

Lectures

ON

Bhagavad Gita.



andit Bhawani Shankar.

ON
Bhagavad Gita
By
Pandit Bhawani Shankar
With
A Foreword by
Babu Upendra Nath Basu.

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" This is not the place to speak of him as he is to those who love him, nor to intrude into the sanctities of a singularly noble and happy family life. A man of high spirituality, of spotless character, ever seeking to serve, to uplift, to bless, Upendranath Basu will long remain in the hearts of his friends and compatriots as an exceptionally high example of pure and lofty manhood."—
DR. ANNIE BESANT, in THE THEOSOPHIST 1910.

Foreword.

ॐ तत् सत् ब्रह्मणे नमः ॥
गीता सुगीता कर्त्तव्या किमग्यैः शास्त्रं बिन्दतैः ।
या स्वयम् पद्मनाभस्य मुखपद्मं विनिसृता ॥

Sing well the Lord's song
That from the lotus lips of Him
Of lotus-navel hath sprung.
What need of scriptures many and long?

Verily the Bhagavadgita is a poem of inestimable value to the earnest seeker alike of divine wisdom and ethical enlightenment ; and language is all too poor adequately to depict its exquisite beauty and superb grandeur. Within the small compass of 700 mellifluous verses it comprises wondrous solutions, for well-nigh all known types of thinkers, of the most intricate problems that either puzzle the brain or perplex the conscience of man. It is a

beacon to the storm-tossed vessel in the shoreless ocean of life, a pole-star to the soul Godward bent. One's voice is hushed at the very thought of expounding its profound philosophy. Yet many and various have been its commentators and exponents, and innumerable the hearts and minds they have soothed and illumined by their several interpretations. Not only has it poured healing balm upon spirits weighed down by doubt and despair and hearts agonized by grief and misery, but it has also quenched with nectar the thirst of the transcendentalist, and blessed the devotee with vision beatific. Indeed, so catholic is its religion, so all-encircling its ontology that the theist and the rationalist, the pragmatist and the agnostic have all their cozy nooks in it side by side, and in its singular solidarity they may find a ready bond of union. Nor even need the politician or the sociologist turn away hungry and disappointed from its hospitable Hall.

As sunshine and rain are to trees and plants, so are the teachings of the Gita to the whole self of man. Like unto the still waters of a dreamy mountain-lake embosoming the infinite

sky with its countless stars of immensely different magnitudes and distances equally vast and varying. this marvellous booklet infolds in its altruistic embrace the faith and science, the emotion and intellect, the wisdom and learning of all ages and climes. Its transparent pages mirror all the luminaries, great and small, dim and bright, that have ever bespangled or do still adorn the blue deep of the human mind. And behold, they do not stand independent and isolated here, but are fondly locked in one another's arms like kith and kin. As if by magic all schools of thought, all sects and creeds, in bitter contest elsewhere are, within its charmed circle, most dexterously organised and synthesized into one magnificent University, one cosmopolitan Church,—explaining and reconciling all dogmas and paradoxes, melting and fusing all inconsistencies and contradictions. It is rightly named the song of the Lord; for, all melodies, all notes of the gamut in every pitch and scale blend here in an entrancing harmony. It is the one monumental poem that bears irrefutable testimony to India's ancient glory. It is also India's greatest gift to the world; and what Schopenhauer said of

the Upanishads regarding himself may with equal truth be spoken of the Gita in respect of humanity at large.

It is no wonder therefore that fresh tracts and new volumes are ever pouring in upon its sacred theme, as if to proclaim the fact that its depth is unfathomable, and the last word can never be said about it. Each earnest student discerns something novel in it, novel to him at any rate, and if his heart is kindled with love of his kind he naturally longs to share the joy and benefit of his discovery with his fellow men. Thus has Gita literature swelled year by year, and may now constitute a library by itself. Strange as it may sound, the Biologist of to-day will be staggered in his self-gratulation when he is told that his latest inductions and deductions relating to metabolism and catabolism are all foreshadowed in its genesis of the world,—a genesis, which one might venture to aver, will firmly withstand the meticulous scrutiny of even a reincarnated Bain and Spencer.

The present treatise consists of a brief outline of only a few out of numerous discourses

given from one end of the country to the other by Pandit Bhawani Shanker, the veteran Theosophical lecturer, well known to, and much loved and respected by Indian fellows of the T. S. Those discourses had such a pure and ennobling influence on his audiences, and our venerable brother, Sir Subramani Iyer, was so struck by the world-disgust and God-hunger they stimulated in the attentive listener that he more than once expressed a strong wish that full notes should be taken of them, so that with the necessary touching up they might eventually be brought out in book-form,—he with the gracefulness, all his own, undertaking the financial responsibility for the publication. But the paucity of stenographers in those days at the several T. S. Branches at which the dear Panditji spoke prevented our taking immediate advantage of this generous offer. At long last, however, it became the pleasant duty of the Independent League of the T. S. with the aid of its Calcutta Branch to carry out only a fragment of the learned Dr. Subramani's idea. The demand for a second edition of the pamphlet thus presented to the public is, in the absence of any endeavour whatever to promote its

circulation, the best proof of its intrinsic worth.

But the reader must not look in it for either the hair-splitting arguments of mediæval theologians or the scholarly disquisitions of Telang, Tilak, Aiyangar & Co., nor yet for the comprehensive penetration of Subba Row or the metaphysical acumen of the Dreamer. This thesis will introduce him to a very different and far more enraptured scene,—a scene where the eye, tired and aching with the lurid glow and galvanic vibrations of a splendid but rapidly revolving Cinema, finds relief and rest in the cool and gentle radiance of the moon as she reposes meditatively on the green banks and soft-hued beds of sweet scented flowers in the garden of Paradise. For, the author is no mean denizen of this gross planet, but a rover of empyrean space, a dweller on “the floor of heaven thick inlaid with patines of bright gold”, and is thus able to shed on us the mellowed light which his Bhakti and Vairagya have distilled from those resplendent spheres. His whole career has been an assiduous preparation for this delightful service, which he joyously renders

to all sincere seekers of eternal verities and the life immortal.

A glance at the self-imposed hardship and discipline of that uncommon career will be both interesting and profitable to the reader as shewing the rugged path that the disciple or voluntary servant of God and man has to tread in order that he may evolve the qualities essential for the efficient discharge of the benevolent yet humble duties, and the grave yet fascinating responsibilities of his pious office. Born in August, 1859, of a high Brahman family with the pride of blue-blood running in his veins, at South Canara, which even now is a stronghold of formal orthodoxy, hemmed in and fettered by all the cramping traditions and blinding superstitions of that dark epoch of Indian history, Pandit Bhawani Shanker, at the early age of 20, burst through the shackles of pride and prejudice alike, and joined the T. S. in March, 1880, when that obscure body was as much under a priestly as under a political ban, with the prowess and valour of a young Hercules, battling against a whole regiment of barbarous troops bent upon strangling it in its infancy.

At this critical juncture when darkness impenetrable brooded over its horizon, our dauntless but unassuming Pandit, following solely the lead of the star shining within him, not merely threw in his lot with the friendless and suspiciously eyed, yet withal sanguine and redoubtable founders of this meteoric society, but regardless of all personal consequences tore himself off from the affectionate arms of mother, wife and sister, and all the ties of flesh and blood—so that the very dawn of the year 1881 found him gladly exchanging the pleasant *insouciance*, the safe harbourage of home and hearth for the privations and austerities of an ascetic, and placing himself under the tutelage and training of no less exacting a monitor than that strangely complex and mysterious apostle of Theosophy, H.P.B. herself.

For four good years, with promise of no reward save the privilege of serving, he submitted without the faintest grumble to all the tests and ordeals of a neophyte, and coming out immaculate therefrom, was with fire and water tempered and moulded by her masterly hand into the purity and elasticity of a disciple.

So well did he stand all these severe trials and so completely did he surrender himself to her modelling that in no time he won her motherly love, was allowed glimpses of the Masters, and trusted with communications from Them. Later on, when H.P.B. departed from India he was initiated into some of the hidden laws and secret practices of Ràja-Yoga by the famous mystic, Subba Row.

Thus armed and equipped he was sent out to inspect and instruct, and much more to enliven and enhearten the comparatively few branches of the T. S. that were then scattered over the country. It was in the course of perhaps his second inspection tour that I came across him early in January, 1885, and at once conceived and sealed a friendship that has grown deeper and more intimate with every year, and has never known a shadow, but always yielded the purest joy and is replete with the most delicious reminiscences. So child-like in his simplicity, so unconscious of his spiritual development, so warm in his selfless affection and sympathy, so ardent in his zeal for true Theosophy, so fervid in his devotion to the great Teachers,

to know him was to love him, and to pass a few days in his holy company under the sparkling sunshine of his smiling eyes and lips, in the fragrant aroma of his saintly and celibate life was to be suffused with a subtle intoxication of exalted enthusiasm and transported into the iridescent realm of peace ineffable ! Oh ! the ecstasy of the weeks we first spent with him from mystic twilight to romantic eve, diving lustily into the glorious mysteries of Brahma-vidya, eagerly exploring the domains of philosophy, chanting rapturous hymns to the Masters ! We lived as it were the very life of the verse :

मञ्चिता मङ्गलप्राणा बोधयन्तः परस्परम् ।

कथयन्तश्च मां नित्यम् तुष्यन्ति च रमन्ति च ॥

Our feet scarcely touched the earth ; our souls floated along in an Elysian dream-land !

Thirty long years he has worked in this way, enlightening many minds, gladdening many hearts, and above all, uplifting many souls throughout the length and breadth of this vast peninsula with never a thought of himself with never a complaint of any kind on his lips but ever in contemplation raised from the sacred

presence of the Masters to the adored lotus-feet of the Lord ! Bird's-eye views of the range covered and impression left by him have been sketched in the annual Reports of the Society's Convention. He has revelled all his life in the study of the Gita and the Upanishads, not in mere intellectual reflection, but in devouring with his whole self and being, the inmost spirit of those sacred scriptures. And these sermons are but faint echoes of the divine voice ringing inside the core of this devout aspirant, and redolent of the profound serenity and veneration of his noble and illuminated soul. They reverently touch upon that wonderful feature of the Gita which brings home to the readers' mind that, to use the inspired speaker's own words, "it is the concentrated essence of the highest teaching and thought that is capable of appreciation by man", that "it is the book of life and embraces in its majestic sweep all phases of life", that it is, I may add, the song of songs—a hallelujah of symphony and seraphic choir !

