

HUMAN CONFLICT AND THE

SOLUTION OF THE GITA

To us, especially the Hindus, the Bhagavad Gita is a treasure trove of wisdom, and a weapon that will help us to cut firmly the roots of the tree of unwisdom. To be permitted to participate in this worship of the most wonderful Gita is verily a privilege equivalent to having been permitted into the company of the Good.

Very eminent saints have spoken of the philosophy and the Yoga of the Gita. But its universal character defies all attempts to exhaust its significance and its meaning to man. It is a book of instruction which, though addressed to a representative man of the ancient age, has been found to grant solace, fortune, liberation and finally wisdom of love of the Divine. Whoever went to the Lord Krishna returned without his gift? Whoever sought refuge in the Lord did not find it in Him? The Gita was taught by the Lord to be an instruction to the World, and its universal message is to man. But sorely not all turn to the Gita. For the Gita is a book for those who have been presented with conflict, a debacle in mental, vital and physical, or have met with a collapse in ethical and social and political life, or have suffered a terrible revulsion from life because of transitory nature of all existence, values and relations. It is therefore a book for those who have met face to face the catastrophe of being in all its forms. For them it has been a refuge and a mother, a light that leads through the mazes of conflict.

The setting of the Gita is vast political conflict, the Great War. The parties, though belonging to a single family and culture, and divided into two camps of the haves and have-nots. Inevitably the issue had to be decided by combat, wherein the defeat of the haves was certain, for reasons certainly not based on having but on not sharing what was common. The haves had no compunction of conscience. They were there to hold what they had or got and to defend it. It is the sign of the Arjuna, one of the exiled and expropriated ones, to be stimulated so to speak, to an imaginative reconstruction of the future, of the consequences that would have had to be faced after the victory was won. This along with the urgency and immediate need to destroy all that

one had more precious than life itself, led to terrible, if not unexpected and violent break-up of his personality. A rude and dreadful shock resulted when he looked upon the battle-field. One part arrested the action that had been deliberately decided upon by all. An abstract problem or liquidation of the enemy in a righteous War was not terrifying ; but when the actual destruction had to be executed, a social sense of values intruded into the picture and set up inner conflicts. The result of this intrusion was collapse (*visada* or sorrow, loss of poise). The righteousness of War appeared to become unrighteous. As Yamunacarya put it trenchantly, the problem was not that the wrong appeared to be right, as in illusion due to but that the right appeared to be wrong, a reverse illusion due to ignorance (an illusion that the organic body is the soul). But this collapse was a sign of a revulsion from the contemplation of the consequences imagined by Arjuna. (How terrifically true his imagination was could well he discerned in the revulsion to sovereignty after the war displayed by Yudhisthira). It was in fact a sentimental revulsion, a raja sic revulsion as Śrī Aurobindo calls it, not the enlightened movement of the individual's consciousness but a disruptive, regressive, dark reaction. Psychoanalysts know this activity of the unconscious mind : it is one of the greatest casuists which will clothe our un wisdom with reason and support it by a conscientious parade of some moral principle.

The outer setting of the Great Conflict was the occasion, not so much for a heart searching , as a stimulus for the setting of the disintegrative process of the personality. An inner conflict is normally impossible without an outer conflict. Śrī Krishna's refrain of advice to Arjuna to fight and win sovereignty, to fight and if killed attain svarga, or if victorious to achieve sovereignty of the earth only reiterates a point of great practical importance in the direction of the best solution of the disintegration that had started within Arjuna. The unconscious impulsion within Arjuna fostered so long could not be repressed by any violent means. Even violence cannot and should not to violently stemmed.

