consciousness and the interest which consciousness has in objects, a situation which has arisen on account of the mutually dependent character of these two factors in experience. Here is, indeed, a hard nut to crack, and yoga becomes really difficult when one comes to this stage of the effort.

A life of spiritual freedom and happiness is now realised to be beyond the scope of the ordinary man. The training which one is called upon to undergo to traverse this stage of understanding needs such dispassion of self-observation that the education with which modern man is acquainted will be found to be of not much value when he begins to attack the problem of the crux of human experience. Our ideas of other people and of the world outside would require a radical transformation before we embark upon this supreme endeavour to probe the mystery of life. Here, our learning will be of no help to us, for much of our learning concerns persons and things, but this task that is now on hand has nothing whatsoever to do with persons and things. The standpoint of the Universal Judge of all phenomena cannot easily be contained within the mind of the human individual. Here, at this stage, the seeker usually falls back upon his routine practices of observances and austerities, taking them for yoga, not knowing that he is yet too unprepared for the secret which eludes his grasp every time he tries to grapple with it. 'Not by logic and argumentation is this wisdom to be attained,' says the Kathopanishad. Human understanding is inapplicable in the realm of the universal.

But, when the piercing intelligence succeeds in battling with this borderland of the universal hidden in individual experience, certain other difficulties begin to show their heads. The mutual interaction of consciousness and matter produces vehement reactions such as the feelings of heat and cold, hunger and thirst, sleep and the fear of death. These natural pressures, which often assume atrocious forms of intensity, prevent further effort for progress onward. Even heroes of saintliness cannot wholly combat these demands from the bodily nature. The questions: 'to do or not to do' and 'to be or not to be' are raised by these physico-vital urges in the individual, and dreads of an unknown nature surround the seeking yogi, some of which we are given to understand from the records of experience of such masters as Gautama, the Buddha and of Jesus, the Christ. These are the stages through which everyone has to pass, and there appears to be no exception to this rule. Here, again, comes up another problem. One's growth towards perfection remains always undiscovered and unpalpable. The growth is from within, as with a fruit, and it is not easily seen. Even a minute before we actually wake up from sleep, we cannot know that we are anywhere near wakefulness. The awakening, when it comes, is always sudden, and it takes us by surprise. It rarely comes with previous notice. The psycho-physical urges which stand on the way of the attainment are impetuous enough to threaten the greatest among the seekers on the path. It becomes a question of life and death. One will not know whether it is life or death that is ahead. It is a fierce battle between the known and the

unknown, on the border between the finite and the infinite.

This experience gets further accentuated by additional factors which weigh heavily on one's experience in the form of the principles of space, time and gravitation, which have a say in everything, in all creation. Space, time and cause are the final judges of all experience. Nothing can be thought except in terms of these determining principles. Even our concept of perfection or of the Absolute is not free from their interference. In fact, the organic involvement of consciousness and its objects is due to the operation of space-time in experience. The push of consciousness towards objects and the push of objects towards consciousness in a kind of mutual agreement between them is on account of the fact that space and time, working together, act equally upon consciousness on one side and on objects on the other. Though, logically, space and time are objects of consciousness and cannot be said to be inherent in it in a sense of organic inseparableness, there is a sort of inseparable unity of the two as between a crystal and the colour that is reflected in its whole body. The entire situation seems to be a huge muddle and mess of an organic tie of relationship between consciousness and the principle of externality, which is the space-time-cause continuum. This stage of realisation is, however, different from the usual experience of man that space and time are outside as objects of observation, which is a far earlier condition now stepped over in an environment where the universal is recognised as the single content in the

various vehicles of individuality spread out through the cosmos.

The understanding working through the media of space and time is the mathematical intellect and the logical reason. Mathematics and logic seem to be exact sciences incapable of a reversal of rule in any period of time, due to a permanent fixation of the space-time laws in one's consciousness. The physical sciences which work on the basis of the law of causality are again offshoots of the laws of the space-time continuum. Our consciousness cannot go beyond phenomena. The concepts of the beyond, such as of an Absolute God, a unified world and an immortal soul, are also tarnished by their involvement in the network of space-time-cause relations. The science of physics has attempted to dive into the secrets of nature and grasp the mystery of the space-time world. But this effort has not led science to a lasting success. From matter in the form of the five gross elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether, scientific enquiry moved along the discovery of electromagnetic fields behind the molecular and atomic structures of matter, and landed itself in the doctrines of quantum particles and wave mechanics, ending finally in the theory of relativity of the universe. This is wonderful knowledge, indeed, which science has acquired in the present day, useful for constructive as well as destructive purposes, taking man's breath away, beyond the limitations of crass materialistic thinking to the realms of a cosmic relativity of all phenomena. But, nevertheless, this relativistic discovery, though it appeared to plant human knowledge in a state of

absoluteness, never really did so, for the wisdom of physical science is not outside the ultimate reaches of the space-time-cause continuum. At this stage modern physics and profound metaphysics coalesce and come to almost common conclusions in regard to the mystery of creation. And, yet, there is a beyond.

It is difficult for the logical understanding to explain what is really behind this acme which has, up to now, been reached. It looks that man is not given to know it or have an access into it. One does not know what is on the other side of this screen that hangs heavily before one's consciousness at this level of experience. Great philosophers, saints and sages have warned us not to be too inquisitive about it. The Buddha declined to say anything on the question. The Bhagavadgita sings of its epic grandeur, and the Upanishads revel in ecstasies over its majesty and glory. Mystics have cried out that it is a ravishing experience which bursts one's soul with everlasting joy. But, apart from these awe-inspiring intimations, making one's hair stand on end, humanity knows next to nothing about it. In moments of unselfish contemplation, dispassionate spirits do get a glimpse of what this marvel is. The Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita, particularly, give us some suggestions and techniques of adjusting our thoughts and feelings in such a way that we can set ourselves en rapport with Universal Existence, which is the Truth of all truths and the goal towards which all beings tend in their wholeness and togetherness, in every stage of their evolution.