Chowkhamba,
Benares City.

UPENDRA NATH BASU.

PREFACE.

Pandit Bhawanisankar visited Calcutta in March, 1914, and delivered a series of 8 lectures expounding the 4th discourse of the Gîtâ. The lectures were on the following subjects: (1) The place of Gnanyoga in the Gîtâ (2) The Pedigree of the Yoga (3) The doctrine of Avatar (4) Jnanyoga as the means to Moksha (5) Pravritti Marga, Action and Inaction (6) Characteristics of a Sage (7) Action-sacrifice and wisdom-sacrifice (8) The Surest way to Moksha. These lectures which were open to all were delivered in the palatial residence of Kumar Narendranath Mittra. Invitations were issued to those who were known to be interested in the study of the Gîtâ and ancient religions and philosophies. The audience numbered about 50 who regularly attended the series, following the lecturer keenly

day by day as he expounded the priceless truths contained in the Gîtâ.

Pandit Bhawanisankar has made the Gîtâ his own, and he can expound, as few else can, the illumining and soul-satisfying teaching of that priceless scripture. It was indeed a relief in these days of irresponsible elocution and sickening sensationalism to listen to one who could strike the true spiritual note and touch with his moral ardour and devotional fire the eternal in us. The lectures gave a fresh incentive to those who see the beauty of a life of devotion and renunciation, and humbly strive to realise it, and proved what was always felt that we want lecturers like Pandit Bhawani-shankar in Calcutta, who could quote chapter and verse from our own scriptures in support of his statements about the spiritual path. Calcutta is a very good field for workers like him and we wish that he would visit the place regularly every year. The substance of these lectures is given in the following pages.



Pandit Bhawani Shankar.

LECTURE I.

“THE PLACE OF JNANAYOGA IN THE GITA.”

This is an introductory discourse which dwells not only on the sequential organic connection between the discourses of the Gîtà but also on the intimate connection of the Gîtà itself with the Mahàbhàrata, in which Vyàsa has set it in the most appropriate place. So, to understand the full teaching of the Gîtà it should not be studied as detached from the Mahàbhàrata. Now the Mahàbhàrata is an Itihàsa, that is, a record of events that actually happened, deriving all their spiritual significance from the great Avatàra who is the centre and life of the Itihàsa. It is an allegory as well, describing the stages of the path which the soul has to pass through on its way to emancipation. It is also called the fifth Veda, and it marks an epoch in the history of our Dharma. For, it was in Mahàbhàrata that the great Vyàsa presented the doctrine contained in the four

Vedas, giving this doctrine a turn with special reference to the great Avatâr, round whom the chief interest of the Mahàbhàrata centres. So, to appreciate fully the doctrine of the Gîtà, all these considerations should be borne in mind and it should be studied as part of, and as having intimate relation with the Mahàbhàrata in the midst of which Vyàsa has purposely placed it. Looking to the fourth discourse of the Gîtà which deals with Jnàna-Yoga, we see how appropriately it comes after the first three discourses. The first discourse treats of Vishàda which is also called Yoga, because it is not the passing despondency of the disappointed man but the deeper deadness felt in the heart, which leaves a permanent sense of unreality of the things seen and felt by the separative self, and which precedes the thirst of the soul for the real. And one of the names by which Arjuna is called is Nara. The first discourse vividly describes the position of the Jivàtmà as it enters the threshold of manhood after passing its stages of irresponsible childhood and of disciplined youth (the discipline imposed from outside by the Shàstras and Achàryas). Arjuna has controlled the senses and the mind and has

built up a strong centre of individual consciousness. But the utter unreality of the external, he has still to learn. He has not as yet killed what in the "Voice of the Silence" is called the Rājā of the senses, the "slayer of the real", and deep despondency possesses his mind when at last he has to pass through the experience. He is now called upon not only to kill the 11 Akshou-Hinis of kinsmen formed of his five senses and Six passions (Kāma, Krödha &c.) but to slay even the Dharmāchāryas to whom he was looking up hitherto for guidance. When the necessity arises for such action his whole existence seems to Arjuna to have dissolved into nothingness, and in one word the Lord conveys to him the teaching at this critical juncture. 'A Pandita, oh Arjuna, neither grieves for the dead nor for the living.' That is how the teaching commences in the second discourse which is called Sāṅkhya-yoga. A Pandita is he who knows the ātman, the real as distinguished from the false, the permanent from the fleeting.

The second discourse begins with the analysis of man. It shows that man is not his body, because though the body undergoes

changes, the sense of self is untouched by them. Similarly are pleasure and pain which are neither in the senses themselves nor in the external objects but are at the points of contact of senses and their objects and are therefore impermanent and changing. Amidst this flux and change, the self alone is changeless and permanent and because it is so, it is the only reality. "For, the unreal existeth not, nor can the real ever cease to be." Thus should the aspirant dissociate himself from his body and the sensations and feelings, and with reason so purified realise the self within himself, the self "whom weapons cleave not, nor fire burns, nor water wets, nor wind dries, the unperceivable, the unthinkable and the unchangeable self." If the aspirant is not capable of thus realising the self, let him follow Buddhi-yoga. Let him do his work casting off attachment, balanced in mind whether success or failure falls to his lot. By thus giving up the desire for Phalam (fruit) and balancing himself under all ups and downs of life he will attain to that disciplined and one-pointed reason by which he will realise the self. He will realise that he is distinct from his sensations and perceptions and from feelings

and emotions, and that pleasures and pains and joys and sorrows by which he was measuring his life till now, touch not the inner serenity, the harmony of the self. Shri Shankaràchàrya's definition of "phalam" is specially noteworthy : "phalgutayà layam adarshanam gachhaṭīti phalam." Phalam (fruit) implies something that vanishes, something unsubstantial.

For such a Sànkhyà-yogi, he who has realised the harmony of the inner self, Karma apparently seems to have no application. Yet it is not so. His very knowledge makes him a more responsible person. Though he has no object to gain by Karma, still to set a good example to the ignorant, he must engage himself in it. Karma includes not only bodily but mental action as well, and as there is no escape from Karma for the ignorant it should be well directed for the benefit of the World. Nor can it be said that after realising his inner self the aspirant's goal is reached. The harmony that he has attained is still of the separative self depending on the background of the not-self for its existence. He must now learn that the not-self which he had so long discarded and flung

away from himself is not an alien to, but a manifestation, as his own self is, of the transcendent self, the fount of all reality (the light of Ishwara). The harmony which he had gained within, must now be realised outside as well. So, in the "Voice of the Silence" it is taught: "In order to become the knower of All self, thou hast, first, of self to be the knower. To reach the knowledge of that self thou hast to give up self to not-self, being to non-being". Further, the only Mukti worth striving for, is the mergence of the individual self into Ishwara through the light of Ishwara. And when Bhagvàn Himself, the Ishwara, comes down and engages Himself in action, turns the wheel of life for the good of the world, how can the aspirant follow a different course? When the aspirant has realised the inner harmony of the Jīvātma in himself, which is the object of Sàṅkhya-yoga, and further, carried it into the outer world in action also, for which Karma-yoga is enjoined in the 3rd discourse, he becomes fit for receiving the illumination through the light of Ishwara which unifies the self and not-self. Hence Jñāna-yoga follows the Sàṅkhya and Karma Yogas in the Gītā.

LECTURE II.

THE PEDIGREE OF JNANAYOGA.

We have this pedigree given in the first sloka of the 4th discourse of the Gîtà. Bhagwàn says:—"I imparted this yoga to Vivaswàn ; Vivaswàn imparted it to Manu and from Manu Ikshwàku derived it." Vivaswàn is the sun, the Hiranyagarbha-Brahmà, the creator of our system. What Bhagwàn means is that this Hiranyagarbha-Brahmà created this world through the illumination derived from this Yoga. So did Manu create the human race with its help, and it was imparted to the Ràjarshis like Ikshwàku that they may rule their subjects having the spiritual welfare of the race in view, enforcing conformity to the Pravritti Dharma of Varna and Ashrama and keeping the way open to the Nivritti Dharma of renunciation. The continuity of the tradition of this supreme Yoga suffered a break for want of proper disciples. For, when this Yoga falls into the hands of the weak who cannot control their minds and senses or of persons of Ahankàra in whom the subtle desire for glory and power predominates, it decays. The Sloka does not however imply

that the Kshattriyas were the special teachers and preservers of the Yoga, for, far higher than the Ràjarshis are the Devarshis and Brahmarshis; and there is the historical instance of Vishwàmitra, a Ràjarshī, who had to perform long and arduous tapas for becoming a Brahmarshi. One important point needs to be emphasised in connection with this Sloka, and it is this: The brotherhood of adepts or Jivanmuktas is as strictly a product of Nature as a tree. It has definite and indispensable purpose and function in the development of the human race, and this function is to keep open the upward path through which descend light and leading. If on account of increase of materialism and Adharma, this spiritual connection stops, then Bhagvàn Himself takes up the work of the brotherhood and provides for the spiritual welfare of humanity. "This ancient Yoga has to-day been imparted to thee by me for thou art my devotee and friend; and this is the supreme secret", so runs the next Sloka. The qualifications of Arjuna to be the recipient of this supreme secret were that he was both a devotee and a friend of Bhagvàn. And here let us dwell on the Nava-vidhà Bhakti.