Dr . S. K Mitra in a contribution on the subject of conflict in the Gita several years ago wrote "The central fact with which the Gita starts and which it always keeps in mind through all its 8 chapters is the presence of the Conflict. It is this which gives it its ethical character". He proceeds to maintain that every chapter of the Gita presents us with

a problem of conflict, reading the meaning of Yoga in each chapter- heading to be solution. This description is ingenious but appears to be extravagant. It is true that there are mainly three conflicts which the master sees in the vital conflict of Arjuna. Firstly there is the conflict between Nature and Man, (body and soul), the second conflict is the conflict between mind and soul, the third conflict is between soul and God: or if we dislike the metaphysical manner of this presentation, they can be transformed into the conflicts of Action and Jnana (renunciation) jnana and bhakti, and yet we might need the help of metaphysical categories to explain the nature of the conflicts. Psychological or naturalistic explanations cannot fully help the solution of the conflicts in human life, much as we may dislike the metaphysical. To grapple with the problem of Arjuna's collapse, a direct assurance of the promise of victory would have been cynical ; to explain that the consequences would not be as catastrophic as he imagines would have been vain. It is the question of the sinfulness on the one hand, and social debacle and confusion on the other.

Accordingly he proceeds to show that the moral conflict rises from the contemplation of consequences and the theological conflict from the contemplation of sin from the killing of men. Śrī Krishna's solution is not complete at this point. Firstly he argues that death is inevitable to all embodied creatures. Even when death occurs at the hands of other individuals, it is only the body that is slain and never the soul ; there is no killer and killed ; and if one considers that he was the killer and the other was killed it is ignorance. The bodies are different from the soul, to identify the soul with the body is a mistake. There is no sin in an act that is of a righteous order. But what is the righteous act ? it is at this point that the analysis of the problem becomes important. If bodies are valueless and if souls are valuable and eternal, there must be a principle which grants value to the soul , and this value is to be found in the individual not by any process of clinging to the body and its apparatus but by an abstraction and discrimination of the categories of being. All activities of is now shown to proceed from the Nature that is linked with the soul as its body. But this contemplation of the activities of Nature is possible only through cultivation of detached action, by performance of actions which are of the satvika- order, that are deprived of the fertility of the passion and desire nature which cloud the understanding and lead to delusion.

Thus we find that Arjuna does not return to the contemplation of the consequences of sin of killing or the sin that might result from the confusion of social relationships which are the aftermath of every war. Thus a preliminary counsel to do the works which are ordained according to one's station and with an impersonal sense of its inherent rightness, and a detachment from its fruits is what every individual soul should cultivate. Renunciation of action is wrong, difficult and unnecessary. Anasakti Yoga or nishkama-karma- yoga is verily jnana yoga, for it develops the inner vision and clarity of otherness from matter or Nature or body and makes one observe with equanimity its action. Duty, further when done without attachment to its fruits does not cause fear. No sin can result. Kama karma alone binds. Karma does lead to ignorance and sin when it is motivated by desire. Of course not all action that is done without conscious desire for fruits would become nishkama-karma, for we have to reckon with actions unconsciously motivated. Śrī Krishna was addressing a cultured and trained law abiding man, who knew the ways of duty thoroughly though as his own brother Yudhisthira (in the Rajadharma) tells Arjuna that he did not learn of the ways of true living or the higher truths from masters by the ordained method -- *pranipatena pariprasnena sevayam*. Here was a conflict of a higher order than life and death, body and soul, rather, life is shewn to be but the conjunction of a perishing nature (apara-prakriti or avyakta or avyaya) and the aksare (para-prakriti) the unchanging constant soul, a conjunction that neither sacrosanct nor capable of being permanent. The conflict of an inner conscience and an outer law is a conflict of the soul- nature with the customary morality, the preservation of which was the duty cast on him. It was not merely a conflict of law with life but also a conflict of one type of law with another type of law or between laws belonging to two different levels of being or stations of existence. The choice between them was most difficult to make, but it had to be made and the consequences were not less drastic. To us moderns it is as urgent and imperatively demanding a solution as it was Arjuna, though we are neither having the reverence for the law of outer morality nor the inward awakened sense of a superior morality of the soul, which are usually defined negatively as *ahimsa*, *asteya*, *aparigraha*, *sauca*, *brahmacarya*. The social conflict is transformed into an individual conflict; the adhibhautika or natural or social disturbance is shewn to demand the understanding of the individual embodied beings which is an inner solution, an

