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# BHAGAVAD GEETA

S.M.S.O. Sabha, Publication No. 204

Vol. I  
Chap. I to III

by

**G.M. Padmanabhachar** B.A., B.L.,  
Coimbatore



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*A Critical Study*  
*of*  
**BHAGAVAD GEETA**

**Vol. - I**  
**Chapters I - III**

*By*  
**Sri C.M. Padmanabhachar B.A., B.L.,**  
*Advocate*  
*(Son of Madhwanatha Muni)*  
**Coimbatore**

*Re-Published by*  
**Sriman Madhwa Siddhantonnahini Sabha**  
**TIRUCHANUR - 517 503**  
**(Near Tirupati, A.P)**

2007

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*With English Rendering by*

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Son of Madhwanatha Muni , Coimbatore.

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**C.M. Padmanabhachar**





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## PUBLISHERS NOTE FOR THE PRESENT PUBLICATION

Sriman Madhwa Siddhanta Onnahini Sabha is proud in publishing the reprint version of the book Srimad Bhagavad Gita originally printed by Sri C.M.Padmanabhachar, B.A., B.L., Coimbatore , in the year 1916.

Srimad Bhagavad Gita is understood by one and all as an universal teaching, supreme philosophical guidance taught by Sarvothama Sri Krishna to all jeevas and it is the crux or essence of all Vedas, Upanishads and all sastras as told in Mahabharata

सर्वोपनिषदो गावो दोग्धा गोपाल नन्दनः ।

पार्थो वत्सः सुधीर्भोक्ता दुग्धं गीताऽमृतं महत् ॥

*Sarvo upanishado gavo dogdha gopalanandana :*

*Partho vathsa: sudhir bhoktha dhugdham-geethamrutam*

*mahath — 4/11*

Mahabharata proudly announces that those persons who have in their heart the four 'Ga' - kaaras viz., Gita, Ganga, Gayatri & Govinda will have no recurring births

गीता, गङ्गा च गायत्री, गोविन्देति हृदि स्थिते ।

चतुर् 'ग'-कार संयुक्ते पुनर्जन्म न विद्यते ॥

*Geetha ganga cha gayathri govindeti hrudhi sthithe*

*Chathur 'GA' kara samyukthe punar janma na vidyathe — 4/12*

SMSO Sabha has undertaken the great task of publishing the Srimad Bhagavad Gita with Sri Madhva Bashya in English. It was a rarest co-incidence that when Mr.R.Ananthan, Hony. Secretary was asking Mr. G.V.Bindhu Madhavan about the possibilities of reprinting of this version, one Mr. Dwarakanath of USA let known his intention to assist a similar publication at the same point of time. In the execution of the above great task, it was decided to re-publish the first Shatka viz., the first six chapters published in the year 1916 by Honourable Sri C.M.Padmanabhachar, B.A., B.L., noted High Court Vakil and a first formal Secretary of the SMSO Sabha, Tiruchanoor.

The Second Shatka was already published in Sanskrit by learned Sri D.V. Subbachar, a Chartered Accountant from Coimbatore and accordingly it has been decided to publish the translated version of the Second Shatka which will be done by his noble son Sri T.S.Raghavendran. The third shatka is being rendered into English by Sri T.S.Raghavendran, M.A., B.L., son of Sri D.V. Subbachar and the present Joint Secretary of the SMSO Sabha.

Accordingly, we are going to publish Srimad Bhagavad Gita, all the 18 chapters in approximately six volumes of about 700 to 800 pages per volume.

The First Shatka, i.e. Sri C.M.Padmanabhachar's book being 90 years old, only one copy of the book was available for type-setting. It contained several broken pages. This caused delay in type-setting and also in



proof correction. Such difficulties will not be there in respect of the remaining publications.

Sri C.M.Padmanbhachar's book is based on the authorities of about 10 works. He has made a comparative study of all Vedantas and has brought out an elaborate Dvaita version which we hope all will enjoy. Viswa Madhva Sangh of USA through generous hearts of several persons have made a handsome contribution in bringing out this publication. Detailed list of donors of the above and others is annexed.

Our thanks are due to dedicated service of proof correction work done by Sri C.H.Raghoothamachar, Coimbatore, for the present publication. *Srimushnam* Sri V. Nagarajachar, Editor "SRI MADHWA SIDDHANTA" & "SRI SUDHA", Srirangam and Sri N. Sethumadhavan, Proprietor of M/s. Veda Vidya Printers, Srirangam have done a commendable service for the elegant and neat printing of this publication.

May Lord Sri Hari-Vayugalu bless us to render more and more humble dedicated service to the cause of the great Dwaita Vedanta which is the only Truth based on the Apourusheya Vedas and supported by all Sadagamas.

**R. Ananthan, B.Sc., FCA,**  
Chartered Accountant,  
Hony. Secretary,  
S.M.S.O. Sabha,  
Tiruchanoor.

TIRUPUR  
12.6.2007, Tuesday  
Sarvajit Nama Samvatsara  
Adhika Jesta Krishna Dwadhashi.

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**Sriman Madhwa Siddhantonnahini Sabha**

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# FOREWORD

BY DEWAN **BAHADUR K. KRISHNASWAMI RAO**, C.I.E.  
*Retired Dewan of Travancore.*

Sri Madhwa Shastra Sampanna C.M. Padmanabhacharyar, High Court Vakil, Coimbatore, has done eminent service to the cause of the Dwaita Literature by publishing in English, the BHAGAVAD GEETA with his commentaries thereon. He belongs to the illustrious Tamraparni family which has been enjoying a high reputation for the proficiency of its members in Sanskrit literature generally, and more particularly in Dwaita Philosophy. His father is one of the most learned pandits now living. Mr. Padmanabhacharyar's acknowledged proficiency both in English and Sanskrit and the religious education and training he had under his renowned father may be taken as guarantee for the accuracy and soundness of the interpretations he has given to the texts in accordance with the doctrines of the Dwaita School of Philosophy. His great work in English, *The Life and Teachings of Sri Madhwa*, has already made him famous with the students of sacred literature.

It is hardly necessary to state that the BHAGAVAD GEETA is held in the highest esteem by all schools of Hindu Philosophy and enjoys a world-wide reputation and popularity for its sublime teach-

ings. The absence of commentaries on this most venerable work according to the tenets of the Dwaita School, in languages other than Sanskrit, has all along been greatly felt; and therefore Mr. Padmanabhacharyar deserves the thanks of the literary world for supplying the great want.