This Nava-vidhà Bhakti is not the nine ways of devotion—each sufficient in itself but the nine stages of the devotee. Reference to the different Slokas in the Gîtà on this point itself will show how one stage comes after the other as a natural sequence ; and the Lord's reference specially to the eighth stage of it viz. of Sakhyatà or friendship, is very significant. Devotion to Bhagvàn begins when a man acquires the control of his senses and mind by following the Pravritti Marga according to the injunctions of Shàstras, and fired by the desire of knowing the truth he studies deeply the scriptures. Where there is this soul-hunger, comes devotion. The first stage is called Shravana, because the soul is now eager to hear of Bhagvàn, and in listening to His glories it rejoices ; the second stage, Kirtana, is reached when filled with the joy it begins to participate it with kindred souls, for, out of the fulness of the devotee's heart his mouth speaketh. The third stage is called the stage of Smaranam, brooding, when the mind always loves to dwell upon Bhagvàn ; and then comes the fourth stage Padasevana, when his love grows deeper, and not satisfied with merely brooding on the Lord he seeks to feel his

solidarity with Him and clings to His blessed feet from which flow peace and bliss. Here the Bhakta feels the first thrills of the divine life, and with it grows his thirst for losing himself in that life; and the fifth stage of Archanà is reached, when in the deep meditation of Bhagvàn he forgets himself, and as he continues in this stage and when Bhagvàn is become enthroned in his heart more and more fully, he passes into the sixth stage of Vandanam, where he feels the presence of the Lord everywhere and in everything and like Arjuna begins to prostrate before all things both animate and inanimate, and when divine life is felt everywhere and in everything the seventh stage of Dàśya naturally follows, in which whatever the bhakta does, he does it as the servant of Bhagvàn, keeping Him always as the supreme goal of his life. The distance and the dual sense implied in this stage of servant and master in course of time wears off and the eighth stage of Sakhyatà or friendship is reached where oneness of the devotee with Bhagvàn predominates. The tradition that Shri Krishna and Arjuna were of equal stature seems to have some allegorical significance. At this stage the devotee grows

like unto the object of his devotion 'just as the form to which the clay is modelled is, first united with the potter's mind', and the devotee becomes fit to receive the supreme Yoga, as Arjuna as Sakhà and Bhakta of Bhagvàn was, as stated in the Sloka. There is not still the complete unity, the thorough oneness which is reached at the ninth stage of Atma-nivedana when the Bhakta disappears and Bhagvàn becomes all in all (Vide 73 Sloka of Chap : XVIII). अर्जुन उवाच । नष्टो मोहः स्मृतिलब्ध्वा त्वत्प्रसादान्मयाश्रुत । स्थितोऽस्मि गतसंदेहः करिष्ये वचनं तव ॥ Arjuna said : "Destroyed is delusion, and I have gained recognition through Thy Grace. O Achyuta, I am firm, with doubts gone. I will do Thy word." It is the final surrender of the devotee's self to Bhagvàn absolutely and unconditionally. Thus is devotion the potent power that leads to and makes possible the utter self-renunciation and self-surrender which are the only means for receiving spiritual illumination.

LECTURE III.

THE DOCTRINE OF AVATARAS.

The Avatàra is one of the most abstruse truths of Hinduism as it is of Brahma-vidyà. To have even a very faint idea of the great truth it is necessary to know what real spirituality is, to have some notion of the spiritual ideal of adeptship or Jīvanmukti. It is truly said that even in this proud age of intellect very few can form a correct conception of a Jīvanmukta. I may here lightly touch upon the preparatory qualifications the aspirant for spiritual life should acquire. By Karma-màrga, that is, disinterested performance of religious and secular duties, he should control his body, subdue his senses, and purify his mind. He should strive for the control and concentration of mind by Abhyàsa, that is, by practice ; for this purpose he should have some fixed time in the morning and evening, when he should withdraw his mind from all external objects and learn to retire within himself. By following this practice regularly he gains habitual control of his mind which enables him to

discharge his duties more effectually and also acquire the power of concentration which is so essential for deep study and devotion as well. The third qualification he should acquire, is by study and deep thinking. He should regularly study the scriptures, and by deep thinking and cogitation on the profound truths dealt with therein, he should develop the penetrative intellect which can intuit the spiritual truths which lie embedded under the apparent tangle of scriptural contradictions. By following this Jnànamàrga his intellect perceives the nature of his own self, its connection with Ishwara and the important place of the Guru in the pilgrimage of the Jīvàtmà, and as this intellectual conviction grows deeper and gains strength he begins to offer himself to his Gurudeva and Ishta-Deva, and as he surrenders himself, he begins to feel the inner peace and joy which gradually transform his conviction into faith and his intellectual perceptions into self-feeling wherewith true devotion begins. By following this fourfold discipline inculcated in the four màrgas of Karma, Abhyàsa, Jnàna and Bhakti, he in course of time acquires the qualifications necessary for a disciple. He

has developed the physical, astral and causal centres and has learnt to surrender them to his Guru-Deva and at the proper time receives his first initiation. It takes place, as H. P. B. says in the "Voice of the Silence", neither in the physical body which she calls the hall of ignorance, nor in the astral body which is called by her the hall of learning, but it is in the Kàrana-sharira, the hall of wisdom, in his own Hridaya (heart), that the disciple sees Him for the first time whose life and peace he was so long feeling in his heart. Therefore does the "Voice of the Silence" teach the aspirant : "Seek for Him who is to give thee birth in the hall of wisdom". What happens is that both the physical and astral bodies fall in trance and the disciple is in his Kàrana-sharira, that is, in his heart he sees his Guru-Deva, and in the heart of his Guru-Deva he sees his Ishtadeva, The Ishwara. The Guru-Deva transmits to him the life of Ishwara, the only true life,—The Self, of which the Māndukya-Upanishad in the 7th sloka speaks as being "shāntam, shivam and adwaitam...sa Atmā", peace, bliss and unity,—The Mystic Consciousness wherein as in the words of the 29th sloka of the 6th discourse of

the Gîtà “he sees the self abiding in all beings and all beings abiding in the self, and sees the same everywhere.”

The unreal life of the false separative self with its triple consciousness—the seer, the seeing and the seen, falls loosened from him and he is awakened in the region of the real. The 69th verse of Chap. II. of the Gîtà referring to this state truly says, “when it is night to all beings the sage is awake and where all beings are awake the sage is asleep.” And Shri Shankaràchàrya commenting on this Sloka says, “To all beings the supreme reality, that is, the Divine life, is night, and there, the initiate is now fully awake. When all beings are said to be awake, *i.e.*, when all beings who in reality sleep in the night of ignorance, imbued with the distinct notions of perceiver and things perceived—that state is night in the eye of the Sage who knows the supreme reality”. He has realised the unity of life in his Kàrana-sharira and the effect of this first initiation, on his physical ego, is that it becomes a mere reflection of the Divine life, in other words, his personality has been killed. Nòt only has

his physical centre, ego, become a reflection of the life of Ishwara, but as a result of the Yoga-fire, the gross particles of his physical body have been purified and etherealised, making that body a vehicle refined enough for the functioning of the higher consciousness (see Swethashwetara-Upanishat. part II. 12th and 13th sloka). He realises that both his physical centre and the physical centre of the Cosmos are essentially one, expressions of the same Divine Life which expressing itself in them transcends both, and he begins to harmonise them. He therefore feels compassion for all beings (vide Gîtà VI. 32.): "Whoso by comparison with himself, sees the same everywhere, O Arjuna, be it pleasure or pain, he is deemed the highest Yogin". This cosmic physical centre is called in the Upanishads, Vaishvânara and in the Gîtà, Adhibhūta and is the basis of all beings. He feels, both himself and the world outside him are but the expressions of the self-same life. He is therefore called a Parivrājaka, a wanderer, because he has now realised for the first time that his true home is Ishwara from whom he has been wandering* away and on reaching whom his

heart is set. Of such an initiate does the 19th sloka of the 12th chapter of the Gîtâ speak "he is one to whom censure and praise are equal, who is silent, content with anything, homeless, steadyminded and full of devotion. "Such a one," Bhagwân says, "is dear to Me". He is silent because his heart is flowing with the peace and bliss of Bhagwân's life, the only life he cares for. To hold forth astral peregrinations and astral lectures as objects of spiritual endeavour and as credentials of initiation, is a perversion of the teachings of Brahma-vidyâ. It is projecting into the higher regions the separative self of the lower, whereas, the true goal of a student of Brahmayidyâ should be the killing of the false and separative self with the help of the life from on high, the life of Ishwara, the one centripetal force in the Cosmos. Not to speak of astral world and swarga, even residence in Brahma-loka is not desirable for a man who cares for Swaswarupa-jnânam, the knowledge of the Self—*vide* Gîtâ VIII. 16. The only object of the initiate is the religious enlightenment of the human race and a perfectly unselfish, self-forgetting, self-annihilating devotion to that object,—a self abnegation

which is not temporal and must have no end for ever, but is his only talisman of safety as it ought to be the only object of his life. For this purpose he need not scour the Lokas, for, from his own heart always flows a current of living moral and spiritual energy for the good of the three worlds, more potent and dynamic in its purifying and elevating effect than any number of lectures and orations whether on the physical or astral or some higher planes. This current of spiritual energy flowing from the heart of every spiritual man increases in volume and force as he grows in devotion and self-renunciation. We are not left in doubt as to the marks of a real initiate. For, in the reply given by Bhagwàn to Arjuna's query about the marks of a Sthita-prajna we have a definite and comprehensive reply. Sthita-prajna is one who has perceived the supreme reality (Brahman) as his self, according to Shri Shankaràchàrya's commentary. This description is found in slokas 55, 56 & 57 of Chap. II. of the Gîtà. In the 55th sloka we are taught the state of the initiate when he is in Kàranasharira: "When the man is satisfied in the self alone by himself, casts off all the desires of

the mind, then he is said to be Sthita-prajna." In the next sloka is described his condition when he is in the Sukshma centre: "He, whose mind is not distressed in calamities, in whom all longings for pleasures are lost, from whom attachment, fear and wrath have passed away, is called Sthita-Prajna". And how he reports when in physical consciousness, is told in the Sloka following the above. "He is Sthita-Prajna, who without attachment anywhere, on meeting with anything good or bad, neither exults nor hates."