adhyatmika solution. An escape from the solution is to abandon the struggle and permit the evil to work itself out. Said Jesus "Resist not evil" and hoped that evil would wither away for lack of opposition. Opposition breeds on opposition, violence on violence. Little obviously did he hope that mankind would devise a way by which opposition could posit an opposite and begin to slay it. Hegelianism and Fichte and Modern Dialectical Materialism have made use of this technique of opposition in practical politics. Create an opposition and then slay it : that is progress. Renunciation of conflict would not help one. Withdrawal of oneself from the conflict is more and more rendered impossible in modern totalitarian states. All that one could do is to withdraw oneself from attachment to the fruits of actions ordained to be done by our station and nature. In that there can be no sin. Śrī Krishna indeed gives such an advice. Renunciation of action is impossible and undesirable. All work must partake of the character of sacrifice, *yajna*, with a profound difference, that all such sacrifice must be offered to the Divine without their fruits being sought. Thus sacrifices and actions must be done, without attachment and for the Divine. The first step is given, and the completion of the *Karma-yoga* lies in the doing, of things as worship and as offering. So too our knowledge of Nature (*jnana* or *samkhya*) is by itself the beginning of detachment from *prakṛti*, but its fulfillment is not knowledge of soul alone as liberated from the veils of *Maya* but its devotion to the All, the transcendent *Purusottama*. Thus *Karmayoga* leads to the same destination as the *jana yoga*, namely the devotion and knowledge of the *Purusottama* (*Bhakti*). They are inseparable though distinguishable. Those who treat these three *yogas* as different and put them up as opposed to each other or superior to each other have not discovered the inner integral secret of the teaching of the Master of Yoga. But obviously such a discovery of their inseparable unity is possible only to one who has been a victim of a disintegrating experience and fear, more mortal than mortality itself. To such a person the meanings of action and knowledge and devotion would all be in jeopardy. Surrender and refuge are the terms that he thinks of. *Prapatti* is the secret of the discovery of the integral Yoga. However much the pragmatic man may seek a solution in a materialistic manner he can never be satisfied with it. Why should man get involved or what is the principle which works itself in and through him? A causal explanation is the philosophic, or shall we say a scientific need, using the word science

in a very wide sense. The dyad of the Nature and soul is the unit of life, dyad in which the two appear to be opposites. But we can never introduce, despite our Hegelian attractions, a dialectic of opposites as all explanation of growth. It is too mechanical to be of any use in regard to facts of moral and metaphysical life, if we may so speak of the transcendent conception of all existence.

Śrī Krishna instead of treating the conflict as a linear or horizontal struggle of material and social forces or of the individual and society seeking to embody material values, calls upon Arjuna to understand the nature of the highest personality or Purusottama and His relation to the individual on the one hand, and the material Nature on the other. But this is possible only to some types of beings. As a transcendental psychoanalyst, unlike our materialist psychoanalysts, instead of creating a typology based on physique and chemique and abnormal personality-disintegrations and with special reference to the unconscious and the vital, Śrī Krishna formulated double typology: a typology that is based on the hormic conception of the soul, and a typology based on the structure of ignorance and direction of the soul. Accordingly the hormic types are of four kinds: the *arta*, *artharathi*, *mumuksu* and *jnani* the distressed one, the seeker after fortune (*preyas* so to speak), the seeker after liberation and finally the seeker after God-live (*para bhakti*) (*sreyas*)¹. All these four types may be considered to be determined by the concept of end rather than the means, though the first is obviously the one under consideration and chosen for instruction by Śrī Krishna in the Gita.

The second typology referred to in a later chapter in the Gita is directional. There are two types namely, the *daiva* and the *asura*. This of course has no reference to the *devayana* and *pitrayana*, but to those who are moving towards the Divine and those who are moving away from it to Darkness, to sunless worlds. Arjuna is assured by the Master as belonging to the *daiva* type.