The method which the commentator has adopted is very commendable. Each Sanskrit sloka (verse) of the Geeta is printed in Devanagari characters; it is followed by each word in the sloka with its English equivalent; and then comes the English translation of the sloka as a whole. The commentaries on each appear under the translation in easy and elegant English. At the end of each important chapter, a lucid summary of the doctrines and interpretations of all the three schools is given. No student can desire for more help to his study of the BHAGAVAD GEETA than what is contained in the volume before us.

In his commentaries, Mr. Padmanabhacharyar gives prominence to the interpretation of Sri Madhwacharya, the greatest exponent of the Dwaita System of Philosophy; and reviews at length the difference between this interpretation and those given by the Adwaita and Visishtadwaita schools, and shows why the interpretation of Sri Madhwacharya should be preferred to those of the other Acharyas.

The present volume consists of the first six chapters of the BHAGAVAD GEETA, which chiefly treat of God (Paramatma) and souls (Jeeva or Atmas), their nature and mutual relations, the duties (Dharmas)



that men have to perform and the way to salvation (emancipation from Samsara of the cycle of births and deaths). The Geeta preaches the highest ideal of duty under all conditions of life.

Arjuna (the great hero of the Mahabharata war) hesitated to do his duty as a Kshatriya (warrior) in the Great War between his eldest brother (Yudhishtira) and his cousin (Duryodhana), as he found arrayed in arms on the opposite side, his venerable elders, preceptors and dearest relations. He strongly expressed his great abhorrence to the killing of those men and his determination to retire from the battlefield. Sri Krishna who is an incarnation of God, with His unlimited and natural love and affection for the righteous, had most graciously condescended to be the Driver (Sarathi) of Arjuna's chariot, during the war. He explained to the hesitating hero, and through him, to the whole world, that in a war of a just cause, the killing of those who are engaged in actual fight on the opposite side, is no sin; that it is a great fallacy to suppose that the destruction of the body which is only an external and mortal covering of the immortal soul, is the destruction of the soul within; that souls change their bodies as men change their bodies as men change their raiment; that death comes in the same way as birth, childhood, manhood and old age, in natural succession; that death is the common and inevitable lot of life in all forms and conditions; that the vindication of a right cause as a matter of disinterested duty is not only the highest merit but also the surest path to salvation; that even from a temporal point of view, retirement from the battlefield is worse than death itself to a world-re-

nowned hero; for such a retirement would be viewed by the public as cowardice and would bring unbearable ridicule and disgrace; that even if Arjuna were killed in the war by his foes, it would be good, for his immortal soul would go to Swarga (intermediate region of bliss) that God, is His inscrutable providence, ordains and regulates all matters, small or great; that it is not possible for humanity to do or not to do anything against His decrees; and that Duty which belongs to every person as the member of a family, as the member of a society, as the subject of a state and as a creature of God, must be performed with physical, moral and mental purity, and with complete resignation to His will. To impress on the mind of Arjuna, the highest authority of the teachings given, Sri Krishna manifested to Him his Universal Form.

The cardinal points, on which the three schools of Philosophy (Adwaita, Visishtadwaita and Dwaita) differ, are as to the nature of souls and their relation to God. The Adwaitins completely identify souls with God, Visishtadwaitins hold that souls are eternal entities quite distinct from, and subordinate to, God, but that all are equal in the enjoyment of bliss after salvation (Mukti); and Dwaitins while agreeing with the Visishtadwaitins as to the eternally separate existence of souls as distinct entities and their complete subordination to God are of opinion that the bliss enjoyed by the emancipated souls (Muktas) varies with the merit to the credit of each soul.

The highly flexible character of the Sanskrit language, the absence of definitions of the important words and expressions used in works of authority, and the



personal convictions and inclinations of the commentators, have naturally given scope for differences of opinion as to the meaning of the texts which specially speak of God and souls. These differences are not surprising, for we know by personal experience, that even in the interpretation of modern legislative enactments which, by means of definitions and illustrations, have done their best to secure unanimity in judicial decisions, eminent judges very often differ in the construction of statutes. The Bible and the Koran have given rise to differences of interpretation and to the formation of different religious sects such as the protestant, the Roman Catholic, the Greek Church, (to say nothing of the sub-divisions such as Calvinists, Free Church, High Church) among Christians; and Sunnies, Shiah, and Wahabees among the Muhammadans.

The readers of Sree Madhwacharya's original Bhashyas (commentaries in Sanskrit) will find that, as a rule, he has quoted in support of his interpretation, authorities from the Vedas, Smritis, Puranas and Itihasas. Mr. Padmanabhacharyar has not reproduced them in the work before us, lest it should grow too voluminous; but this omission does not in the least affect the faithfulness with which he has followed the interpretation of Sree Madhwacharya. The readers may rest assured that, in Mr. Padmanabhacharyar's commentaries, they have the most accurate interpretation, of texts as given by Sree Madhwacharya. He is bringing out a Sanskrit commentary, in which the portions omitted in the English are given. Those who are acquainted with the Sanskrit language will find it very useful and interesting.

We shall give only instances of the manner in which Mr. Padmanabhacharyar has dealt with the texts. The forty-fifth and forty-sixth slokas in the second chapter of BHAGAVAD GEETA have raised much controversy, as their superficial reading seems to throw doubt on the authority of the Vedas. Mr Padmanabhacharyas elaborately considers the commentaries of the different schools and shows that the interpretation given by Sree Madhwacharya fully maintains the high authority of the Vedas. That the interpretations of Sri Madhwacharya is the right one is proved by the 22nd sloka of Chapter X of the BHAGAVAD GEETA in which Sree Krishna says, "I am Sama Veda among the Vedas". All that is meant by the two slokas in the second Chapter is that the Vedic rites must be performed without hankering for their promised rewards. This is consistent with the repeated injunctions of Sree Krishna to Arjuna never to undertake a duty for the temporal rewards it promises, lest the failure to secure the reward should discourage the resumption of duty. In Sloka 40 of Chapter VI we further find the assurance of Sree Krishna that no good act is ever spiritually lost.

In Conclusion, I wish to assure the talented and erudite commentator Mr. Padmanabhacharyar, that he has admirably done his duty as a scholar and commentator, in the spirit inculcated by the Greatest Teacher of the World, Sree Krishna, in the BHAGAVAD GEETA.

Triplicane  
16th August, 1916

K. KRISHNASWAMI RAO.



## A FEW WORDS BY THE AUTHOR

An association designated Sree Madhwa Tatwa Bubhutsu Sabha was doing good work for a time in Coimbatore. Under its auspices, weekly meetings used to be held for some years, for religious discourses. It chanced that I was called on to deliver lectures on BHAGAVAD GEETA and M.R. Ry. H. Rama Rao Avl. was requested to expound Yukti Mallika.