In course of time, as the initiate develops in an ever-increasing measure, devotion and self-surrender to his Gurudeva and Ishtadeva, he receives his second initiation; and just as, after the first initiation his physical ego becomes merely the reflection of the Divine life and his physical body purified and refined by the Yoga-fire becomes a vehicle fit for higher consciousness, similarly, as a result of the second initiation his astral body becomes a perfect mirror, reflecting merely the one life. In the "First steps in Occultism" H. P. B. well describes his state. In him 'the' power of passions

is dead altogether and they have been crushed and annihilated in the retort of an unflinching will.' In him "not only all the lust and longings of the flesh are dead but also the recognition of the personal self is killed out and the astral has been reduced in consequence to a cipher". His astral ego is now but a reflection of the Divine life and he realises that his astral centre or ego and the corresponding cosmic centre are in essence one, both reflections of the one life, and his sense of separateness between the two falls off. This astral cosmic centre is called in the Māndukya-Upanishad "*Taijasa*", resplendent centre, and in the Gītā, Adhidaiva, the substratum of all the Devatās. The light of Ishwara which his Gurudeva had transmitted to him at the time of the first initiation has now by his profound devotion and renunciation been transmuted into electro-spiritual force which is called the higher Kundalini and rises upwards. It now rises from the heart into the head and there brings into full functioning all the spiritual centres in the brain which upto now it was vivifying, and it passes on to what Shri Shankarāchārya calls the Dhī-guhā, the cave of the intellect, the space between the

brows, and there electrifies Buddhi into a dynamic power resulting in spiritual clairvoyance. It then merges in the great Goddess seated in the centre of the full-blown Sahasràra (thousand-petalled lotus). And through these higher spiritual centres the initiate subdues and controls the lower Chakras. According to Hindu books of Yoga, there is in the brain the Sahasràra Chakram. "It is an unopened bud in the ordinary mortal and just as the lotus opens its petals and expands in all its bloom and beauty when the sun rises above the horizon and sheds his rays on the flower, so does the Sahasràram of the neophyte open and expand when Ishwara begins to pour His life into its centre. When fully expanded, it becomes the glorious seat of the Devi (Daivi-prakriti), and sitting on this flower the great Goddess pours out the waters of life and grace for the gratification and regeneration of the human soul".

H. P. B. refers to this spiritual process in the following passage in the "Voice of the Silence" and in her notes thereon. "Let not thy heaven-born merged in the sea of Màya, break from

the universal parent (soul), but let the fiery power retire into the inmost chamber, the chamber of the heart and the abode of the world's mother. Then from the heart that power shall rise into the sixth, the middle region, the place between thine eyes, when it becomes the breath of the One-Soul, the voice which filleth all, thy Master's Voice." In her note on the words "power" and the "world mother" in the above passage she says, "these are names given to Kundalini—one of the mystic Yogi-powers. It is Buddhi considered as an active instead of a passive principle....." Thus the electro-spiritual force called Kundalini is the result of the spiritual development of man and has nothing to do with physical and mechanical processes. But there is the lower Kundalini also, seated in the Mulàdhàra Chakra, at the base of the spine, which Hata-yogis try to awaken by Prànyàma (restraint of breath). It is a dangerous process and has nothing to do with spirituality. There is another set of teachers who, by external stimuli such as crystal gazing, and focussing the attention and gaze on the Chakra between the eye-brows, advocate the development of

clairvoyance, psychic vision, which is quite distinct from spiritual clairvoyance. The tiny serpent seen in this Chakram by the psychic is not the real spiritual power called Kundalini. The psychic sees different objects in a finer world just as we see here the physical objects, but there is in him the sense of separateness as deep, if not deeper, as in the ordinary man, and he accentuates this separateness by setting his false and petty self against the surroundings, and striving for domination over them. This is a process, the reverse of spiritual, a projection of the lower and false into the higher and the real. Saints and sages have time and oft taught, distinguishing real spirituality from these artificial methods which are prompted by the thirst for power and Siddhis. Thus the great sage Jnāneshwara in his "Dwādashākshari (the well-known twelve syllabled mantra) Abhanga" says: "Awakening the serpent by the control of the nine gates and passing it through Sushumnā which is one of the three Nādis, such is not, say the Munis, the path. The fount of liberation is in ceaseless contemplation of Nara-Hari." Similarly does Machhendra teach his disciple Gorakh while

telling him the real qualifications of a Chela :

कुण्डलिनीको खुबचढ़ावे ब्रह्मरंध्रकूजावे ।

चलताहै पानिके उपर बोल्ता सोई होवे ।

सोहि कछावे कछावे नहि गुरुका बच्चा ॥

“Arousing the Kundalini and forcing it up to the Brahmarandhra (the crown of the head) and thus acquiring the power of walking on water and of prophecy, do not constitute a spiritual man—such is not fit to be a Chelà.”

Real spiritual clairvoyance develops in the initiate as naturally, as a bud at its proper time blooms into a flower. It is vision and feeling blended into one wherein the separateness of the seer, the seeing and the seen, is altogether absent. It is this spiritual clairvoyance that Shri Shankarāchārya refers to in the following Sloka in the Aparokshānubhōoti.

दृष्टिदर्शनदृश्यानां विरामो यत्र वा भवेत् ।

दृष्टिस्तर्तुर्व कर्त्तव्या न नासाग्रवसोकिनी ॥

“Vision is to be concentrated there where the triad—the seer, the sight and the seen, vanishes, and not on the base of the nose (Agneya-chakra).”

As a result of his harmonising his astral centre with the Adhidaiva centre, the basis of all devatàs, through the higher Kundalini, he sees the hierarchies of cosmic intelligences, the Devas, and realises them and himself as essentially one being,—expressions of the one Divine life which, expressing Itself in all these and in himself, transcends all and remains itself. He has now all the great higher Siddhis which are not so much control acquired over something outside, but knowledge realised, of the inwardness of cosmic processes,—the expansion of his Buddhi into the cosmic Buddhi. With the possession of all these Siddhis the outstanding characteristic of the initiate now is his utter humility. His Abhimàna, thirst for individual power and glory, has vanished. He is therefore called a Kuteechaka, one who resides in a humble hut of leaves. He has now that power which enables him to appear as nothing in the eyes of men. “Be humble, if thou wouldst attain to wisdom; be humbler still when wisdom thou hast mastered.”

Then comes his third initiation, and to understand the significance of it, even faintly,

it is necessary to know something about the unfolding of the Jivàtmà. The Jivàtmà is called in our scriptures Hamsa. Hamsa is a bird which is known to possess the peculiar power of separating off pure milk from a mixture of milk and water, and Jivàtmà is called a Hamsa, because, it, like the bird of the name, has the power of discriminating the real from the unreal in Samsàra which is a combination of both. Up till now this Hamsa, that is Jivàtmà, had fed itself on the very cream of the best and noblest experience gained in innumerable lives. Even at the time of the first initiation, the initiate has realised that the real self is the Divine Life which transcends the self of the Jivàtmà. But now as a result of further spiritual progress he realises more deeply than before the utter unreality of this individuality, that it is a thing "which he has created with pain for his own use and by means of which he purposes to reach to the Life beyond individuality." He now retires deeper within and approaches the sanctuary of the Self nearer than ever before and is realising in a greater and fuller measure the peace and bliss of the one life. This further spiritual progress

that he has made and which enables him to go through the third initiation, involves the spiritual transformation of his Kàrana-Sarira, which now becomes an upadhi of pure (Sàtwic) Akàsha. His spiritual ego, the centre of Kàrana-sarira, which at this stage is called Pràjna in Måndukyopanishad is seen by him to be a mere reflection of divine light and now no more being limited by his Kàrana-sarira, is realised as the cosmic centre of that plane, called Ishwara in the Måndukyopanishad and Adhiyajna in Gità; and all the rich treasure of knowledge and experience gathered by him with pain and patience through innumerable lives, and of which his Kàrana-sarira was built is now gladly sacrificed by him to Adhiyajna, and thus is increased the fund of cosmic intelligence working for the uplifting of the race. He now sees that the end and consummation of all knowledge, austerities and sacrifices is the Great Goddess, the divine light of Ishwara, at Whose Feet he now offers his individuality purified and ennobled by the virtuous Karma of a series of incarnations. At this stage he is called a Hamsa, that is, one who has realised that he and the cosmic centre of Adhiyajna are one.

Now he finds that all the six great Saktis which are developed in him are but the manifestations of the one self, the Divine Life. These six Saktis are : (1), Jnàna Sakti, ability to see the past and future ; (2), Ichhà Sakti, the power of the will ; (3), Kriyà Sakti, the mysterious power of thought which enables it to produce external perceptible and phenomenal results by its own inherent energy ; (4), Màtrikà Sakti, the power of letters and mantras ; (5) Parà Sakti which includes the powers of light and heat ; (6) Kundalini Sakti already mentioned. He has now to fight the final struggle against flesh that will liberate him once and for ever from the bonds of matter, and pass the 4th initiation. He has now risen above the limitations of the three bodies, but he has still to cross the neutral barrier. He has to fasten the energies of his soul on this supreme struggle. When the human monad is completely isolated from the three bodies—physical, astral and causal, it is as it were at a neutral point of consciousness and no consciousness is experienced by it. It is the Mahà Sushupti, and before the monad can be finally liberated, it should cross this neutral barrier. Bhagwàn refers to this

struggle when he says in the 14th Sloka of the 7th chapter of the Gità, "Hard is my divine Màya to surmount. Those who seek Me alone pass over this Màya." The result of this last struggle, that is, success or defeat in it, entirely depends upon the latent energy of the Jivàtmà resulting from devotion to Ishwara, its previous training and past Karma. It is the real Kurukshetra for the Jivàtmà where it hears in full the song of life,—Mahàshmathàna, the great burning ground, where it hears the voice of the cosmic deep and where Ahamkàra is reduced to ashes. It is Mahàshmathàna because it is the death of the individual man from whose ashes the regenerated man springs into existence electrified by the song of Life. If he has emerged from this final struggle triumphant, then he is a full-blown adept, a Jivanmukta, who has entirely merged himself in the One Life. He is now called a Paramahansa, that is, one who has realised "That", that is, He the One Life and himself are one. He has become "Om" because "sa" and "ha" of "Soham" being eliminated in him, he remains only the "Om".