There is yet a third typology which is social and functional, and in the context of Arjuna, this plays as important a role as the other two, though much subordinated since it depends on the material factor of birth and station. But caste typology or even class

typology has at the present day only an antiquarian interest. However this also is utilized at the beginning as an argument urging Arjuna to fight as he was a ksatriya, and again at the end of all these discourses he is shewn that if he did not fight then, the fight would be forced on him by the Svabhava (Nature both external and internal)

¹ It is a matter of great importance to recognize that this difference is that which distinguishes the Katha and the Gita. Naciketas was a seeker of the Sreyas, but Arjuna was a seeker after Preyas, however much enlightened he was. Śrī Krishna's often uttered exhortation, "*Hata va prapsyasi sargam jitva va bhoksyase mahim*" reveals His deep understanding of Arjuna's nature

Svabhavajena Kaunteya nibaddhas svena karmana

Kartum necchasi yan mohat karisyasy avasopi tat.

(XVIII 60:)

Every disintegration of the normal personality involves an integration, as Dr. Brown has said. Modern psychoanalysis shows that the abnormal is a type of reintegration of a disintegrated mental-vital-physical synthesis (unity) that deliberately and vitally utilizes unconsciousness and forgetfulness and ignorance in its machinery of integration. Psychoanalysts seek to break up this abnormal integration by conscious analysis and integration by waking consciousness. On the other hand the Yoga Psychoanalytic process, as in Śrī Krishna's seeks a metaphysical or sacramental synthesis or integration, which would utterly abolish every element of unconsciousness, forgetfulness and passion in any of its integrations and not merely lift up the repressed elements to the level of the waking consciousness.

The consciousness or awareness, should we say, of the insufficiency of a particular code of conduct involves a search for a better or more fundamental code of being, it is the lack of this makes most men indifferent morose, cynical. But no amount of humanism or activism can adequately provide a solution to the distress of the loss of a code of ethics on which one had placed unbounded faith. When faith is lost all is lost,

and to lost faith in one's own humanity is a dire thing. But to lose faith in the essential divinity within each thing, both in man and nature is a far greater loss than the loss of faith in oneself and one's greatness. This is the significant truth which Śrī Krishna discovers for Arjuna. The ego which is the function (*dharma or amsa*) of the Divine All, must shed its conceit or independence and allness, a concept which has its roots in the relationship brought about by the Will of the Divine with the Nature (*ksetra or prakrtior svabhava or avyakta*). The inner and more fundamental agency or root-agency of the Divine (*ksetrajna*) has to be known and asserted through the inner detachment of the ego from the fruits of the operations of the Divine in Nature, operations which apparently pass through it. This is the release through works, supported by knowledge of the real causal personality. Such action not only does not bind but release by providing more and more illumination to the soul till it begins to shine with a solar-light. The understanding of the creator cannot be complete without the understanding of the creator or in the language of the mystics, the knowledge of the soul is complete only when there is the knowledge of the Godhead and His infinite Nature. The universal quality of this statement is such that whether it is the eastern Rsi or western saint the understanding of the finite is impossible without the comprehension of the infinite. But such an understanding of the Infinite demands not merely the knowledge of its inexhaustible attributes but also its transcendence over them ; and the relation of the infinite to the finite demands that the finite should grow into the consciousness of the Infinite and the Universal everywhere. The most exquisite exposition of this point cannot assure the finite of that except by a perceptual experience, a direct supernormal perception, *divya pratyaksa* of the Divine, Most writers thus miss the importance of the conflict between perception and *sabda*, and between perception and inference when they seek to treat lightly the *Visvarupa-darsana*. Even like Nala, we are seeking a perceptual demonstration. *Pratyaksa* is the only solvent of disbelief and the culmination of belief. The aim of knowledge is to make things perceptible to us in their essence. This is not a materialistic attitude. The only difference between the gross materialist and the scientific man and the mystic, lies in the fact that the former two want that the supra-sensory and supra-mental must come to them for verification on the sensory level, whereas the mystics have held that perception can be either sensory or