It is this knowledge which becomes our guide in the directing of conduct in daily life. It is the ethics of determining and judging the particular in terms of the universal, in the different stages of its manifestation. The higher we go, the greater is the expanse of the universal and the lesser is the cramping influence of the gross particulars or individualities in the world of sense-experience. From the above analysis it will be observed that the base and structure of political administration through the circles of family, community, nationality and the international system of law is a proof of there being a need for higher and higher integrations of environment into a unity of selfhood which is falsely attempted through legal disciplines and outward rules of behaviour in the medium of the space-time manifold. Politics cannot achieve what it simply points to as a signpost in the space-time mechanism which acts as a screen through which we faintly locate what is behind. The march of history shows that life is restless and tends to a more synthesised purpose of rest by means of more integrated organisations of life. The study of history without an insight into the *why* of its processes through the ages would be like dissecting a corpse to know the working of the human organism, or, worse still, an effort to catch the moon visible in the ripples of a river. Sociology, civics, economics and aesthetics are indications of the impossibility to rest merely in one's individuality, personality, body, senses and the legalistic intellect. These limitations are pointed out by the need for organisation, sympathetic behaviour, dependence on

material goods, harmony of perception in art and wholeness of sublime thinking in literature, all which are like ambassadors who represent, but are themselves not, the power for which they stand. The urges for food, accumulation of wealth, sexual gratification, exercising power over others and proclaiming one's name by popularisation are pressures felt within to immortalise one's being, to universalise it, to be supreme above all externality of being and to behold oneself in the objects and unite oneself with them in spatio-temporal self-perpetuation—all which, again, are futile attempts to implant the infinite in the reflected medium of the finite realm of entities isolated by the laws of space, time and cause. The longing for knowledge is an expression of the basic infinitude of consciousness and an indication of its restlessness until this realisation is reached in *being*, and not mere *learning*. The freshness and energy gained from sleep indicates that here one enters, though unconsciously, a wholeness of reality characterised by absence of space, time and externality. Sleep is, thus, an indicator through structural similarity of an experience which totally differs from it in kind. The fear of death proves the immortality of one's essential nature. One cannot cease to exist in one's core; hence, there is dread of the very idea of cessation of being. As the notion of the finite proves the possibility of the infinite, the notion of change a changeless substratum, and the notion of difference the fact of oneness, the abhorrence of the phenomenon of dying is demonstration enough of the potential eternity of the soul. Perception through the senses and cognition

through the mind of objects apparently located in space and time show, by the fact of the 'compresence' of awareness in perception and cognition, that the objects are in tune with the subject in their essence. The stages of the development of modern physics show that the universe, inclusive of the body of the observing subject, is a uniform energy continuum, a space-time continuum of relativity of 'prehension' and 'apprehension' in differing orders of interpenetrating systems and experience, that there is an all-round 'ingression' of mutually determining situations of cosmic significance, which are mistaken for persons and things, and that the knower of all these phenomena has to be a single consciousness, universal in its nature, which knows itself alone, and knows no other, there being nothing outside it. The outcome of all efforts at the acquisition of knowledge by way of the educational process in the fields of art, science, technology and the like is an attempt of consciousness to reach out to a qualitative expansion in larger dimensions characterised by more and more inwardness and totality of comprehension. The ethical principle, or the moral rule, demonstrates the need to recognise a 'kingdom of ends' and urges that things and persons are to be regarded as a sort of selfhood rather than objects—a possibility of achievement when the barrier of the space-time distinction of subjects and objects is lifted. This cannot be done through the codes of ethics and morality, for the rule is only a hint at the existence of a more expanded selfhood as the true being of everything and is not itself a solution to the problem. The formal

religion of the populace is an indication of the necessity to look for, adore and love the *whole* rather than a part of the universe. This tendency is manifest in the desire of the mind to give itself up completely in concentration of a thing, an object, a fetish, a portrait, a symbol, a diagram, an image or a concept conjured up within itself in greater and greater degrees of comprehensiveness. The entire being of man asks for the entirety of existence in all forms of religious enthusiasm, prayer, worship and meditation. But this type of formality in religion does not mean contact with reality, which plays hide and seek through the forms.

The duty of man is what he is obliged to perform in recompense for the services he receives from the world. He depends on other human beings for his food, clothing, shelter and education. He depends on the five elements for water, heat, light, air and his very existence. He depends on the presiding subtler forces behind nature for the integration of his personality and society, forces which regulate even the orbital motion of the planets and the stellar systems.

The lesser the help we take from outside, the lesser is also our obligation and responsibility in the form of duty, and the greater is our freedom, which is attained gradually by stages of overstepping the lower and the grosser in terms of the higher and the subtler, so that when we need nothing at all from outside, we attain supreme liberation.

First, there is a gradual independence gained over our needs from other people. Then comes the

independence over the forces of nature, the limitations of one's individuality. When this is achieved, absolute independence is attained, which is called God-realisation, Reality-experience, etc., wherein one has nothing to gain or lose, nothing to know or learn, nothing to wish or desire for, and nothing to do as a matter of duty or obligation.