Thus far we have the guidance of the Māndukyopaniṣad, from stage to stage, in the spiritual progress of the Jivātmā, till the liberated man has triumphed over all the bonds of matter. He is now a Jivanmukta, for whom Samsāra can weave no illusion, and nature holds no secret. He has crossed the ocean of Māyā and has fully entered the divine light. Even for him there stretch forth further vistas of progress. Saith the "Light on the Path": "For within you is the light of the world, the only light that can be shed on the path. If you are unable to perceive it within you it is useless to look for it elsewhere. It is beyond you because when you reach it you have lost yourself. It is unattainable because it for ever recedes. You will enter the light but you will never touch the Flame". The further stages of progress hinted at in this passage are also referred to in the Hindu scriptures which darkly hint at five further stages of spiritual height. They involve the most arduous Tapas out of all human experience and utterly beyond human perception or imagination. In enumerating the four classes of His devotees in the 16th verse of the 7th Chapter

of the Gītā, Bhagawān includes the Jnānin as one of those four classes of Bhaktas, and in the following 17th and 18th verses Bhagawān says "among these four classes of Bhaktas, who are all noble, the Jnānin surpasseth all, for he is My very Self ; as steadfast in mind, he resorts to Me alone as the unsurpassed goal" ; and in the following verse, the 19th, Bhagwān says, "at the end of many births the Jnāni comes to Me, realising that Vāsudeva is the all ; he is the Mahātman, very hard to find". Again in the third verse of the same Chapter of the Gītā we have the following statement. Bhagwān says, "among thousands of men one perchance strives for perfection ; even among those who strive and are perfect only one perchance knows Me in truth." Thus, the teaching of the Gītā is clear and points out that even after the man has fully entered the light and become a Jivanmukta, it is possible for him further spiritual heights to attain. He has entered the light, but he has not merged himself in the divine centre, the spiritual sun from whom this light emanates. Bhagwān says that even among Mahātmās one who has attained this condition is very hard

to find. Now turn to the 50th verse of the 18th chapter of the Gītā. The Lord says, "How he who has attained perfection reaches Brahman, that in brief, do thou learn from me, O son of Kuntī,—that supreme consummation of knowledge" and in the following five verses is treated the Parābhakti possible only to the Jñāni, by means of which he enters Bhagvān and becomes Brahman. Thus run these verses: "Endued with pure reason, controlling the self with firmness, abandoning sound and other objects, laying aside love and hatred, resorting to a sequestered spot, eating but little, speech and body and mind subdued, always engaged in meditation and concentration, endued with dispassion, having abandoned egotism, violence, arrogance, desire, enmity, property, and free from the notion of 'mine' and being peaceful, he is fit for becoming Brahman. Becoming Brahman of serene self, he neither grieves nor desires; treating all beings alike, he attains supreme devotion to Me. By devotion he knows Me in truth, what and who I am; then knowing Me in truth he forthwith enters into Me". Add to this the 4th verse in chapter 12th referring to this same state: "Having

restrained all senses, always equanimous, devoted to the welfare of all beings they reach Myself (the central spiritual Sun, the highest goal).” At the fourth initiation he had become a Jivanmukta who has triumphed over all matter, one who has liberated himself from all bonds of Saṁsāra. He had then fully entered the divine light, the veil of Ishwara the veil of light through which Ishwara manifests Himself to the highest spiritual perception of a human being. Shri Shankarāchārya in his “Soundaryalahari” addressing this light says, “Thou art the body of Shambhu.” The light is, as it were, a cloak or a mask with which Ishwara is enabled to make His appearance. But Ishwara, the real centre of light, is not visible even to the highest spiritual perception of man. Hence in the above quoted passage in the “*Light on the Path*” it is said, “you will enter the light but you will never touch the flame.” The goal of Parābhakti, which is only possible for a Jnāni, is the merging into this centre of light, Ishwara, the highest goal of spiritual endeavour. This mergence of the Jivanmukta into Ishwara may be likened to what may happen in the case of the sun when

a comet falls upon it; there is in the case of the sun an accession of heat and light; so also, whenever any particular individual reaches the highest state of spiritual culture, develops in himself all the virtues that alone entitle him to a union with Ishwara and finally unites his soul with Ishwara, there is, as it were, a sort of reaction emanating from Ishwara for the good of humanity; and in particular cases an impulse is generated in Ishwara to incarnate for the good of humanity. This is the highest consummation of human aspiration and endeavour. Even in the earlier stages of his spiritual life, an aspirant for the higher life becomes a participator of the grand silent work in the spiritual enlightenment of his race,—the current of the living moral and spiritual energy flowing from his heart being his humble contribution. As he progresses on the path his contribution increases till by inconceivably arduous tapas and renunciation he succeeds in bringing down the great Ishwara Himself to do this work. This is one aspect of the doctrine about Avatàra. The subject is a profound one and touches one of the most jealously guarded secrets of Brahma-Vidyà.

If the latter-day Theosophical teachers had even but the faintest idea of the sanctity and solemnity of the subject we would have been spared so much blasphemous talk of preparations for an Avatàra and such flippant prattle about sacred things. We see the wisdom of the ancients in drawing the veil of secrecy on these high subjects ; for, when sacred things are bandied about light-heartedly, spiritual degradation is the result.

The very word Avatàra implies a coming down. Viewed from the point of view of the Jivanmukta it is a gradual ascent and the final absorption of the human soul into Ishwara, but from the stand-point of Ishwara it is a coming down of Bhagwan to the plane of Jivàtmà. Ishwara therefore is not a result of evolution, but One who makes evolution possible. Hence Bhagwan says, in the 6th verse of the 4th Chapter, "Though I am unborn, of imperishable nature, and though I am the Lord of all beings, yet controlling my own nature, I take birth through the instrumentality of my Màya." Bhagwan controls his Prakriti having three qualities and through the instru-

mentality of His light, His Yogamàyà, He incarnates Himself. Further, in the 7th and 8th verses of the 4th Chapter of the Gītā, we are given not only the time of his coming down but also the reason for it. "Whenever there is decay of Dharma, that is, religion, and ascendancy of irreligion, then I manifest myself. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil-doers, and for the firm establishment of religion I am born in every Yuga." If Bhagwàn appears as an Avatàr at such long intervals as is implied by this verse, His Avatàras will not be many, at least so far as our humanity is concerned. In fact we know only of two previous human Avatàras, viz : of Parashurama, and of Shri Ràmchandra. Even supposing that Bhagwàn manifested Himself in lands other than our own, His Avatàras cannot be many. How are we to explain then, the statement in the 5th verse—"Many births of Mine have passed as well as thine, O Arjuna, all these I know, thou knowest them not, O harasser of foes". The many births referred to in the verse, include not only His human Avatàras but also the many births of the great Jivanmukta who had absorbed

himself in Bhagwàn and who, owing to the infinite love and compassion he had developed in himself for humanity, had generated an impulse in Ishwara to incarnate Himself for the good of the human race.

LECTURE IV.

JNANAYOGA.

This yoga is the only means to Moksha and has bearing on the 9th and 10th verses of the 4th Chapter of the Gità. If Moksha means immortality, immortality is not possible of attainment even if you reach Brahma-Loka, because, even Brahma-Loka dissolves at Pralaya, for in the 16th verse of the 8th Chapter, Bhagwàn definitely says, "All worlds including the world of Brahmà are subject to returning again, O Arjuna, but on reaching Me, O Son of Kunti, there is no birth." Unless we reach Bhagwàn there can be no immortality for us, and in the 9th and 10th verses Bhagwàn indicates the necessary conditions

for reaching Him, and of thus attaining Moksha. The words Ràga (passion), Bhaya (fear) and Krödha (anger) in the 10th verse have very deep significance; they imply the limitations to all human endeavours at attainment of liberation, when such endeavours take no cognisance of Bhagwàn. There are schools of philosophy which ignore altogether Ishwara and His Light in their speculations and expositions of the Universe and man, and which inculcate their special methods for attaining liberation. Now this verse points out that the highest and the most serious of such philosophies can help man at the best to realise only his individuality, his Kàrana-Sharira-Self. By strict and rigid practice of the teaching of such a philosophy he can rise above the loves and hates, the ambitions and desires, the passions and appetites of the average man; for, the Kàrana-Sarira-Self, the higher man, cannot be moved by the motives and considerations which are the springs of actions of the lower self, the personality. Hence the petty desires and passions moving the personality are conquered. But that does not mean that these passions, fears, likes and dislikes have been thoroughly rooted out; and

they cannot be eradicated unless the sense of separateness is entirely got over. The Kàrana-Sarira-Self, great as it is, compared to the personality, is still separative, and has therefore the higher equivalents of passion, fear and hate. What is then the Ràga (passion) of such a philosopher? By hard struggle and exertions he has built up his individuality and he is attached to the serenity and calm which he enjoys therein. With much patience and pain he has wrought for himself a bed for repose which he does not like to quit. What then can be his Bhaya (fear)? The fears of ordinary man have no sting for him. Even death has lost its power to terrorise him. Still he has fear, and it overpowers him when he attempts to rise above his Kàrana-Sarira. By his thinking and reasoning he sees the necessity for transcending his Kàrana-Sarira, but when he makes an attempt to leave it he finds himself lost as he loses his centre; and as in the case of the ordinary man when death overtakes him he is seized with terror, so, the philosopher feels perhaps a deeper terror when he leaves his Kàrana-Sarira. The reason is, that when isolated from its three bodies the Jivàtmà

passes into Mahà-Sushupti, the neutral barrier, the Great Sunyam, which can only be passed through devotion to Bhagawàn. Not, unless his Kàrana-Sarira ego is surrendered to Bhagawàn with deep devotion, and the Real Self, the One Life, is realised thereby, is it possible to cross this neutral barrier. Further we have the word Krödha (hatred). Now to a philosopher it is his Not-Self that becomes his enemy. He has built up his individuality as against this Not-Self, and he feels himself secure, only so long as he can keep this Not-Self in subjection. Hence there is a perpetual warfare between his Self and Not-Self. The only way of getting over these three impediments to liberation is through devotion and self-surrender to Bhagawàn. When a philosopher having realised his individuality surrenders that individuality to Bhagawàn, and thus, develops devotion to Him, then he in course of time attains the life beyond individuality, realising that the Light of Ishwara is the One Life, the One Transcendent Self ; and thus attains Wisdom, Jnàna, which Shri Shankaràchàrya in his commentary on this verse says is in itself tapas. Now this wisdom-tapas, the entering

of the Light of Ishwara, the realisation of the One Life, is the only purifier, because it alone can root out the attachment, fear and hatred referred to above. His attachment goes, because when he realises the One Life he realises its peace and bliss whether he is embodied or not and amidst all sorts of surroundings which are to him mere expressions of that Life. His fear goes, because once he has attained to the Light of Ishwara, the Life above individuality, he can cross the neutral barrier, for, now he hears the Song of Life and wakes up through the Grace of Bhagawàn on the other side of the Cosmos, a regenerated man, a Jivanmukta. How then can the struggle between the Self and Not-Self remain where the very sense of separation between himself and his outside is rooted out and where Self and Not-Self are realised as expressions of the One Life, the only Reality, and in the place of his former aversion he feels divine love for all ?