In trying to do justice to my work, I was forced to make something like a comparative study. This opened to my eyes a vista of interesting information. Day by day, the conviction grew upon me that Sree Madhwa's interpretations were preferable to those of others, based, since they invariably were, on sound texts of authority and vigorous common-sense. It occurred to me that the notes of weekly lectures might be put into shape and submitted to the public.

Unfortunately Oriental savants of the West mistook Vedantism to mean only Adwaita. They bestowed scant attention on the Theology of Sree Madhwa and hardly noticed it in their researches. When Theosophy came to publish the glories of Indian antiquity, it also threw Dualism into obscurity. In the advertisement given by the new methods to Non-dualism, Sree Madhwa's Theology went, for no fault of its own, into comparative neglect.

Week after week, as I worked my way through Sree Madhwa's Commentaries and compared them with those of other schools, the feeling became strong in my mind that this system deserved better of the public and that its languishment arose partly at least from want of presentment in accordance with modern methods. I therefore thought that no apology was necessary to give an English rendering to Sree Madhwa's Bhagavad Geeta. The only apology that was called for lies, however, in the circumstance that I, of all persons, should take up the role of being Sree Madhwa's interpreter.

Nobody is more conscious and convinced than I am of my incompetence for the task. But a strong hope that others more competent may, in due time, take up and continue this work on similar lines, is my chief excuse.

In studying various commentaries of dissenting schools, I came upon a Srirangam Edition of the BHAGAVAD GEETA with the Commentary of one Venkatanatha. This is a printed publication of 1912 A.D. This commentator has indulged in very strong language of abusive criticism against Sree Madhwa. I found the matter and manner of his criticism very unjust and ungenerous. In some places, he has descended to malignant bitterness. A perusal of this work confirmed me in the idea of doing something in vindication of Sree Madhwa.

This writer Venkatanatha was unknown before the Srirangam printers ushered him into public notice. When he lived and where, are not ascertainable.



Although his editor looks upon him with unbounded admiration and has nothing but unlimited praise to bestow on his work, I fail to see much of merit in him as an original thinker. In numerous places, he has simply copied Madhusoodana Saraswati.

*The following are instances of his plagiarism:-*

The asterisks are gross examples.

Nowhere does this writer think of acknowledging indebtedness.

| Number of Chapter | Number of<br>the verses.   |
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| VI                | ... 1, 2, 8, 9, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21,<br>22*, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30, 32,<br>35*, 37, 43*. |

The following are the chief works consulted by me in my effort to make a comparative study:-

1. Sri Madhwa's Geeta Bhashya
2. Sri Jayateertha's Prameya Deepika thereof.
3. Sri Madhwa's Geeta Tatparya.
4. Sri Jayateertha's Nyaya Deepika thereof.
5. Sri Raghavendra Swami's Geeta Vivriti
6. Sankaracharya's Geeta Bhashya
7. Anandgiri's gloss on Sankara Bhashya
8. Works of

- a) Madhusoodana Saraswati
- b) Sankarananda.
- c) Neelakanta
- d) Sridhara
- e) Abhinava Guptacharya
- f) Sankara Bhashyotharsha Deepika
- g) Brahmanandagiri of vencatanatha

N.B. All these (No.8) are of the Adwaita school.

9. Ramanujacharya's Geeta Bhashya.

10. Vedanta Desikar's gloss thereof, known as Tatparya Chandrika.

I leave it to the reader to appraise the value of and the necessity for this work. No doubt, I have freely criticized wherever I thought criticism necessary. But I have never done so in malice. People may differ from me and feel unconvinced by my reasoning; but I pray that no motives be attributed to me. It is nothing but



the exigencies of frank discussion that have called for the language used and not a carping spirit of fault-finding.

The volume deals with the first six chapters of the BHAGAVAD GEETA. I have stopped at this point as my poor scholarship and poorer health would let me advance no further.

My thanks are primarily due to Sree Madhwa Tatwa Bubhutsu Sabha who created for me the opportunity to make a study. My thanks are due to M.R.Ry. Dewan Bahadur K. Krishnaswami Rao Avl., C.I.E. for his foreword where he has spoken of me in very kindly terms. I am highly thankful to Mr. P. Hari Rao, B.A., B.L., High court Vakil, Madras for the general index attached to this work.

I tender thanks to my friends who assisted me in preparing the typed sheets and passing them through the press. The services of Mr. K. Srinivasa Rao, B.A., B.L., my son-in-law, were particularly helpful and valuable.



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| 13. ...     | 622-624 | 37. ... | 735-742 |
| 14,15,16... | 625-634 | 38. ... | 742-748 |
| 17. ...     | 634-641 | 39. ... | 748-753 |
| 18. ...     | 642-646 | 40. ... | 753-757 |
| 19. ...     | 646-649 | 41. ... | 757-762 |
| 20. ...     | 649-656 | 42. ... | 762-776 |
| 21. ...     | 656-660 |         |         |
| 22. ...     | 660-662 |         |         |
| 23. ...     | 662-665 |         |         |
| 24. ...     | 665-669 |         |         |





॥ श्रीः ॥

# THE BHAGAVAD GEETA

## CHAPTER - 1

धृतराष्ट्र उवाच-

1) धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे समवेतायुयुत्सवः ।

मामकाः पाण्डवाश्चैव किमकुर्वत संजय ॥

|              |     |                              |
|--------------|-----|------------------------------|
| धृतराष्ट्रः  | ... | Dhritarashtra                |
| उवाच         | ... | said                         |
| धर्मक्षेत्रे | ... | in the land of righteousness |
| कुरुक्षेत्रे | ... | in Kurukshetra               |
| समवेताः      | ... | met together                 |
| युयुत्सवः    | ... | eager to fight               |
| मामकाः       | ... | my people                    |
| पाण्डवाः     | ... | the Pandavas                 |
| च            | ... | and                          |
| एव           | ... | only                         |

किं ... what  
 अकुर्वत ... did  
 संजय ... O! Sanjaya

“Gathered together, eager only for battle, in Kurukshetra the land of righteousness, what did my people and the Pandavas do? O! Sanjaya.”

We enter upon the study of a great work. Bhagavad Geeta is one of the Holiest Scriptures of the Hindus. Its enormous popularity bears testimony to its worth. Its reputation is not confined to the Indian Continent and peoples alone. It seems to enjoy a well-merited esteem in Europe and America as well.