From the political state of consciousness to the Absolute it is a rise from one *totality of being* to another, from one *wholeness* to another with greater fullness. This totality or wholeness is the essential characteristic of selfhood, so that it is a rise from self to self, in higher and higher connotations, and there is nowhere, at any stage of evolution, a love evinced for anything other than some stage of selfhood. A pure object is a sheer externality, which can never become the goal of anyone's liking. This rise, however, is from more mechanised types of self to more organised forms of it, until both these categories are transcended in the Absolute Self. The mechanised and organic types are subject to disintegration and annihilation when their components get separated through change in the evolutionary process. The Absolute, alone, is. Everything else is a movement towards it.

At every stage of the advancement of this 'totality' or 'wholeness' of being towards the Absolute, contact with elements which pull the consciousness towards externality as the respective object-forms of any given stage is to be diligently avoided—the forms of consciousness-entanglement detailed in the above

analysis. Students on the path of yoga have therefore to be extremely vigilant in assessing the correct state of consciousness in which they are at any moment in their life and dexterously endeavour to overstep the limits of consciousness by a healthy growth into the next higher stage of reality, through meditation along the lines indicated in these paragraphs.

THE PROGRESS TOWARDS THE ABSOLUTE

The typical man faced with the conflict of life is Arjuna, the hero of the Mahabharata, and the psychological seed behind the gospel of the Bhagavadgita. His position described at the outset of the Mahabharata war is symbolic of the state of mind of every seeker of Truth. While there is a lot of enthusiasm and tumult of courage and emotion to encounter the opposing forces on the eve of setting out for the actual hour of 'strike down' (I. 13-23), there is, when this hour is really at hand, an unexpected change of feeling. The body, vitality, mind and intellect fail him miserably at the crucial hour (29-31). The argument of Arjuna is also the argument of the seeker on the path. It is mainly threefold: First, the opposing forces are not always our ill-wishers but are friends and relatives with whom we have lived for the major part of our life, and to strike them would be a heinous sin (33-37). Second, it is doubtful if this battle with the forces is going to be successful, for one does not know which side will win in the struggle—the seeker may overcome the world, or

the world may overcome him and trample him down for his audacious attempts (II. 6). Third, any opposition to or encounter with our old well-wishers, friends, kith and kin, who are now regarded as foes in the battle of the spirit, may ruin the necessary social structure and one may be setting a bad example to mankind in general (I. 39-44). For these reasons at least, the war of the spirit is an adventure of doubtful value and consequence.

This plea which was put forth by Arjuna harasses the mind of every student of yoga, who finds himself in the midst of well-wishers and friends, whom it would be unworthy to oppose or give up (II. 4, 5); there is the suspicion that the effort may not be successful, and such forces as hunger and thirst, to mention the least, may threaten his very existence; also, men and the world who were with us and were our benefactors cannot easily be faced in a storm and overthrown without a feeling of compunction. This social logic of the sociological mind can be met only with the pointed retort of Sri Krishna stated in the second chapter of the Bhagavadgita and expanded further on in the gospel, in graded steps, until the reach of the grand spiritual apocalypse. The immediate answer to the Arjuna in the seeker is that his understanding is not stable (11); it is biased in favour of his kith and kin with a prejudice of personal relationship, sentiment and emotion, which are the characteristics of the weaknesses of flesh. The understanding of the social man cannot really be regarded as stable, because its argument is always one-sided; it speaks in terms of gains and losses to itself in the realm of loves and hatreds, of 'mine and thine'.

The higher understanding which the true seeker is called upon to entertain is what is known as Sankhya in the Bhagavadgita (39). This understanding has nothing to do with man's usual understanding of right and wrong, or of good and bad, for this latter is a highly affected partisan working in favour of the selfish individuality of sense and ego. What, then, is the higher understanding on which Sri Krishna wishes us to base our yoga of 'skilful action' (50)? It is that rarefied form of reason which does not stoop down to the level of a handmaid to the lower intellect operating in the field of the senses and arguing in favour of its own personal satisfaction (41). This higher reason is the inner spirit revealing itself occasionally in sober individuals with a dispassionate heart. The war of the spirit is not for or against anyone, for the spirit has no friends or foes (38, 45). But, when it is interpreted as a struggle for someone or something, it also, naturally, becomes at the same time against someone or something else. It is this wrong interpretation of the righteous war that led to the dispiritedness of Arjuna, and makes every seeker dejected, disconsolate and melancholy. It is not robbing Peter to pay Paul, but a type of struggle which the human mind cannot easily grasp, due to which reason it is that we find very few succeeding in this inner path of the search for spirit. This is a war not against persons or things but against unrighteousness which tries to defeat the final purpose of things in the world, and, thus, is wholly an impersonal attitude of spirit on behalf of the spirit (II. 48, 50).

This *sankhya-buddhi*, or impersonality of understanding, is, however, difficult of achievement as long as there is a world outside whose very presence makes effort personal rather than impersonal. There cannot be impersonality as long as there is a reality outside. Here is the great problem. But, it is rooted in a misunderstanding of one's relation to the world, due to a commonplace view of things held on the basis of reports received through the senses (43, 44). The senses repeatedly affirm that the world is outside them and is to be dealt with as some sort of an alien object, by developing towards it attitudes of like, dislike or indifference, as a given context may demand. This is precisely what Sri Krishna rebutted as an entirely untenable position grounded in an error of standpoint. The stand which man usually takes in every form of judgment is personal—that sometimes he thinks in terms of family, society and the larger expanse of mankind does not raise his view to anything more than the personal attitude, for collections of individuals cannot be free from the characteristics of the basic unit of individuality, and the so-called humanitarian view can easily be detected as a camouflage of the personal viewpoint of the individual extended to a group similar to him in the way of thinking. What is needed is a thorough change in the viewpoint itself, and not merely an extension of the individual's viewpoint to a larger group of individuals. It is quality and not quantity that makes the difference between the false and the true.