LECTURE V.

PRAVRITTI-MARGA.

The next five verses from the 11th to 15th deal with action and inaction. If Moksha can be attained by seeking Bhagvàn alone, the highest goal, how is it, all men do not follow this course ; how is it that we see such differences in men that while a very few are devoted to Him, a very large majority feel no attraction to this path ? Is the Lord then partial that on a very few only He bestows his very Self that is Moksha, and on few others only devotion to Him, while a very large majority do not receive even that ? Such a question arises, and the 11th Verse gives a satisfactory reply and removes the doubt about Bhagvàn's strict impartiality. Saith the Lord, "Howsoever men approach Me, even so do I reward them ; My path do men follow in all things, O Son of Prithà". He says that whatever paths men choose, He meets them there, because all forms being filled with His life, all paths are His. But men differ in their choice according to their Guna (nature). For, as the

12th verse says, "They who long after success in actions sacrifice here to the gods ; for soon in this world of men success accrues from action". The path leading to Moksha referred to in the 10th verse has no attraction for the large majority, because it is an arduous path where tangible results are not secured immediately. Very few are the men who have the necessary patience and perseverance to undertake and carry on through innumerable lives the long and tedious process of self-purification and of surrendering the purified self to Bhagvàn, and to cling to Him alone for evermore. Our own observation confirms what Bhagavàn says in the 3rd verse of the 7th chapter that scarcely one in a thousand strives for perfection. The reason is that the large majority of human beings are impelled by desires and seek the immediate fruition of their desires ; hence instead of turning their minds and hearts towards Bhagvàn they worship the minor gods and reap according to their sowing. But Bhagvàn's divine dispensation seeks to provide even for these people, and for this purpose He says in the 13th verse that "The four-fold caste has been created by Me according

to the distribution of Guna and Karma, energies and actions ; though I am the Author thereof, know Me as Non-Agent and Immutable". The Sanskrit word for caste is Varna, not the outer colour of the physical body, but the colour of the subtler bodies, and the very word Varna implies that the four-fold caste is no artificial imposition on Man by some external authority. It finds its sanction in the very constitution of human nature. The One life is the light of Ishvara, and when it appears through the modifications of Prakriti and its Gunas, it appears as different colours, Varnas, with different Guna and Karma, energies and consequent actions. As Bhagavàn says in the 40th verse of the 18th chapter, "There is no being on earth or among gods in heaven who is free from these three qualities of matter", and further in the 41st verse it is explained, "Of Bràhmanas, Kshattriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras, O Parantapa, the duties have been distributed according to qualities born of their own natures." Evolution itself implies different stages of growth. The duties of Bràhamana, such as serenity, self-restraint, austerity, knowledge,

etc.,—of Kshattriyas, such as prowess, firmness, splendour, not flying from battle,—of Vaishyas, such as ploughing, protection of kine and trade,—of Shudras, the duty of service, fit in with the tendencies developed in them through several previous births. The scriptures in pointing out these several duties as proper for respective castes simply reveal the workings of nature's law, and thus giving man an insight into the workings of Nature, help on human evolution. This four-fold caste with its specific duties attaching to each has been devised with the double view of ensuring prosperity on earth and of gradually leading man on to the path of renunciation. It is made attractive to the average man by the graduated scheme of rewards (vide Apastamba Dharma Sutra 22-23), while the various restraints it imposes make for the control of body and senses and the starving out of the desire-nature. Moreover, as against the modern secular conception of Society as being a body politic, the basic idea on which the system is founded is a spiritual one in which the four castes are considered as forming so many limbs of the Purusha, the spiritual Being, Prajapati, (Vide Purusha-Sukta). The Brà-

hmanas are His mouth, the Kshattriyas are His arms, the Vaishyas His thighs and His feet are the Sudras. Here there is no question of great and small; all are parts of an organic whole, and all have to perform their proper functions to preserve the welfare of the whole. It made the mind familiar with the idea of all work being a sacrifice. The Brāhmana does his work; so also the other castes do their works. It gave a spiritual direction to all work by holding prominently before men this idea of human solidarity and sacrifice. Strange as it may seem, this institution of caste founded on the idea of a common spiritual origin pointed to an organic solidarity and spiritual unity of the race. Though the Colours (Varnas) are different from each other, the separative element was accidental, and in reality they are one in their origin, the Light. So viewed, the system induced in each a sense of duty irrespective of results and gradually paved the way for worshipping Bhagavān through devotion to one's duty referred to in the 46th verse of the 18th chapter: "Him from Whom is the evolution of all beings, by Whom all this is pervaded,—by worshipping Him with proper duty, man attains

perfection". While the fostering of a sense of duty attenuates the personality and lifts motive out of personal inclination on to the impersonal idea of righteousness, the recognition of Bhagavàn as the source of all Life and Dharma curbs the Ahankàra involved in the separative sense of duty, and thus are laid the sure foundations for the life of renunciation, and a hankering for liberation, Mumukshutva, is aroused. For action in which attachment and Ahankàra are absent does not bind. Thus, though Bhagavàn in the 13th verse says that the fourfold caste was created by Him, yet in the 14th verse it is said "Actions pollute Me not, nor have I a desire for the fruit of actions. He who knows Me thus is not bound by actions." The Lord says: "Because I have no attachment, action does not bind Me."¹ Similarly if men perform action dispassionately and without Ahankàra, such action will not bind them. Therefore proceeds the Lord in the 15th verse: "Thus knowing, men of old performed action in the hope of liberation; therefore, do thou also perform action as did the ancients in the olden time."

ACTION AND INACTION.

Why is a reference to the ancients made in the previous verse ? Because, as the following 16th verse says, "What is action ? What is inaction ?—As to this even the wise are deluded. I shall teach thee such action by knowing which thou shalt be liberated from evil." Action and inaction are not so simple to understand rightly. Therefore says the 17th verse, "Thou hast to know something even of action, something of unlawful action and something of inaction ; hard to understand is the nature of action." What then is the Mystery about Action and Inaction, on the right understanding of which a man is liberated from evil ? The next verse hints at this mystery. "He who can see inaction in action, who can also see action in inaction—he is wise among men, he is devout, he is the performer of all actions". Bhagavàn nowhere says that there is a short cut to liberation. He leaves us in no doubt as to the high moral and spiritual qualifications necessary for an aspirant for Moksha. So insistent is He on this point that lest He should be misunderstood, whenever He refers to the attainment of

Liberation, He invariably describes the marks of such an individual—how he conducts himself and what moral equipment he should possess. Bearing all this in mind we should not lightly pass over the above three verses about action and inaction. The ultimate right realisation of the nature of action and inaction presupposes therefore, all the high moral and spiritual attainments which alone liberate man from the bonds of Samsāra. But the verses have application even to beginners. Thus, as soon as a man begins to free himself from the sway of desire and strives to replace personal inclination by duty as the motive of action, he sees that when the call of duty is not heeded and what ought to be done is left undone, he is bound by the very non-performance of duty, while work done in discharge of duty has no power to bind. Thus he begins to see action in inaction, and vice versa. The Mumukshu, the aspirant for liberation, sees farther than this. He sees that the only way of rising above the binding power of action is through devotion to his duty and self-surrender to Bhagavān. Duty so performed causes the development of knowledge in him which makes possible the

renunciation of all Karma. In such action, as leads to knowledge culminating in renunciation of Karma, he sees inaction. And as renunciation of Karma or actionlessness can be attained through action he sees, in this actionlessness, action which made the attainment of actionlessness possible. But the sage realises the truth of action in inaction and vice versa in a still deeper sense. He sees that the cause of action is desire and he sees further that this desire pervades the senses, the mind and the intellect (Buddhi). Knowing this he ever keeps himself above the three by rooting out desire and establishing himself in the Light of Ishvara. In the words of the "Light on the Path" he has raised his individuality out of the shadow into the shine and has, therefore, lifted himself out of the region in which Karma operates. He has realised the actionless Self, and in all actions he sees inaction. Further, as a result of his utter purity and rooting out of Ahankàra, he has become a perfect channel of the One Life and is at perfect rest and peace. But from him continuously flow the divine influences which purify, elevate and spiritualise everything about him. His very presence vivifies and stimulates the

better nature of those about him, and he draws out the best that is in them. Thus, though he seems to be doing nothing yet he does all that ought to be done. Of such a sage the 18th verse says: "He is wise among men, he is a real Yogi, he is the performer of all action." A short story illustrates the truth of how a sage becomes a performer of all action by virtue of his identifying himself with the One Self and how a tiny rill of individual effort could be made to embrace in its beneficent results the whole universe by identification with the One Self. Once it is said that Mahàdeva, the Great God, had to perform a sacrifice (Yajna), and all 33 crores of gods had to be invited to this ceremony. So the Great God made His son Kàrtikeya Swàmi go round and invite all the gods to the sacrifice. The vehicle of Kàrtikeya Swàmi is a peacock, and bestriding this vehicle, strutted forth Kàrtikeya Swàmi on his long and tedious errand. Several days passed, and the day appointed for the sacrifice was very near. But the rider of the peacock had scarcely carried the invitation to a tithe of the number of the guests, and at this rate it became evident that the invitation would not

reach all the Devas in time. And it became necessary to entrust this work to some wiser person, and accordingly Ganapati was chosen for it. Now Ganapati as his physiognomy shows is the wisest of Gods. The large elephant's head carries a big brain, and he has the skill and craft to support the weight of this bulky head and his rotund belly on the back of a tiny mouse. Such is Ganesh, the God of wisdom—He who performs the maximum work with minimum labour. What a poor insignificant creature is a mouse beside the showy, strutting peacock. Yet Ganesh was chosen to do the work. The time at his disposal was very short, and looking to the number of guests to be invited and the vehicle of the invitation, it seemed all but a hopeless task. Yet Ganapati thinking himself for a while gathered himself up for doing his Father's bidding. Thrice did he go round the great God, and prostrating himself before Him, who is the God of gods, invoked all the 33 crores of gods in his name and gave them the invitation through the Great, and on the appointed day came all the guests to the sacrifice.