This work of 18 chapters is a small portion of the great Epic, Mahabharata. It occurs in the Bheeshma Parva and consists of a dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, wherein the former propounds the highest truths of religion and philosophy to the latter.

Sri Badarayana also known as Sri Vedavyasa is the author of the Epic. He is also, of course, the author of the Bhagavad Geeta. The orthodox belief is that Sri Vedavyasa is an avatar of Vishnu.

Sankaracharya, Ramanujacharya and Sri Madhwa begin their commentary with a brief introduction. The first two authors above named dwell on the greatness of Sri Krishna and introduce the work. Sri Madhwa dwells on the greatness of Sri Badarayana and the Mahabharata, and expatiates on Bhagavad Geeta as the quintessence of all that is sweet and great in the great Epic.

The divergence between Sri Madhwa on the one hand and the other two commentators on the other

seems to be of some significance. There is controversy on two important points to be noted in this connection.

1) Is Sri Vedavyasa an incarnation of God?

2) Is the Bhagavad Geeta, as it is found, the work of Sri Vedavyasa or of Sri Krishna?

As to the first point, Vedanta Desikar seems to be decidedly of opinion that Sri Vedavyasa is no God incarnate, but only a Maharshi, who had faults and failings like other human beings, and had Prarabdhas also to suffer. The commentary of this author, Verses 8 & 9 of Chapter IV, Sanskrit Publication of Ananda Press bear this out.

On the other hand, Sri Madhwa quotes texts of authority in support of the position that Sri Badarayana is an incarnation of God. (*Vide Sanskrit Exposition*). ★ In this, most members of the Sankara School seem to concur. Even among the members of the Visishtadwaita school, opinion does not seem to be unanimous. In the preface to the latest edition of Sariraka Meemamsa, and that attached to the Edition of the Bhagavad Geeta published by the Ananda Press, the writer quotes verses in support of Sri Veda Vyasa's Supreme Divinity.

Thus, there is not sufficient reason to ignore Sri Vedavyasa and the Mahabharata in connection with the high merits of the Bhagavad Geeta.

This leads us to consider the second point noted above. Some people take it that all the eighteen chapters of the Bhagavad Geeta are the actual words of

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★ Apart from this publication, C.M. Padmanabhachar has published a similar big volume in Sanskrit also, on Bhagavad Geeta.



Sri Krishna *in metre* just as they are found. They say that Sri Vedavyasa's part consisted only in finding a place for it in this epic. Others, however, say that the Bhagavad Geeta is as much the work of Sri vedavyasa as other parts of the Epic, where truths are expounded by means of dialogues. It may be that Sri Krishna taught Arjuna these truths. But the Divine author Sri Badarayana knew the presentment of the subject by first-hand knowledge and re-produced it wholesale in a versified form. Passages found elsewhere in Mahabharata have been relied on in support of both the views indicated above.

To the orthodox believer who takes both Sri Badarayana and Sri Krishna as incarnations of God, the controversy possesses little or no interest. As God is not conceivable without omniscience, it is easy to see that what He taught by one Form was reproduced by another, verses and all. It is equally admissible that the teachings of Sri Krishna, perhaps communicated in a different tongue or dialect, or perhaps in prose under the exigencies of *viva voce* instruction, have been faithfully handed down to us by Sri Badarayana in a shape in which we find Baghavat Geeta.

One point deserves some stress in respect to the arguments employed by both sides. Because the work is known by the name of Bhagavad Geeta, they say that the author is fully indicated by the name, so that none but Sri Krishna can be said to have had any hand therein. But this is a fallacy. Throughout the Epic and elsewhere too, the dialogue is the method largely employed as the medium of narration or instruction. There is 'Gopee Geeta', 'Bhramara Geeta', 'Sruti Geeta', 'Ashtavakra Geeta,' and so on for instance. These designations do not exclude the authorship of Sri Badarayana and there is no special reason to inter-

pret the name 'Bhagavad Geeta' alone from a different standpoint, employing other canons of construction than hold good as a rule.

The reader may feel this a digression. But it may throw some light on the different angles of vision with which the commentators have approached the subject. Sri Madhwa attributes the authorship to Sri Badarayana in the fullest measure, without however detracting from the merits of the work as the teachings of Sri Krishna. Others do not always speak of Sri Badarayana with the full realization of the fact that He is no other than Sri Krishna, both being the God supreme and identical with each other in the fullest sense.

Let me proceed to note a few points in respect to the Geeta Verse under notice.

King Dhritarashtra here questions Sanjaya. On the eve of the great engagement, Sri Vedavyasa had been speaking to Dhritarashtra, and in the course of the interview, had offered him a boon. If the king had accepted it, he could have seen the events of the war with his own eyes. But he had declined the boon, evidently regarding the sight of horrid carnage as a doubtful blessing. As an alternative, Sri Vedavyasa had blessed Sanjaya with capacity to obtain a thorough first-hand knowledge of every incident, not excluding the thoughts, motives and words, of every combatant. After blessing Sanjaya with this boon, Dhritarashtra was asked to obtain full news from him.

*Says Vedavyasa,*

"To you, O! King, Sanjaya will narrate everything: whether it be any fact of public knowledge or any secret held in confidence – whether it occur by day or by night, whether it be mere thought or words. He

is not affected by the deadly play of weapons – nor does he suffer any fatigue. ”

The verse under comment is quite simple. Dhritarashtra asks Sanjaya what the two parties did, arrayed, as they were, on the Holy plain, eager only for battle. But the context that led to this enquiry is somewhat significant. A few chapters before this, we are told that Sanjaya had come to the king and communicated the news that Bheeshma had fallen, the hero who had held his own for the first ten days of the war. The king is stricken with grief. He puts questions and obtains somewhat disconnected information. He is dejected and wishes to know all. He is afraid that his son possibly failed to take sufficient precautions for Bheeshma's safety. In his vexation, he thinks that the Pandavas might have practiced foul-play although they were righteous by nature and the battle-field itself was धर्मक्षेत्र. Thus we see him asking Sanjaya, “My dear Sanjaya, tell me all: begin from this point; the two armies are arrayed on the Holy Plain. They are about to strike: What happened next?”

The significance of धर्मक्षेत्र and कुरुक्षेत्र is noteworthy. Kurukshetra is the name of a Holy region. It was holy even before the great war. In Salyaparva, we are told that a king of the lunar race, 'Kuru by name, had done penance here once upon a time. He had prayed to Indra that every person dying here, in battle, or in times of peace, should be received into Swarga Indra reluctantly had granted the boon.