On a reinterpretation of the implications of the human standpoint, and not merely its outer set-up or

form, it is seen that the ordinary man's judgment of things is incorrect, because it is the outcome of a psychological estrangement of the perceiving consciousness from the world of objects. The truth is that the structure of the senses is interwoven with that of the external world and, hence, any special bias in favour of the perception through the senses is uncalled for. Here is the weak point in all the arguments forged by Arjuna at the commencement of the battle. And this is also the weakness of every man in any walk of life, of even the learned and the student of yoga judging and evaluating persons and things through the purely sensory standpoint. 'The properties move among properties' (III. 28), is the aphoristic answer of Sri Krishna to the quandary of Arjuna. The pattern of the senses is governed by the very same properties (*gunas*) of the universal material matrix (*prakriti*) as are the objects that are perceived by the senses. In the light of this analysis of the true position of the perceptual process, a judgment of things is inseparable from a judgment of oneself. Here is the qualitative difference of correct judgment from the quantitative shape of erroneous judgment.

This knowledge may frighten off anyone from making any effort in a world of such a mysterious make. But, says Sri Krishna, 'No one can rest without action even for a moment' (5), and 'One shall be dragged to action by the very structure of Nature' (XVIII. 59). Complexity of arrangement in the process of perception should not deter a person from doing his duty. This wisdom-action is known as Karma-Yoga, a term which

applies to any effort in the world, whether personal or impersonal, material or spiritual. Thus, no one can get out of the law of Karma-Yoga. It comprehends all actions and all processes, whether they are visible or are carried on only invisibly. It is to fight the battle while it is there and not to avoid the battle itself, and this with the mature understanding (*sankhya-buddhi*) of the internal relevance mutually existing between the world outside and the percipient thereof. The endeavour in this direction, however, gets thwarted by the interference of the passions; 'desire and lust (*kama*) and hatred and anger (*krodha*), born of the character of distraction (*rajas*), insatiable, sin-impelling, the one great enemy of man' (III. 37). But there is no cause for fear. The seat of this passion is the network of the operation of the senses, mind and intellect in a collaboration (40), due to which the individual is confounded and does not realise his true relation to the world outside and engages himself in likes and dislikes for things. This knot of collaboration can be broken by the sublimation of sense-energy into the mind, the mind into the intellect and the intellect into the supreme universality of consciousness (Atman) within oneself. Resort to the Atman is the solution for all problems and tensions of life in the world (42, 43).

This is the Sankhya and the Yoga of the Bhagavadgita, explained in a nutshell. The knowledge provided to a seeking soul in this revelation, no doubt, suffices to an extent, for here one comes to know of there being a new meaning hidden beneath the daily processes of life. While this is a powerful aid in living

wisely in the world without the blunders attending upon sense-perception, this knowledge alone will not be enough to face problems of a different kind altogether. Who is to teach the senses that this is the fact beneath their perception? The perceiver himself is involved in the limitations of the senses and, as such, he cannot be expected to admonish the senses or exercise a restraining influence over their fumbling activities. A superior hand has to work in relieving the perceiving consciousness from the tangle and tension of sensory operation. This is the divine hand which moves as the incarnation (*avatara*) of the Supreme Being. Its presence is felt everywhere and there is nothing which it does not touch, nothing to which it does not render succour in every crucial moment, juncture or crisis (*yuge, yuge*) (IV. 8). The purpose of this divine intervention is the establishing of the righteousness of the law (*dharma*) which sustains the universe, and the complete overcoming and transformation of forces which go counter to this law (*adharma*) (7). An insight into this subtle mystery of God working in the world, without the ordinary man usually knowing it, is a great advance in the way of yoga. The common attachments to objects and the strings of affection get gradually snapped on the advent of this new light of knowledge in one's progress to perfection. The Bhagavadgita points out that at this stage a student of yoga achieves three mighty results—viz., a balanced attitude of consciousness (*samatva*) and a special dexterity in executing functions (*kausala*), which is known as yoga; a knowledge that the perceiver and the perceived are not

independent entities as the subject and the object but form an interconnected organism as a single whole (24, 35), which is called *jnana*; and a vision by which is beheld the totality of the universe as a unitary self in which the universality of objects is undividedly present (*atmavattva*) (41).

A further movement of consciousness, by an intensification of meditation, causes its total detachment from all objective sensations, spontaneously, an achievement for which one had to put forth hard effort in the earlier stages of the application of Sankhya and Yoga. Here, all activity becomes a dispassioned sport of free choice and effortlessness. One who is united with the true self (*yogayukta*), of an entirely purified nature (*visuddhatma*), having subdued the urges of the individuality (*vijitatma*), with the senses under a perfect control (*jitendriya*), and beholding oneself in all beings (*sarvabhutatmabhutatma*)—such a one is not attached even by doing everything (V. 7). But, for this fruit, one has to pay a heavy price in the form of restraint over the passions of love and hatred for persons and things (23). There is no other way of gaining this sublime end. And, once this stage of supreme renunciation is reached, one becomes fit for the higher attainment of self-integration by concentration and meditation (*dhyana yoga*) (27, 28). It is here that the disintegrated personality of the first stage gets gathered into a focus of force and energy, plumbs abysmal depths and soars into the empyrean of the unknown.

The law of this vertical ascent of consciousness towards a direct grasp of reality, as different from its horizontal movement heretofore, is the subjugation and determination of the lower self by the principle of the working of the higher Self (*uddharedatmanatmanam*) (VI. 5). God as the higher Self becomes the friend of man as the lower self, when the latter is determined by the law of the former; else, it would look that God disposes everything that man proposes (*varteta atmaiva satruvat*) (6). When God befriends man, the light of the higher Self floods every nook and corner of the lower self; then supervenes the yoga supreme. Herein the mind and the intellect stand together, and the senses return to their source. The Self delights in the Self, beholding the Self by the Self (18, 20). The world of objects gets reflected in the Self and is seen as inseparable from it, bringing about a thoroughgoing equal vision in regard to all things (29). This is the highest yoga which any man can hope to reach by the effort of his consciousness.