LECTURE VI.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAGE.

This discourse was based on the next six verses from the 19th to the 24th. The 19th verse contains a general definition of a Sage. "He whose engagements are all devoid of desires and purposes, and whose actions have been burnt by the fire of Wisdom, Him the wise call a sage." When a man becomes impersonal, that is when he has realised his Self, all desires and thoughts of the personal self depart from him. But still there is the idea of self and not-self, which is the root-ignorance, and unless this is dispelled by the Light of Ishwara, the seed of Karma is not burnt out. In a sage, even this seed of Karma has been burnt out. Hence his actions have no binding power, because they cannot sprout and grow any longer. Therefore are his actions said to be burnt by the fire of wisdom in the definition of a sage, which we are considering.

The next five verses describe the two types among the Sages defined in the 19th verse. Even

after liberation, a few men for some reason continue to live amongst people and mix with them in wordly vocations. They have no purpose of their own to serve. But they engage themselves in action to set an example to other men and body forth in their daily work and conduct the ideal of true sacrifice as Janaka did. There is a second type of the sage very rare to meet with. He lives a life of obscurity and seclusion, at peace with all beings, solely devoted to the religious enlightenment of his race. He lives unknown and unrecognised, radiating in all directions strong spiritual impulses that purify and ennoble. Such a type embodies the ideal of renunciation. In the five verses from 20th to 24th, which we are considering, the three verses 20, 23 and 24 refer to the type which embodies the ideal of sacrifice, and verses 21 and 22 to the type embodying the ideal of renunciation. Understood in this sense, the apparently meaningless repetitions in these five verses gain a deep significance and a perfect appositeness. Taking the sage embodying in his life and conduct the ideal of sacrifice we have in the 20th, 23rd and 24th verses the following statements. The 20th verse runs : "Having

abandoned attachment for the fruits of action, ever content, dependent on no one, though engaged in actions, nothing at all does he do." The sage has realised the One Self. He is ever established in that supreme Bliss of the Self and is therefore ever content; he is dependent on none, because everything derives its reality from the One Self which he has become, and though he is engaged in actions for setting an example to men, he does not lose his hold of the consciousness of the Self, and he is not bound by what he does. He is further described in the 23rd verse: "Of the man whose attachment is gone, who is liberated, whose mind is established in knowledge, who acts for the sake of sacrifice (Yajna)—his whole action melts away." [Here sacrifice (Yajna) means Nārāyana, Bhagavān. The sage has no attachment whatsoever and he performs sacrifices to satisfy the Yajnapurusha who is Nārāyana. How his whole action is reduced to ashes in this fire of wisdom-sacrifice is described in the next 24th verse: "Brahman is the offering, Brahman the oblation, by Brahman is the oblation poured into the fire of Brahman, Brahman verily shall be reached by him who always sees Brahman in

action." What to the ordinary man appear as the five distinct elements in a sacrifice—(1) the performer of the sacrifice ; (2) the oblation ; (3) the pouring of the oblation into the fire ; (4) the fire ; (5), the instrument by which the oblation is poured into the fire—all these are verily the Brahman to the sage. It is not by an intellectual effort that he sees in each of these elements Brahman, but there is not present to his consciousness anything but Brahman, the Self, and thus are all his actions reduced into Brahman, the Self, without any residue.

The second type of the sage embodying the ideal of renunciation is extolled in the 21st and 22nd verses thus : "Free from desire, with the mind and the self controlled, having relinquished all possessions, doing mere bodily action, he incurs no sin ; satisfied with what comes to him by chance, rising above the pairs of opposites, free from envy, equanimous in success or failure, though acting he is not bound." The only comments that can be offered on these verses are the following. He has relinquished all possessions, he is devoid of the sense of 'mine'ness. He does mere bodily action, which means that

his actions are strictly restricted to keep his body living, as regards which, again, there is no idea of possession in him. His body is not his, but has now become a temple of Divinity, as his Jiva has become Shiva, the Self. He is satisfied with what comes to him without effort, and is free from the pairs of opposites ; he is the same amidst all changes in his environments. He is content to be obscure and is not moved by jealousy when others are extolled for their merits and attainments.

LECTURE VII.

ACTION-SACRIFICE AND WISDOM-SACRIFICE.

In the next 9 verses of the 4th chapter, from the 25th to 33rd, are enumerated the several kinds of sacrifice which people perform with definite objects. The 25th verse refers to the sacrificial rites in devotion to the minor Devas, which Karma-Yogis perform to gain some end. In this verse also reference is made to Wisdom-Sacrifice to makè the enumeration exhaustive and also to com-

pare it with all other Yajnas subsequently. This highest sacrifice consists in pouring the self by the Self into the fire of Brahman, so that the limitations of the conditioned self are destroyed by the fire of the Brahman, and the Self so purified and freed of limitations, is realised as Brahman itself. The 26th verse refers to the restraint of senses and also to the sacrifice which consists in directing the senses only to such objects as are not forbidden by Shāstras and restraining them from forbidden objects. The 27th verse refers to the efforts of the student at concentrating his mind on the Self, in which effort the functions of the senses and vital airs are suspended as a result of deep thinking. The 28th verse tells us how some give away their wealth to the deserving, how others observe austerities, while others still practice concentration of mind, and still others recite the vedic texts according to prescribed rules, and others still read scriptures with the object of understanding them, while there are the ascetics observing particular self-imposed vows very rigidly. All such acts are called sacrifices. Hence the word sacrifice as used here is very comprehensive. Even the practice of

Prāṇāyāma (restraint and regulation of breath) and regulation of food, which are referred to in the 29th and 30th verses, are called sacrifices. The performers of all these are extolled as knowers of sacrifice, and their sacrifices have the efficacy of destroying their sins, as against the impious who cook for themselves and eat verily sin,—who are referred to in the 13th verse of the 3rd chapter. The man who is performing even the most trivial sacrifice for gaining a trivial object is a wiser and better man than one in whom the very idea of sacrifice is absent. Because, as the following 31st verse puts it, “Even this world is not for the non-sacrificer ; whence the other ? O best of Kurus.” Further, the nature of Karma being determined by the motive inspiring it, if the above enumerated sacrifices are performed with the object of reaching Brahman, that object also is gained in course of time through the purification of the mind and intellect resulting from the performance of the sacrifices. The 31st verse says : “Eating ambrosia, the remnant of the sacrifice, they go to Eternal Brahman ;” and Shri Shankarāchārya commenting on the verse says : “Performing the sacrifices mentioned above, they

eat at intervals prescribed food, in a prescribed manner; food so eaten is called ambrosia, Amrita. If they wish for Moksha they go to Brahman in course of time, not at once, as we should understand for consistency's sake."

Then comes the 32nd verse which runs :
 "Thus manifold sacrifices are revealed at the mouth of Brahman; know them all as born of action. Thus knowing, thou shalt be liberated."
 This verse in one word points out the crucial difference between wisdom-sacrifice and all the other sacrifices enumerated above. The latter, says Bhagwàn, are all born of action, are of the not-self, because the Self is actionless, and if this actionless Self is realised one becomes liberated. The transcendental superiority of wisdom-sacrifice over all the sacrifices is dwelt upon and the reason for it is given in the 33rd verse. "Superior is wisdom-sacrifice to the sacrifice with objects, O! harasser of thy foes; all action without exception, O son of Prithà, is comprehended in wisdom". Wisdom-sacrifice transcends all sacrifices with objects, because all action is comprehended in wisdom. All the

good that can be done by actions is achieved by wisdom which comprehending all actions transcends them all.

LECTURE VIII.

THE SUREST WAY TO MOKSHA.

In the 33rd verse wisdom was praised ; and in the following verses, *i.e.*, the 34th and onwards Bhagawàn describes this wisdom and points out the surest means of attaining that wisdom. The 34th and 39th verses should be read together as having bearing on the means of attaining wisdom. The 39th verse brings out what the 34th verse contains by implication. The 34th verse runs thus : "Know this (wisdom) by long prostration, by enquiry, by service ; those men of wisdom who have realised the truth will teach thee wisdom." This wisdom is ultimately to be imparted to his disciple by the Guru who has realised the Truth, but what should be the equipment with which the disciple should approach his Guru ? To understand the full significance, "by long prostration", "by en-

quiry," "by service" in the above verse we should ponder over what the 39th verse says. It runs, "He obtains wisdom who is full of faith, who is devoted and who has subdued the senses, and having obtained wisdom he ere long attains to the supreme peace." Unless a man has faith in the existence of this wisdom, Brahma-vidyà, and also in the existence of the Jivan-muktas who are its custodians his prostration cannot be genuine and sincere. When he has such faith and also when he appreciates the greatness of this wisdom and is convinced of its being the only means of triumphing over the evil of Śamsàra, then only is it possible for him to approach the Guru in that spirit of sincere humility and reverence which the physical action of long prostration symbolises. Thus faith is the first qualification that is necessary to really prostrate before the Guru and approach him. Added to faith must be the earnest devotion to wisdom, and without this longing for wisdom he cannot properly enquire. Before this, he had read the scriptures and had tried to understand them with a view to know the self through the not-self. By prosecuting his enquiries on analytical lines he had understood

what Atmà and what Anàtmà is. But now he studies the scriptures to know the mystery of the One Life. His enquiries are deeper, they run on the lines of synthesis and are transcendental. He longs to attain to the Vidyà, the wisdom that alone can remove the root ignorance of separativeness—Avidyà. He longs to know that which is beyond both self and not-self and of which both self and not-self alike are expressions. The deeper and more earnest are his enquiries and longings, the more clearly does he see the greatness of the Guru; for he is the embodiment of the divine wisdom; he alone, who is also the representative of Ishwara, can dispel the darkness of Avidyà, the false separative knowledge, by kindling the light of true wisdom. Realising this, his devotion to the Guru increases, and out of devotion and love he entirely surrenders himself to the Guru. The second qualification is therefore a deep longing for and devotion to Wisdom. Says the "Light on the Path," "Those that ask shall have. But though the ordinary man asks perpetually, his voice is not heard. For he asks with his mind only, and the voice of the mind is only heard on that plane on which the mind acts....."