‘Dharmakshetra’ points to the general sanctity of the place. It is the land where justice and right reigned



predominant. It blessed the dweller with religious merit. Vedanta Desikar takes धर्म to mean sacrifice (याग) and understands the allusion to mean, "the field where the great sacrifice was going to be celebrated, the sacrifice of the wicked being slain."

The king lays stress on the sanctity of the region in order to convey a veiled rebuke at the Pandavas that they had possibly committed a sin by killing Bheeshma, contrary to the genius of the Holy place they were in.

In the second line, he speaks of his own people and of Pandavas as separate groups. His partiality towards his own sons is obvious. Therein lay a concealed wish that his sons should win. It is not impossible that he conveys also a mild censure that his sons were mentally blind like the speaker himself who was physically blind. At a moment of grief and despondency, he uses the word मामकाः which means 'persons led by the maternal uncle.' It was but too evident that the calamities of Dhritarashtra were largely due to the infernal machinations of the notorious Sakuni Mama.

A modern critic of Bombay hangs an elaborate argument on the words of the kind distinguishing his own people from the Pandavas by calling the former मामकाः. He thinks that a racial distinction is denoted by this. The theory is urged that Pandavas belonged to a different race altogether, that they were darker in complexion than Aryans and Kurus, and that they hailed from the Himalayas with peculiar customs of polyandry and invaded the plains. This school, which counts a few learned men among its supporters, treats

the Mahabharata war as primarily and essentially a racial feud. The materials for such a theory seem however to be slender.

In commenting on धर्मक्षेत्र apparently used as an adjectival qualification of कुरुक्षेत्र, Neelakanta thinks that the object was to distinguish the battle-field Kurushetra from other regions known by the same name. In Jabala Sruti, a Kurukshetra is spoken of which is said to be a place for the Gods to sacrifice in. Elsewhere, in another Sruti, it is said that Kurushetra is part of the heavenly region where Brahma dwells with unemanipated souls. Neelakanta says that in order to exclude these two possible significations of the word, the expression धर्मक्षेत्र was added, so that the region referred to might be located on Earth and might not be looked for in the Heavens.

This explanation seems very far-fetched. Sanjaya had just returned from the battle-field having witnessed the events of the first ten days up to the fall of Bheeshma. It was ridiculously incongruous that, in addressing Sanjaya, the king should apprehend a misconception on his part as to whether Kurukshetra was an earthly or heavenly region, and use a qualifying adjective धर्मक्षेत्र to obviate the error. It is clearly more reasonable to find some other significance for this adjectival expression. As already observed, Dhritarashtra advisedly refers to the sanctity of the place in order to set it in antithesis to the calamity of Bheeshma's fall, which, in his opinion, was an obviously unrighteous event.

Madhusoodana and Sankarananda state the object of the king's question thus: "The region is one of piety and sanctity. Did my sons give up the contest and sue for peace, influenced by the great sanctity of the spot?" Or, did the Pandavas retreat from the dreadful carnage, influenced by the same reason? After the gathering in battle-array, did they really fight, or part in peace?

This interpretation too, as pointed out by the author of Sankara Bhashyotkarsha Deepika, does not accord with the context. It is impossible to ignore the setting of the story as found in Mahabharata. Sanjaya had clearly begun by telling the king of Beeshma's fall and of how the hero had behaved with wonderful prowess up to his fall. It is too much to say that Dhritarashtra completely forgot himself and began with a pointless question as if he knew not whether the parties had given battle or retired in peace.

No doubt, the king asks "What did they do, after the battle-array, gathered on a Holy Plain?". But for the previous history, Sankarananda and Madhusoodana would be quite right. But, judged in the light of the context, the object of the question is not to find out whether the parties had fought at all, but whether they had fought with honour or not. Having been briefly told of a calamitous termination which had marked an epoch-making stage, he desired for full details, and for this purpose, starts the story from the point where he desired Sanjaya to begin. He says in effect: "The parties met determined only for battle, all proposals and negotiations having failed. After they met face to face for this purpose, what followed?" Such a question



is intelligible enough even on the part of one who knew briefly of what had befallen, the object being to elicit details and judge of the events for himself.

It is a well-known saying that every verse of the Mahabharata possesses not less than 10 different meanings. It is not given to ordinary scholars to find out these meanings everywhere. Occasionally, a few have been unearthed by commentators.

In respect to the present verse, Venkatanatha (an annotator of the Adwaitha school) thinks that Dhritarashtra's words have given unconscious utterance to certain truths, thereby anticipating the upshot of the story and foreshadowing its moral. He puts the purport in this manner; "What did they do?" The 'किं' stands in Sanskrit for something low or disastrous. It also means something wonderful. In respect to Duryodhana and party, it conveys the former sentiment. In respect to the Pandavas, it means the latter. धर्मक्षेत्र and कुरुक्षेत्र stand for *Sri Krishna's body*. Sri Krishna has often called the Pandavas "His very life". Hence, he is the body of which the Pandavas are the lives. In Sri Krishna's body, the Kauravas met for battle and became lost, like the fire-fly consumed in the flame of a lamp. Such is the description of the event in Chapter XI of the Bhagavad Geeta. On the other hand, the Pandavas derived the greatest blessings by meeting in Sri Krishna's body. He hugged them with joy and conferred on them not temporal benefits alone, but permanent boons also. It was a wonderful thing that Arjuna who stepped into the field for the sake of

conquest, obtained, in addition, philosophy of the highest wisdom which enabled him to conquer Samsara itself. It is a marvel that the occasion gave to Arjuna and the whole world situated like him, teachings calculated to tide every one across the vast sea of births and deaths.

Venkatanatha says that although this esoteric signification was not in the mind of the speaker (Dhritarashtra), the language conveys it, and the meaning is perfectly legitimate and acceptable on the analogy of the first verse in Ramayana *मानिषाद प्रतिष्ठां त्वमगमः* etc., which eminent commentators have similarly interpreted as an unconscious allusion to the story of Sri Rama and Seeta succinctly foreshadowed.

Another commentator of the Bhagavad Geeta (Abhinava Guptacharya, also of the Advaita School) treats the verse under comment in the most esoteric sense. He thinks that क्षेत्र of the verse denotes the human body in general, and the fight spoken of, is what rages between the righteous and the unrighteous impulses of man. Dhritarashtra asks which of these two polarities in human nature is the victor.

It is left to the reader to judge whether esoteric import of this character is legitimately readable into the language of the verse. They have been derived by means of etymological feats which appear unnatural and forced in some instances at least.