The soul now becomes confident of its powers and, like Hanuman, the epic hero, crossing the ocean, takes a leap into the expanse of existence to reach the Absolute, finally, which still remains an 'other' to the meditative consciousness. The visible is not the whole universe, for it extends also into invisible realms. The five elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether form the outer crust of the cosmos and these alone are visible to the senses (VII. 4). But, internal to this region of physical objects are other subtler layers of the cosmos—the cosmos of energy, mind and intelligence. All this is beyond the

reach of the senses and the individual's understanding. Transcendent to even these subtle planes of creation hails God, the Almighty, as the dispenser of justice and the redeemer and saviour of all created beings (5-7). The illusion of sense-perception as the physical world of diversity is hard to pierce through except by resort to the grace of God; there is no other remedy for one's ailment in the form of stark ignorance of Truth (13, 14).

With all this, and even in this stage of supernal experience, God retains His transcendence and seems to be capable of attainment—not in this lifetime of the seeker, but after he quits his body and reaches the other world. Both the individual and the world appear to be so severed from the transcendent Being that He can be reached only after death, beyond this world, by traversing the path of the sun in its northern sojourn (VIII. 5, 6, 8, 12, 13, 24). There is maintained a distinction between the individual (*adhyatma*), the world (*adhibhuta*) and the presiding principle over these (*adhidaiva*) (3,4). The thought at the time of death, and the yoga of meditation practised at that time, determine the nature of the attainment, which remains a futurity to the seeking soul. This 'other-ness' of the goal which remains a theoretical possibility of the future cannot ultimately be satisfying, for satisfaction is a 'present' and not a 'future' to the consciousness. The future is a source of anxiety, as the past is mostly a source of regret and worry. It is the present that brings hope of the materialisation of values and the actualisation of principles.

The hope is rewarded. God now, at yet a higher stage, does not merely remain transcendent but is at the same time related to the world and the individuals as their protector and saviour by His immanence (IX. 4). He is the parent of all beings, looking to the needs of everyone, with great concern. He is the destination, the Lord supreme, the resort and the friend of all beings. He is the beginning, the middle as well as the end of things. He is not only existence but also non-existence and what is beyond both; immortality as well as death, and what can never be conceivable (16-19). The intimacy between man and God is vital and real. God pervades the universe as a whole, as its immanent sustaining force. All beings are stationed in Him, and He is in all beings. He is reached not merely after the death of the seeker; nay, He rushes to save and provide the needs of those who undividedly meditate on Him in their consciousness, here and now (22). This is a great solace to the soul which was up to this time frightened at the transcendent distance of God from itself. In fact, nothing can be nearer than God. This is the realisation and the satisfaction that comes at this heightened level of spiritual experience. As this experience deepens, a newer light brightens up the truth to a greater extent and the presence of God as the supreme immanence in everything becomes more and more a matter of day-to-day perception. He is present in things not merely in a general sense as fire hidden in all substances, but He is seen to be particularly active and specially manifest in all beings of exalted knowledge, power and splendour (*vibhuti*) (X. 41). He is the Soul of

the universe, the origin, sustenance and dissolution of everything, and the magnificence visible in all things of glory (20, 21).

But the grand apotheosis is yet to descend and inundate the very substance and being of the soul. For, till this stage, the presence of God was either of a general character or confined to things of special exaltation and heightened capacity. But this is not wholly true. The truth is that God is really present in His supreme majesty and glory in all things equally, at all times, and everywhere. This is His essential nature and cosmic form (*visvarupa*) (XI. 5-13). God is not merely in all things, but He is, verily, all things (38). This is the revelation which stuns and swallows up personality, individuality and isolated percipience of soulhood, and reigns supreme as the only reality. This experience is not to be had by mere human effort—not by sacrifices, studies, charities, austerities, or activities of any kind (48). Action cannot touch the being of anything, and God is Absolute Being. The process of knowing (*jñatum*), beholding (*drashtum*), and entering into (*praveshtum*) this Being of all beings is whole-souled devotion to it, by which the very self of the seeker is burnt, burnished and consumed in the fire of divine omniscience (54). This great reality is not perceived but experienced (8). It is the real and the only doer, enjoyer, seer and experiencer of everything (32-34). This is the goal of life.

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This grand achievement is the precious fruit of personal spiritual practice (*sadhana*). The effort is fourfold: The wisdom of God as the Absolute (*Brahman*), contemplation on God as Creator, Preserver and Destroyer (*paramatman*), love of God as the benefactor of all beings (*bhagavan*), and service of God as manifest in creation in an attitude of unselfishness (*karmaphalatyaga*). These four approaches to God are technically known as *jnana*, *yoga*, *bhakti* and *karma*, which mean knowledge, meditation, devotion and dedicated action, respectively (XII. 8-11). It is by this practice that the grand vision of God as the Supreme Being is to be transformed into a permanent experience of day-to-day life and not merely had as a flash or a glimpse that comes and goes in moments of ecstasy. Continued practice of a synthesis of these four methods of attunement of oneself to God ensures a life of divinity on earth by a perpetual establishment in God-consciousness (13-19). This is the personal side of spiritual practice. Its social aspect is explained further on, in relation to the world.