To ask is to feel the hunger within, the yearning of spiritual aspiration." The third qualification is "service." With this goes the subdual of the senses in the 39th verse. Hitherto he had controlled the senses in order to realise his self against his not-self. But now the senses must be trained and tuned to see the unity, the One Life. He must now strive to realise the One Life in his action and in his daily life which now becomes one service of his Guru. Says Bhagawàn in the 27th verse of the 9th chapter : "Whatever thou doest, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou sacrificest, whatever thou givest, whatever austerity thou engagest in, do it as an offering to Me." Out of devotion and love he meditates on and worships his Guru-Deva ; and the inner spirit of surrender and worship is reduced to practice, and in that all his activities become one service of his Guru. The senses are thus trained to see and realise unity and he realises the presence of his Guru at all times and at all places and in all actions. This is real Sebà which sees *Sa eba àsamantàt*—"He indeed everywhere." By such discipline he qualifies himself to receive the wisdom from his Guru, as the 34th verse says, "those

men of wisdom who have realised the truth will teach thee wisdom." For, the "Light on the Path" says, "when the disciple is ready, the Master is ready also." What this wisdom is and what its efficacy is in liberating man from all evil and ignorance, are taught in the five following slokas from 35th to 39th. "Knowing which," says the 35th verse, "thou shalt not again thus fall into error, O Pàndava ; and by which thou wilt see all beings in thy self and also in Me."

This is true Wisdom by which all beings from Brahmà, the Creator, down to the tiniest blade of grass, as Shri Shankarachàrya puts it in his commentary on this sloka, are seen in one's real Self which is the light of Ishwara, the one life, and which is also Ishwara Himself. Thus does he realise his identity with Brahman, the Self which, expressing itself from Brahmà down to the tiniest blade of grass, remains transcendent. The significance of this profound wisdom, the supreme realisation of the self, is well brought out in the following story in the 13th and 14th chapter of the 10th skanda of the Srimad Bhàgavata. It is said that once Brahmà, the Creator, in order to test the divine powers of

Bhagwàn hid away the calves and cowherd-boys who were tending the calves, and kept them under his Màya. Sri Krishna out of Compassion for the mothers of the Gopas and cows, and also with a view to teach Brahmà, became himself all the calves and cowherd-boys even to the minutest detail of colour and dress. About a year passed, and things passed on as usual without the parents of the cowherd-boys noticing any change excepting that they felt a deeper love for their boys as did the cows also for their calves. Balaràma, who until now believed that the Gopas were the incarnations of the gods and the cows of the Rishis, could not account for this sudden increase in the love of both human and bovine parents for their offspring evolved from Bhagawàn's Màya. So also was Brahmà perplexed when he could not distinguish between the calves and cowherd-boys (whom he had concealed and kept under Màya) and their duplicates which he now found engaged as usual in the wood, until Bhagavàn, out of compassion for Brahmà and with a view to show how utterly unreliable outward forms are in disclosing the reality, appeared himself in His divine form from each of the calves and

cowherds which He had created. Balaràma also saw the error of considering individualities however high as the final reality. All forms, processes and individualities derive their value and interest as indicating the Self, but utterly fail as measures of the immeasurable Self whom no number of Brahmàndas can exhaust and whose mystery Brahmà himself cannot fathom. Such is the wisdom of the Self that the Guru imparts to his disciple, and on gaining which the disciple attains, as the 39th verse says, Supreme Peace. It is a wise injunction handed down by Hindu tradition which says: "Seek not to trace back the origin of a Rishi and a river." The Rishi, the Jivanmukta, is par excellence the embodiment of divine wisdom, the wisdom of the self, the negation of the separative. But man's ambitious curiosity lays its blasphemous hand on the most scared and cherished ideals and foists its limitations and imperfections on the limitless and perfect. Hence we have the sad spectacle of modern Theosophical literature revelling in trivial and weird stories purporting to be past lives of Mahàtmàs, which read like third rate novels. Not content with such desecration we find even Bhagwàn Himself dragged

down and duplicated to support new fangled theories.

The greatness of divine wisdom as the only means of attaining liberation is taught in the following three verses, from 36 to 38: "Even shouldst thou be most sinful of all the sinners, thou shalt verily cross all sin by the bark of wisdom. As kindled fire reduces fuel to ashes, O Arjuna, so does wisdom-fire reduce all actions to ashes. Verily there exists here no purifier equal to wisdom. He who is perfected by Yoga finds it in time in himself by himself." To the man seeking Moksha even Dharma becomes a sin, because Dharma itself is separative, and the only bark of safety in which the sea of Avidyà of separative life can be crossed is Wisdom which by its innate nature, reducing everything to unity, burns out all sin. Shri Shankaràchàrya, commenting on the statement in the above verses that wisdom-fire burns actions to ashes as fire burns fuel, says that the simile should not be taken literally, but what is meant to be conveyed is that wisdom renders all action impotent as regards its binding power. The attainment of wisdom not only enables

man to perform action without being bound by it, but it gives him the power to consume by the fire of wisdom even such of his past karma as has not begun to work itself out. This brings us to the subject of the records of the past lives, where they are preserved and how and to whom they become accessible. There are three records of past events. The physical memory of man is a record of past events but of this life only and is not of the events of past lives. The second record is found in the astral light which alone is accessible to the psychic. The third record is Akàsh, the cosmic ether. This is the most permanent record and lasts for Kalpas and Kalpas. But this is accessible only to the initiate who is on the threshold of liberation and who has to square up all his past account before becoming perfect. This power of reading the past comes to him as a result of his spiritual progress and the consequent illumination. Therefore does Bhagavan say in the 15th verse of the 15th chapter of the Gità, "from Me are memory and knowledge as well as their loss, etc.", and Shri Shankaràchàrya commenting on this says, "Just as memory and knowledge occur in persons as a result of

their good deeds, so as a result of their sins, loss of memory and knowledge occur in the sinful". Says the "Light on the Path," "The operation of the actual laws of Karma are not to be studied until the disciple has reached the point at which they no longer affect him. The Initiate has a right to demand the secrets of nature and to know the rules which govern human life. He obtains this right by having escaped from the limits of nature and by having freed himself from the rules which govern human life. He has become a recognised portion of the divine element and is no longer affected by that which is temporary. He then obtains a knowledge of the laws which govern temporary conditions. Therefore you who desire to understand the laws of Karma, attempt first to free yourself from these laws ; and this can only be done by fixing your attention on that which is unaffected by these laws." From the above authoritative statements it should be clear that these records cannot be laid under contribution by so called occultists for writing out stories for the delectation of their followers, which are taken
 * to substantiate their claims to occult powers:
 Perhaps the record in the astral light may be

within their ken, but the results of such psychic visions are not at all reliable, because the psychic who has not burnt out the residue of senses, mind and individuality in the fire of wisdom, cannot but project himself and fancy that he reads external records which are nothing but his secret thoughts and desires externalised. More reliable perhaps are the results arrived at by the unpretentious professor Denton through psychometry published in his book called the "Soul of Things" than the weird tales of personal loves and hates which are now-a-days published in theosophical books as evidences of occultism and which are claimed as the results of the researches in Akàshic record. This is another instance in which high names have been dragged down to the level of modern ignorance.

It is worthy of notice that at three different places in this chapter it has been shown how wisdom lifts a man above the operations of Karma. These are not meaningless repetitions of the same teaching but are meant to show the three aspects of wisdom-sacrifice, and how the fire of wisdom, by reducing to ashes the triad—Kartà the doer, Kriyà the deed, and Karma

the object of the deed, lifts the man of wisdom above the operations of the law of Karma. In the description of wisdom-sacrifice given in the 24th verse, it is shown how the Kriyà, the whole action with all its accessories, is rendered impotent as regards its power to bind. The description in the 25th verse tells us how by the identification of the purified self, the Kartà, with Brahman the One Self, action loses its binding power; and lastly how by reducing the whole outside world, the Karma (not Self), into the Self, action is burnt to ashes is described in the 35th verse. There can be no vain repetitions in the Gita, seeing that it is the concentrated essence of the highest teaching and thought that is capable of appreciation by man. All that man's mind can speculate upon and man's spirit can yearn for with regard to the mystery of life is found deep embedded in the apparently simple aphorisms. Attempts are always made to read into the Gita one's own pet theories, and partisans have sought its high authority to establish their own creeds. Some have called it the book of devotion, others as inculcating action. But the Gita is as comprehensive as life itself. It is the Book of

Life and embraces in its majestic sweep of divine teaching all phases of life. It is the glory of Bhagvàn's teaching that out of His infinite compassion He limits Himself to suit even the narrowest intellect, takes cognisance of lowly acts and practices and shows how even these can be turned towards Himself and be thus spiritualised. Ignoring Him and His divine teachings those who hanker after other knowledge are as Uddhava says.

वासुदेवं परित्यज्य योऽन्यं देवमुपासते ।
तृषितो जान्हवोतोरे कूपं बांक्षति दुर्भगः ॥

“He who rejecting Vāsudeva goes after other gods is like the unfortunate man who feeling thirsty on the banks of Gangà, runs in search of a well.”