संजय उवाच -

2) दृष्ट्वा तु पाण्डवानीकं व्यूढं दुर्योधनस्तदा ।  
आचार्यमुपसंगम्य राजा वचनमब्रवीत् ॥

|             |     |                          |
|-------------|-----|--------------------------|
| संजयः       | ... | Sanjaya                  |
| उवाच        | ... | said                     |
| दृष्ट्वा    | ... | seeing                   |
| तु          | ... | but                      |
| पाण्डवानीकं | ... | the army of the Pandavas |
| व्यूढं      | ... | arrayed                  |
| दुर्योधनः   | ... | Duryodhana               |
| तदा         | ... | then                     |
| आचार्य      | ... | the preceptor            |
| उपसङ्गम्य   | ... | approaching              |
| राजा        | ... | the king                 |
| वचनं        | ... | speech                   |
| अब्रवीत्    | ... | spoke                    |

Immediately after seeing the armies of the Pandavas, arrayed for battle, King Duryodhana approached his Preceptor and made the following speech.

‘दृष्ट्वा तु’ ‘But seeing’; Duryodhana saw the enemy’s forces and noticed with the expert eyes of the veteran



soldier how the forces had been marshalled. His heart of steel felt a tremor at the awful moment. He saw and quailed. Face to face with the enemy, even his iron resolution received a thrill and he repaired to Drona to talk over the matter.

‘व्यूढं’ ‘arrayed.’ There had been a great deal of debate among the Pandava leaders with regard to marshalling. After much thought and debate, the army of the Pandavas had been marshalled in a particular shape. Duryodhana noted the enemy’s skill in the matter and felt the impregnable strength of the array.

‘आचार्यमुपसंगम्य’ ‘approaching the preceptor’. The king went up to the preceptor instead of sending for him. There was reverence and policy in this procedure.

Dhrishtadyumna was the chief in command of the enemy. He and Drona were sworn foes, as Dhrishtadyumna’s solemn vow was to kill Drona. The previous history of their birth and boyhood shows this. The king approached Drona, of all persons in the field, to tickle and kindle him against Dhrishtadyumna and the Panchalas. There was something of Iago’s cunning and shrewdness in Duryodhana’s conduct and speech.

Bheeshma and Drona were persons well-known for their partiality to the Pandavas. Duryodhana had spoken to Bheeshma just then and installed him in the chief command. It was policy to speak next to Drona and inflame him and secure him. There was besides, important matter to talk over. Drona was the next in command after Bheeshma. It was necessary to tell him

how to dispose of himself during Bheeshma's command. It was necessary to tell him he was not to go forward to the front, and that he was to keep an eye on Bheeshma to protect him from the flanks.

‘राजा’ ‘King.’ What is the significance in calling Duryodhana, *King*? It is a difficult point of Hindu Law whether Duryodhana was king *de jure* or not. His father was no king by law owing to his congenital disability. But the son was under no such bar. Hence he might well be deemed sovereign of at least half the kingdom. As for *de facto* sovereignty, there was no doubt at all. He had been ruling for 13 years at least. He was the real ruler and this circumstance was of paramount weight with Bheeshma and Drona. Though they believed in the justice of the Pandavas' claim, they were bound as soldiers of king Duryodhana to do their duty. It was no business of theirs or of any soldier to sit in judgment over the merits of the war or the title of the monarch who employed their service. Hence the author speaks of Duryodhana as राजा to convey the hint that herein lay the secret of Drona's morality in fighting, as he did, for him, as also of Bheeshma's

“वचनमब्रवीत्” “Spoke the words”. There is a verbal redundancy here. It was enough to say that he spoke. It was apparently superfluous to say that he spoke ‘words.’ The word वचन in Sanskrit implies however that the language spoken was short, pithy and pregnant with underlying import.

3) पश्यैतां पाण्डुपुत्राणां माचार्य महतीं चमूम् ।  
व्यूढां द्रुपदपुत्रेण तव शिष्येण धीमता ॥

|                 |     |                       |
|-----------------|-----|-----------------------|
| पश्य            | ... | behold                |
| एतां            | ... | this                  |
| पाण्डुपुत्राणां | ... | of the sons of Pandu  |
| आचार्य          | ... | O Preceptor           |
| महतीं           | ... | mighty                |
| चमूम्           | ... | army                  |
| व्यूढां         | ... | arrayed               |
| द्रुपदपुत्रेण   | ... | by the son of Drupada |
| तव              | ... | your                  |
| शिष्येण         | ... | by pupil              |
| धीमता           | ... | skilful               |

Behold this mighty host of the sons of Pandu, O Preceptor! arrayed by the son of Drupada, your clever pupil.

Duryodhana's speech is meant to rouse Drona. He praises the enemy's force as mighty, whether he believed it so or not. He calls attention to Drupada's son, the Commander, being Drona's clever disciple. Instead of referring to Dhrishtadyumna by name, there was an object in describing him as Drupada's son. He touched upon a very old and a very deep hatred to kindle it into flame.

‘Behold this mighty host’ says he, laying stress on the impertinence of the Pandavas in marshalling forces against their own venerable preceptor. ‘Behold and realize how grossly you are insulted’ is the covert idea. ‘You, sir, are the preceptor, more of Pandu’s sons than of us, for your attachment and partiality to them is well-known. Yet behold how they are gathered to fight you.’

And who is the leader now? Your own wise pupil. He was wise, for he derived a thorough knowledge of the military science and art from you, sworn as he was to kill you, and you imparted a sound education like a fool out of a suicidal policy to cut your own throat. Your instruction is responsible for my troubles, for your veritable pupil leads the forces against us with all the skill derived from you.

‘महर्ती’ By this, it is meant that Drona could not afford to despise the enemy, for the host was mighty, well-nigh invincible.

‘शिष्येण धीमता’ Pupil and disciple as he may be, it will be no easy task to conquer him, he is an able general.

4) अत्र शूरा महेष्वासा भीमार्जुनसमा युधि ।  
युयुधानो विराटश्च द्रुपदश्च महारथः ॥

|            |     |               |
|------------|-----|---------------|
| अत्र       | ... | here          |
| शूराः      | ... | are warriors  |
| महेष्वासाः | ... | mighty bowmen |



|               |     |   |
|---------------|-----|---|
| भीमार्जुनसमाः | ... | equal to Bheema and Arjuna                            |
| युधि          | ... | in battle   |
| युयुधानः      | ... | Satyaki   |
| विराटः        | ... | Virata  |
| च             | ... | and   |
| द्रुपदः       | ... | Drupada   |
| च             | ... | and   |
| महारथः        | ... | the great charioteer technically known as 'Maharatha' |

Here are warriors of great prowess equal in battle to Bheema and Arjuna; viz., Satyaki, Virata and Drupada; warriors known as Maharathas.