supersensory or both, the latter being however integral knowledge, *satya*, whereas the former is partial or fragmentary knowledge. Secondly, the knowledge of the Infinite is possible only through a total dedication and surrender to it. Even then the realization of the darsana of the Super mental or supersensory illimitable form, Visva-form of the Divine, is almost a gift of the and studies. The individual finite should perceive the Divine as the Transcendent, and the Visva and the Avatar and the antaryamin of all. It is not enough to know and the Divine as the Transcendent alone, for it is impossible to understand how it could relate itself to the finite. It is not enough to know the Divine as the Visva alone or mere Nature, (Śrī Krishna indeed shows that all creatures and worlds, gods and men and all are in just a portion of His Manifest Visva, all pervading form, within whom all events take places as in Time), for it would lead to the feeling of helplessness and make God equivalent to Nature and the souls, a mere sum of these so to speak. The knowledge of the Divine as a historical figure, an establisher of the right and teacher of truth by itself gives us no assurance of His capacity to save or redeem us unless He is far above us and is array or flood or power of the Infinite projected directly into the temporal and natural scheme. Otherwise there might not be much difference between souls and the Avatar, a fact so finely stated by Śrī Krishna himself describing how He in His own time was considered by most men of His time albeit eminent. The Gita teaches the selfness of God in all as inner reler, Antaryamin, also, but if this be the Divine or the Cosmic causality or the redeeming and saving Avatar would be beyond the comprehension of the human individual, and the worship of all creatures might well result, due to loss of perception of the essential human. Thus anthropomorphism, naturalism and pantheism are but partial truths. An integral understanding of the Deity is what the Lord teaches in the Gita (especially in the second satka – chapters VII to XII).

Some modern scholars hold that the Gita is not aware of the Pancaratra-exposition of the Nature of the Deity : it is true there is no mention of the names of the four vyuhas such as Vasudeva, Sankarsana, Pradhyumna and Aniruddha : obviously because the names of his son and grandson cannot be equated with the Cosmic Vyuhas, as Śrī Krishna is clearly speaking about His own status as Vasudeva. The great and profound utterance which a mahatma alone makes that all this is Vasudeva – *vasudevah sarvam iti*—expressed the fact that Vasudeva indeed is the Transcendent, Vasudeva is

Visvamurti, Vasudeva is the Isvara, in all creatures and Master of Nature both higher and lower, and Vasudeva is the son of Vasudeva, the historical avatar who incarnates age after age for the protection of the righteous and annihilation of the unrighteous and the establishment of the Dharma, the right order and the reign of divine law, and the proper mode of works . If this is not the Pancaratra conception Deity, what else?

The pratyakas darsana of the fivefold form is possible only to one who has devoted himself in all his parts and who has surrendered himself and all to the Lord and has developed love for God so intensely as not to be able to live apart from Him. Separation from, His consciousness should prove an intolerable burden even as the Alvars had felt. The divine should become the thing which one lives by, breathes by and does all organic functions even. The famous upadesa,. *Manmana bhava madbhaktho madyayi mam namskuru and yat karosi.....yad juhosi.....yat tapsyai.....tat kurusva madarpanam* is the method of devotion through knowledge which leads to the divinising of the consciousness of the finite being, and an infinitesimal of its capacity in knowledge and enjoyment and a perfecting of the peace and fulfillment of the higher nature of the Divine even in the scheme of apara-prakti. The reiteration of the Lord that even here one has to experience the unshakable peace, the status of the Highest state of illumination and the existence beyond the pains pleasure, measure and association of the opposites and the qualities, is a- pieces with the Vedic optimism '*ihaiva bhavati*'. There is no way to peace other than through self-restraint desire less action and devotion to the Divine in all His forms. Here is a universal word , to whomsoever it might be, if only be seriously in distress, or seeks mastery and nature and fortune or liberation or divine gnosis which is of the form of devotion to the integral Divine. If he offers himself up to the Divine , surrenders his being and leaves himself unto His care, the Divine takes him up. To go beyond conflict one should surrender to the Divine , the, not, only one passes out of the distress of conflict but is granted that faith and strength and perception of the Divine's Grace which help him onward to the perfection of his nature. As Śrī Aurobindo has put it "The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their part, to the Divine. For them, the calm, the light, the powers the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the height of knowledge , the seas of Ananda." This is the translation of the greatest promise to the