It is commonly believed that there is a contradiction between God and the world, and what obtains in God cannot hold good in the world. There has been a distinction unwittingly introduced between eternity and temporality, a situation which has led also to a bifurcation of spiritual life from social and political life, for instance. The spiritual hero is not regarded as being

fit enough to be a political hero or a statesman, and vice versa. The Bhagavadgita is a standing refutation of this misconception regarding the relation between God and the world, which it does not only with its superbly active gospel of spirituality, reason and commonsense, but also by pointedly making its venue a frightful battlefield. Sri Krishna Himself is before us as an immortal example of how the Bhagavadgita is to be lived in one's personal life. What a perfected blending of knowledge, spiritual power, statesmanship, political insight and personal grandeur! Such a personality was Sri Krishna whose life is a perennial commentary on the gospel he taught to mankind, with Arjuna as its occasion. This fact of life, which is the perfected life, being mostly stifled by the sensory view of things, is hidden from the vision of the common man who takes the world for one thing and God for another thing. The teachings commencing from the thirteenth chapter and concluding with the eighteenth, in the Bhagavadgita, are a detailed enunciation of how the vision of the Supreme Being, which opened up in the eleventh chapter and in which an establishment was sought in the twelfth, is to be the sole guide in one's daily life in the world. Here, the realisation of God, instead of abolishing the law of the world, transforms it into a reign of divine wisdom which plants the eternal meaning of the Spirit in the temporal succession of the earth. God and the world do not deny each other but coalesce into a single fact of existence, which is demonstrated in the life of synthesis and perfection lived by the liberated soul (*jivanmukta*).

Towards the achievement of this end, we are initiated into the nature of the knower (*kshetrajna*) and the field of knowledge (*kshetra*). Matter is the field of the activity of the Spirit (XIII. 1). Consciousness is different from the body, as it is also the impartial witness of all other objects. This consciousness is also the universal observer of all things and, thus, omnipresent (2). The field of the activity of consciousness includes both the external universe as the physical objects and ourselves as the psychological subjects (5,6). Though this knowledge was already given in an earlier stage when it was known that the qualities of *prakriti* move among the very same qualities as the senses and mind on one side and the objects on another side (Ch. III), it now comes with a new significance that consciousness is here realised as not merely a witness isolated from its objects but as one organically entwined with the latter, transcending and including both the subjects and the objects. How such an organic connection between the subjects and the objects bearing distinct characters is possible can be evident only when these two related terms are visualised from the standpoint of the Absolute, which is incapable of being designated either as being or non-being, since it is spread out everywhere, not only in all things but as all things, moving and unmoving, living and non-living, active and inactive, visible and invisible (XIII. 12-17). The seeing of all things, within as well as without, by consciousness, is possible because the Absolute as consciousness is a blend of all things within and without, covering everything equally, seeing, hearing, knowing, grasping

and being everything, all at once. Here is given, in this stupendous realisation, a more practical touch to the grand cosmic vision provided at the stage of the eleventh chapter. The inner effort, however, needed to perpetuate this realisation consists in the practice of the ethico-metaphysical virtues of humility born of knowledge, unpretentiousness, unprejudiced regard for all beings, straightforwardness, self-control, equanimity of attitude, love for solitude, and pursuit of the higher enlightenment which substantiates a grounding of oneself in Truth (7-11).

There is, again, a fresh light thrown on this enlightenment. The universe as *prakriti* is not constituted of material substances or tangible objects but is essentially a movement of forces or energies (*gunas*). These forces, again, are not anything which can be equated with forms perceptible to the senses. They are supersensible, and, from the point of view of the senses, virtually 'unsubstantial'; only, they act in certain ways, and it is the action of these forces which appears as the universe of sensory perception. These ways of the universal energy are three: dynamic, inert and equilibrated, known respectively as *rajas*, *tamas* and *sattva* (XIV. 5). The threefold energy binds consciousness to individual experience of passion, delusion and understanding. The junction and disjunction of the forces is the union and separation of beings (6-8). When knowledge rises to this occasion, it enables one to look upon the world not as an object to be dealt with in any manner, but as a sea of forces which has not within it the distinction of inside and outside.

The coming and going of the forces, their union and separation, makes no difference now to the enlightened person. There is no material world obstructing or contending with consciousness. The knower operates upon the cosmic forces and becomes one who has transcended their operative jurisdiction (*gunatita*). The knowing principle (*kshetrajna*) assumes universal sway and the field of action (*kshetra*) becomes only a name that is given to the way in which consciousness manifests itself as forces of nature. The universal knower, not any more an individual perceiver, is the supreme master of the destiny not only of himself but all that there is anywhere—neither elated nor depressed at anything, not taking any personal initiative but cooperating with the cosmos (22-26).

Such a master or adept is the true representative of God in the world—*purushottama* (XV. 18). Sri Krishna was a specimen of this type of superman who ranged beyond the limitations of individual nature, overcoming the forms of externality, whether as the seeing subject or the seen object. He is, verily, Man-God moving in the world. Here we have the complete picture of the Bhagavadgita's teaching, enthroning humanity in the status of divinity and leaving man wholly free in all the worlds. All-knowledge and all-power are His special endowments. Here the principle of duality, of the divine and undivine forces (*daivi* and *asuri sampat*) is confronted directly and resolved for ever. The divine and the undivine are not merely ethical opposites as the good and the bad, with which we are usually familiar in our life, but the first fluctuation of the point of creativity

into the positive and negative poles, which gains suzerainty in all the realms of being—physical, vital, mental, intellectual, moral and social. This polarity of forces, known as the divine and the undivine elements in creation, is totally overcome and resolved into an absolute form of perfection, wherein the conflict between subjectivity and objectivity melts into a unity of positivity of character (XVI. 6, 1-5). Here the psychological distinction of ‘I’ and ‘you’ is transmuted into a limitless selfhood of experience.