‘भीमार्जुनसमाः’ Remembering the purpose and the object of the speech, we see that Duryodhana exaggerates the prowess of Satyaki, Virata and others, as of the same high order as of Bheema and Arjuna. Drona is warned that it is not Dhrishtadyumna the leader alone that had to be feared, but scores of others whose prowess was equal to that of Bheema and Arjuna who towered high in greatness as admitted on all hands.

5) धृष्टकेतुश्चेकितानः काशिराजश्च वीर्यवान् ।  
पुरुजित् कुंतिभोजश्च शैब्यश्च नरपुंगवः ॥

|            |     |              |
|------------|-----|--------------|
| धृष्टकेतुः | ... | Dhrishtaketu |
| चेकितानः   | ... | Chekitana    |

|            |     |                   |
|------------|-----|-------------------|
| काशिराजः   | ... | the king of Kasi  |
| च          | ... | and               |
| वीर्यवान्  | ... | the courageous    |
| पुरुजित्   | ... | Purujit           |
| कुन्तिभोजः | ... | Kuntibhoja        |
| च          | ... | and               |
| शैब्यः     | ... | Saibya            |
| च          | ... | and               |
| नरपुंगवः   | ... | eminent among men |

The Valiant Dhrishtaketu, Chekitana, the king of Kasi, Purujit and Kuntibhoja and Saibya, eminent among men.

6) युधामन्युश्च विक्रान्त उत्तमौजाश्च वीर्यवान् ।  
सौभद्रो द्रौपदेयाश्च सर्व एव महारथाः ॥

|            |     |                             |
|------------|-----|-----------------------------|
| युधामन्युः | ... | Yudhamanyu                  |
| च          | ... | and                         |
| विक्रान्तः | ... | the brave                   |
| उत्तमौजाः  | ... | Uttamaujas                  |
| च          | ... | and                         |
| वीर्यवान्  | ... | powerful                    |
| सौभद्रः    | ... | Abhimanyu (son of Subhadra) |
| द्रौपदेयाः | ... | the sons of Draupadi        |
| च          | ... | and                         |

|         |     |            |
|---------|-----|------------|
| सर्वे   | ... | all        |
| एव      | ... | only       |
| महारथाः | ... | Maharathas |

Yudhamanyu, Uttamaejas and Abhimanyu, brave and powerful; as also the sons of Draupadi – all of them, Maharathas.

7) अस्माकं तु विशिष्टा ये तान्निबोध द्विजोत्तम ।

नायका मम सैन्यस्य संज्ञार्थं तान्ब्रवीमि ते ॥

|            |     |                   |
|------------|-----|-------------------|
| अस्माकं    | ... | of our side       |
| तु         | ... | on the other hand |
| विशिष्टाः  | ... | the eminent       |
| ये         | ... | who are           |
| तान्       | ... | them              |
| निबोध      | ... | note              |
| द्विजोत्तम | ... | O eminent Brahmin |
| नायकाः     | ... | leaders           |
| मम         | ... | my                |
| सैन्यस्य   | ... | of army           |
| संज्ञार्थं | ... | for distinction   |
| तान्       | ... | them              |
| ब्रवीमि    | ... | I mention         |
| ते         | ... | to you            |

On the other hand, note, O eminent Brahmin, those who are eminent on our side — the leaders of my army, whom I mention to you for distinction.

‘तु’ This small particle is somewhat significant. It conveys hidden ideas. Having mentioned (with exaggerated eulogy) the chief men of the enemy, ‘let us turn to our own side’, says he. He wishes to imply that his side suffers by the contrast. By this particle, he begins to contrast the relative strength of the belligerents, feels a tremor and conceals it.

‘संज्ञार्थ’ . Just to distinguish a few — not with intent to make an exhaustive enumeration.

‘द्विजोत्तम’ . The flattery conveyed is obvious. It has been observed already that Duryodhana was not such an admirer or friend of Drona and Bheeshma as not to taunt them with their well-known partiality to and love of Pandavas. In verse 3, the taunt was apparent in drawing attention to the enemy’s commander being Drona’s own pupil. In the present verse, he calls Drona the prince of Brahmins, Madhusoodana Saraswati observes a hidden insinuation herein and makes out a gentle hint conveyed to Drona that being, after all, an eminent *Brahmin*, he might collapse, and yet as there were other leaders in his army, born Kshatriyas and warriors, there was no reason to despair. He then proceeds to enumerate the leaders that Drona may mark and remember, lest he should, in his warm admiration of the enemy’s strength, forget or overlook the notabilities of his own side.



8) भवान् भीष्मश्च कर्णश्च कृपश्च समितिंजयः ।  
 अश्वत्थामा विकर्णश्च सौमदत्तिस्तथैव च ॥

|            |     |  |
|------------|-----|--|
| भवान्      | ... | yourself                                 |
| भीष्मः     | ... | Bheeshma                                 |
| च          | ... | and                                      |
| कर्णः      | ... | Karna                                    |
| च          | ... | and                                      |
| कृपः       | ... | kripa                                    |
| च          | ... | and                                      |
| अश्वत्थामा | ... | Aswatthama                               |
| विकर्णः    | ... | Vikarna                                  |
| च          | ... | and                                      |
| समितिंजयः  | ... | victor in war                            |
| सौमदत्तिः  | ... | son of Somadatti known as<br>Bhurisrawas |
| तथा        | ... | also                                     |
| एव च       | ... | and only                                 |

Yourself, Bheeshma, Karna and Kripa, the victor in war; Aswatthama, Vikarna and Bhurisrawas also.

The four persons mentioned in the first line of the verse are the generals (विशिष्टा). The three in the second line are captains (नायकाः).

Some read (जयद्रथ) in the place of तथैव च. समितिजयः. This epithet, it is pointed out by Madhusoodana Saraswati, is meant as a solatium to Kripa for counting him after karna.

Drona is put down, first in order, to flatter him. Among captains, his son Aswatthama is counted first, even before Vikarna, the younger brother of Duryodhana, for the same reason.

9) अन्ये च बहवश्शूरा मदर्थे त्यक्तजीविताः ।  
नानाशस्त्रप्रहरणाः सर्वे युद्धविशारदाः ॥

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| अन्ये              | ... others                                   |
| च                  | ... and                                      |
| बहवः शूराः         | ... many warriors                            |
| मदर्थे             | ... for my sake                              |
| त्यक्तजीविताः      | ... ready to lay down their liver            |
| नानाशस्त्रप्रहरणाः | ... wielding diverse weapons and<br>missiles |
| सर्वे              | ... all                                      |
| युद्धविशारदाः      | ... veterans in war                          |

And many other heroes ready to lay down their lives on my account, wielding diverse weapons and missiles all of them veterans in war.