Divine master- *sarvadharmam parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja; aham tva sarvapapebhyo moksayisyami ma sucah*. Do not grove. The conflict with relatives, with social ideals, with lower natures, with fear of sin and action and renunciation and every known conflict natural or social, individual and personal, or supernatural or divine (*adhibhautika, adhyatmika, and adhidaivika*) requires the individual to surrender to the omnipresent. Prapatti is the sign of humility, willingness to receive instruction. There can be no fulfillment of Yoga, not to speak of a beginning of it till this loss of ego-sense actually takes place.

Before I conclude permit me to state what I consider to be the greatest contribution that the Gita has made to human redemption.

The individual has to be remade. This could be done properly only by the direct power of the Divine Lord, His Grace. The individual becomes a particular medium of the universal divine excellence, as an instrument of the Divine wherein the Divine exhibits Himself as a vibhuti. By this remaking by the Divine the conflicts that the human individual has been heir to and deemed to be un-surmountable are resolved and the feels liberated and fulfilled. Both in Nature and in himself, the individual feels delight of the presence of the blessed presence and above all gets the 'sense of reality' or intrinsic worthiness. He gets the brahma-bhava.

In the social order of Nature, this realization of the individual would result in the recognition of the unity of law and love, for the individual attains to the state of perceiving the Divine (Krishna) in all and all in the Divine (Krishna)- *yatanto yoginascaimam pasyanti atmanyavasthinam* (XV. 11) *yo mam pasyati sarvatra sarvam ca mayi pasyati* (VI). The lower dharmas are transformed by the realization of the one supreme dharma of love of God in all, which is the status of jnani. A sense of spirit-equality (*samatva*) would inform all minds and action of individuals. A fraternity would emerge because of *anasuya* non-jealousy and non-covetousness. It may appear to moderns utopian, but for nothing less had the Master given his promise-*pratijanihi na me bhaktah pranasyati*. A true society cannot but be based on the character and perfected

culture of each of the individuals comprising it. Divinity made or evolved men would be a society of real humans.

Some hold that a true society must be based on dharma and that there are differences between personal dharma and social or political dharma. They further hold that cultivation of dharma fosters the digitization of man. This is true for the greater part of mankind. For the solution of human conflicts demands the understanding of the more and more impersonal nature of law and therefore its universality. For the Gita only the universality. For the Gita only the Divine knowledge can foster the knowledge of the highest dharma, and the method is more love of God the universal Purusottama, as a personality beyond all the distinctions and levels of every order of life. For those who seek knowledge (jnana) the love of God is the only *dharma*. for without it they cannot exist – this is the *satya-dharma*. Rationalists and absolutists hold that dharma of the Absolute can exist apart from God and is higher than God and sovereign, and it is that which makes God just and true. The import of the teaching of the Lord leaves us in no doubt on this point. The lord is never tired of asking Arjuna to surrender to Himself and do everything as offering to Him.

There seems to be no other way than to recognize the Divine Purusottama, the Supreme Being and person, can be not only the saviour in being things but in the smallest and through this knowledge our liberation from ignorance, from sorrow, from bondage to recalcitrant matter and mind, and our evolution to a higher and diviner nature could be attained. He the Divine leads the soul who has sought Him or who has devoted himself to Him to greater and greater clarities of dharma and remakes him in His own nature.