There are really no positive and negative forces, from the point of view of a still higher vision. These poles appear to be warring with each other when consciousness remains as a witness of creation. But it has to rise beyond this state of even a witness and enter into the very field and make this field a part of its own being. God has to regard the universe as His very body, for it is not outside Him any more. In that integrated Universal Individual, there cannot be a conflict of the *daiva* and *asura* forces. They are overcome, and there comes the universal attitude of pure perception which is called ‘Faith’ in an intensely supernormal connotation, as a general spontaneous communion with life, and not the ordinary tendency to ‘belief’ in what one cannot understand. This rarefied attitude of *sattva* is contradistinguished from that of the unregenerate nature of *rajas* and *tamas* at the lower levels. The exalted attitude of the highest synthesis in life is symbolised in the mystic phrase ‘Om Tat Sat’ (XVII. 23). The Absolute as the transcendent is ‘Tat’, as immanent it is ‘Sat’, and as a fusion of the two aspects in its all-comprehensiveness it

is 'Om'. There is a greater and greater tendency to unification, universality and non-externalised selfhood as consciousness advances in its march towards perfection. In the state of the cosmic equilibrium of *sattva*, the tripartite force of matter as *prakriti* enters into the body of God as the Supreme Being. Consciousness here, having attained perfection, beholds perfection in the fundamental essence of being.

The perfection of an all-round symmetrical living, with due proportion of emphasis among understanding, determination, feeling and action while living one's life in the world with this supreme enlightenment, makes spirituality commensurate with the world-process in its personal, social, natural and supernatural levels. One's duty towards one's own self is austerity (*tapas*), one's duty towards the world and other people is charitable service (*dana*), and one's duty towards God is a divine dedication (*yajna*). These three obligations are inviolable (XVIII.5). Proportion in the practice of one's duty is to introduce perfection into life. The beholding of a common essence of reality as the imperishable basis of all beings, indivisible though present in everything divided in the world, is the perfection of understanding (20). To see variety, though connected in external relationships, would be imperfect understanding (21). But to take any particular object exclusively, as if it is everything in itself, is the lowest form of understanding, for it is farthest removed from truth, causing attachment and delusion in the mind (22). This is the final analysis of the philosophical foundation of human understanding. In its ethical application, that form of

understanding is regarded as perfect which knows correctly the pros and cons of things, what is proper and improper in any given situation, and what truly constitutes bondage and freedom of oneself as well as others (30). Imperfect understanding confuses stand-points between righteousness and unrighteousness and regards them in their improper significance (31). That type of understanding, however, which mistakes vice for virtue and misconstrues every context and situation in life, is of the worst type (32).

That volitional power by which one restrains the outgoing tendencies of the vital forces, the senses and the mind, by resort to unshaking meditation on Reality, is perfected determination (33). The will which works for personal gains and engages itself in the fulfilment of desires, the acquisition of material benefits and seemingly good efforts for the achievement of these ends, is imperfect determination (34). The will which finds itself incapable of freedom from sloth, fear, grief, despondency and pride is the lowest form of determination (35). The feeling of satisfaction of the perfect kind generally comes in the end, while the effort towards it seems painful and unpleasant; but this is the nature of all pure happiness which stabilises one's personality, fully (37). The satisfaction which looks enchanting in the beginning, due to the restless activity of contact of the senses with objects, is born of an imperfect kind of feeling (38). But the feeling which is of a delusive character, intoxicating due to the operation of the base instincts, attended with fatigue and stupor, leading to blunderous deeds, is brute satisfaction (39).

The process of conduct which takes into consideration all the five factors determining a course in any direction—physical fitness, psychological ability, fineness of instruments, various alternatives of procedure and, above all, the presiding principle of divinity over everything—and does not blind itself to a regard only for the visible aspects of effort in the world, is perfected action (14). When the divine principle superintending over all courses of action, though invisible to the senses, is overlooked, and only the temporal factors are emphasised, action becomes imperfect and leads one to a feeling of egoism born of the ignorance that oneself as an individual and a personality is the real doer of actions (16). The action which is not rooted in the background of like and dislike for things and whereby the intellect does not get deluded into the false notion of agency in action is the purified one; it does not bind the doer thereof. Such action is born of *sattva*, or knowledge (17, 23). An action involving much labour and effort, causing fatigue and anxiety born of desire and self-regard, is the effect of *rajas*, or distraction and lack of composure (24). That which disregards the pros and cons and relevance of factors involved in a situation, regardless of the inconvenience and pain caused to others thereby, inconsiderate also of one's fitness to perform it, merely viewing it from a selfish end born of thorough misconception, is action engendered by *tamas*, or inertia, or stupidity (25).

THE BEARING OF KNOWLEDGE ON SOCIAL LIFE

The properties of the creative force (*prakriti*)—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—work, in various proportions, not only in the individual, but also in society. They work not only in particular bodies, but also in groups of bodies or social formations. In society these properties work as public relations, while in the individual they operate as psychological incentives, motive power and conditions of experience. Society is primarily a set-up of relations established among individuals. Even these relations connecting individuals in a social bond are constituted of the properties. Everything perceptible or conceivable, whether on earth or in heaven, is under the clutches of the properties (XVIII. 40). The multitudinous variety that we see in creation is the work of the properties, which are the basic building bricks of the cosmos. Human society is made up of a community of individuals who come together for a purpose they have in view. The attitudes people develop towards one another are in accordance with the operation of the properties. An attitude may be characterised by *sattva*, *rajas* or *tamas*—calm, disturbing or violent—in various proportions. The properties dash upon the properties in perception as well as activity. It is not the subject perceiving the object, rather it is the properties beholding themselves externally in space-time.

Any definite manifestation of knowledge, capacity or conduct in life is an expression of the preponderance

of a particular property of *prakriti*. It is this predominance of the properties that is responsible for the formation of groups, communities and even nations. Individuals form themselves into societies to fulfil a particular aim or interest. Birds of the same feather flock together. No one is born as a social being, for at birth no one belongs to anyone else. The relationships start later on due to the working of the properties through the bodies, senses and mind, in an active manner. The inborn inadequacies and weaknesses of the human individual make it impossible to live without cooperation from others. The primary weakness of human nature is selfishness, which takes many forms such as desire to subjugate others, exploiting others, dishonest behaviour with others and, in the end, battle with others. Conflict is essentially born out of non-regard for the value and existence of other persons and things. Even when groups of individuals join together in a large proportion for a common purpose, the selfish root of individuality does not get obviated; it only gets strengthened by association with sympathetic yearnings. This is especially the case with groups formed mainly for political purposes and practical convenience of interested communities. But the higher purpose of the grouping of human beings into social categories is different: it is to check one another in the expression of selfish attitudes and thereby cooperate with and help one another for a purpose beyond the form either of the individual or group.

The capacity for such cooperation depends upon one's knowledge and power to execute action. This

consideration of human characteristics coagulates into the system known as *varnashrama-dharma*, or the righteousness underlying the logical gradation of the categories of people socially as well as individually. The social categorisation of people into spiritual power, political power, economic power and man-power is what is known as *varna-dharma*. The gradation of individual duties in relation to one's internal development and growth in the process of evolution through the stages of a life of continence, normal fulfilment of desires, non-attachment and spiritual integration, is *ashrama-dharma*. These principles operate for the reconstruction of society. Manpower provides the necessary material for an enterprise. Economic power provides the means of work and of the utilisation of manpower. Political power provides the organisational structure to protect and stabilise the value that is produced through economic power and manpower. Such protection includes not only defence against outside attacks but also internal security and promoting of cultural growth in its various levels. All this is the function of the administrative, governmental or political constitutions. And yet, with all these, there can be a serious handicap if there is no restraint exercised over the methodical operation of the systems of administration, material economy and the working forces. This restraining power and directive intelligence is provided by the spiritual regeneration and knowledge with which people are endowed. It is clear that these four classes of human understanding and effort are

really the four facets of the single crystal of organic functioning in consolidated human society (41-46).

The concept of society in this context should not get restricted merely to the notion of mankind we have usually in our minds. Creation as a whole is a single society, and our duties, according to *varna* and *ashrama*, have reference not only to the things of this earth but of the whole universe. In the light of this vision, the necessity for the performance of each one's duty to the best of one's knowledge and capacity, for the highest good of the whole, directed through stages, and the mutual obligation that should obtain among one another in this vast set-up of the universal environment, is obvious. It is by this vision of universal action that the Supreme Being is adored in one's life (46). The perfection attained is, thus, to be manifested in social life. In this magnificent concept of social duty, the individual, community, nation, world and the entire universe get integrated in the Absolute which is seen in and through all these degrees of reality. This is the performance of the cosmic sacrifice in its supreme inter-relatedness—which is duty par excellence in its comprehensiveness (III. 9-16).

In the eighteenth chapter of the Bhagavadgita, which is its final teaching, there is a summation of the individual's duties (XVIII. 5, 14, 20, 30, 33, 37), social duties (41-46, 78), the constitution of nature (40) and the spiritual discipline necessary for God-realisation (49-55, 61, 62). Thus, the synthesis of the approach to life hinted herein points to the vast gospel of the subject

of yoga in eighteen steps of the movement of consciousness to perfection. The call for renunciation of all relativistic duties in one's resort to the supreme duty of attaining universal integration (66), and the beautiful blend of the characters of the universal and the individual in the daily life of the world (78), bring into relief the high watermark of this stupendous teaching. As the relinquishment of every function, relationship and value of dream in the waking awareness is only a growth into a higher reality and not an abandonment of anything substantial or meaningful, the surrender of empirical values, connections and duties in a transcendent universality of attitude is an entry into reality rather than the forsaking of what is true and is of any significance. This core of man's supreme heritage, duty and goal in life is the eternal message of the 66th verse of the last chapter. And the divine gospel concludes with its parting advice, which shines as a pendant in the garland of the Lord's Song, that, wherever is a conscious and voluntary confluence of the Absolute and the relative, knowledge and action, grace and effort, there do excel in their glorious ascension, without doubt, all values of life—prosperity, victory, happiness and established polity.

CONCLUSION

All endeavour, of any kind, involves three stages: theory, practice and attainment. The Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita are systematic treatises on these three processes of consciousness, the latter particularly being

designated under this scheme as the science of reality (*brahmavidya*), the practice of self-discipline and meditation (*yogasastra*) and the union of the individual and temporal with the universal and eternal (*Krishna-Arjuna-samvada*). The seeker of Truth should not be in a haste. He has, first of all, to conceive and arrange his ideas of the principles on which the efforts are to be built up. Secondly, he has to plant these systematised principles in his own personal life as the central constituents of his very existence and activity, thereby transforming his day-to-day life into an embodiment of the fundamental principles contemplated earlier and established in consciousness. Thirdly, there should be a patient waiting for the result to follow, whatever be the time this fructification of effort may take. Care, however, has to be taken to see that the practice is flawless, dispassionate, free from all ulterior motives unconnected with the aim, and that the principles underlying the practical process have really got soaked into one's being. With these conditions fulfilled, the goal is certain to be attained, like the ripening of the fruit in a tree that has slowly grown into maturity.