‘त्यक्तजीविताः’. It is meant to compliment the warriors on their willing readiness to lay down their lives

for Duryodhana's cause. But the expression sounds an inauspicious note in that it literally means that they had already lost their lives for their leader. There is a prophetic ring in the use of the past tense and it recalls to mind the saying that coming events cast their shadows before.

10) अपर्याप्तं तदस्माकं बलं भीष्माभिरक्षितम् ।  
पर्याप्तं त्विदमेतेषां बलं भीमाभिरक्षितम् ॥

|                 |     |                       |
|-----------------|-----|-----------------------|
| अपर्याप्तं      | ... | inadequate            |
| तत्             | ... | that                  |
| अस्माकं         | ... | our                   |
| बलं             | ... | army                  |
| भीष्माभिरक्षितं | ... | commanded by Bheeshma |
| पर्याप्तं       | ... | adequate              |
| तु              | ... | while                 |
| इदं             | ... | this                  |
| एतेषां          | ... | their                 |
| बलं             | ... | army                  |
| भीमाभिरक्षितं   | ... | commanded by Bheema   |

Inadequate is that army of ours commanded by Bheeshma; while this force commanded by Bheema is adequate.

There is some controversy about the true meaning of this verse. The doubt occurs as to what

Duryodhana was drifting to in the whole of his speech. Is he diffident of his strength and decrying it, or is he convinced and confident of his own strength to win?

Most of the adwaitic commentators adopt the view that Duryodhana could never have decried his own strength. Very often before the war, he had been vehemently asserting his own superiority and belittling the strength of the foe. On the second day of the battle, he is found speaking to Drona and repeating a similar sentiment almost in identical language. He says. "Inadequate for us is the army commanded by Arjuna; while our army is adequate". Hence they argue that consistency leads one to interpret the present verse also to mean that his own force was superior to the enemy's. Making up their minds that Duryodhana was incapable, for any reason, of belittling his own strength, they approach the verse and construe its language. 'पर्याप्तं' ordinarily means 'sufficient' and अपर्याप्तं 'insufficient'. To avoid the natural result of these meanings, some suggest a reading so as to interchange the words Bheeshama and Bheema. But there is a uniformity of reading in all editions, with Bheeshma occurring in the first line and Bheema in the second line, and not vice versa. Others try to read the poetical lines in prose order, and assort and couple words in such a way as to evolve the meaning they have in view. The tortuous combinations thereby produced sufficiently condemn the construction. Others again, construe पर्याप्तं to mean limited and अपर्याप्तं unlimited, and make out that the Kaurava force being 11 Akshohinees in number was unlimited, and therefore more powerful than the 7 Akshohinees of the foe.



Neelakanta understands पर्याप्तं to mean 'covering' or 'embracing', and says that Duryodhana's army was a large host, capable of surrounding the enemy and crushing it, while the other was incapable of doing so by reason of its numerical inferiority.

Madhusoodana Saraswati suggests other fantastic senses. It seems to me that these various twistings, being the result of a wrong notion at bottom, are unsound. The basic error is in assuming that Duryodhana did not, and could not, think of decrying his own strength. It seems to me that the context clearly indicates the drift. He began by describing the enemy's army as mighty (महती चम्) He called Dhristadyumna a skilled warrior (धीमान्). He referred to the enemy's leaders as all of them being of superlative prowess equal to that Bheema and Arjuna. He recounted many of them by name and exaggerated their bravery. On his own side, he made but a casual reference to a few and alluded to the rest among *etceteras*. Then, he institutes the contrast in question. Later on, it occurs that Bheeshma blew the conch to cheer up Duryodhana.

Hence, the present speech was conceived in despondency which needed to be dispelled by Bheeshma. We miss the true import and significance of the speech if we understand the speaker as in a hopeful, cheerful, optimistic, vein of self-confidence. In this supreme anxiety, he probably felt at the awful moment, that the foe was invincible, or he exaggerated their strength purposely to spur Bheeshma and Drona, well-known for their partiality to the Pandavas, on to special efforts for his success.

In this view, पर्याप्तं meaning 'enough' and अपर्याप्तं meaning 'not enough' convey a clear idea. Sreedhara understands the words in this sense, also Vedantacharya. While making no mistake in this respect, Sreedhara, however, renders the verse so as to read thus: insufficient *seems* that army of ours *though* marshalled by Bheeshma, while this army of theirs *seems* sufficient, *though* marshalled by Bhima. There is no warrant in the text for the words in italics. Where is the word for "seems", it is impossible to see. Nor is there any word in the text to imply that Bheeshma was far superior to Bheema, though of the respective forces, the former force was weaker than the latter.

Vedantachariar discusses the *pros and cons* in a very learned note, but falls into the same error as the adwaitic annotators in assuming that Bheema was a far weaker person than Bheeshma as propounded by Mahabharata.

The credit of bringing out the true position of Bheema belongs to Sri Madhwa, who in a masterly epitome of the great Epic, has subjected many moot points like this to the searchlights of thorough investigation. Bheema is the son of Vayu and this is a deity next only to Sree and Hari. Duryodhana, the Satan (कलिः) fully knew the greatness of Bheema and was truly afraid of him alone. Heaps of texts could be quoted from the Mahabharata (*vide* some cited in the Sanskrit portion) being statements made by Duryodhana, Dhritarashtra, Vidura and Bheeshma, acknowledging the unparalleled supremacy of Bheema.

Hence we realize the true force of Bheema's army being contrasted with Bheeshma's though Dhristadyumna was the general in command of the Pandava army. Duryodhana cared little for this son of Drupada and less for the other chieftains of the foe. He dreaded Bheema by day and by night, waking, sleeping or dreaming. Bheema had been his rival in boyhood and youth. He had been uniformly thwarting and disgracing Duryodhana everywhere, and at every opportunity and occasion. It was Bheema that had plighted his word to split the thigh of Duryodhana and destroy his brothers in this war. Hence, hatred and fear involuntarily prompted him to refer to Bheema as the rival of Bheeshma.

One point more. Vedantachariar fancies some difficulty in the use of the word 'that' as an adjunct of Bheeshma's army. He thinks it inappropriate, as ordinarily it denotes the thing at a distance. He therefore construes the word तत् as an adverb to mean 'therefore' and not 'that,' and proceeds elaborately to show that the previous portion of the speech had really marshalled reasons to justify the use of the word 'therefore'. The word could easily mean 'aforesaid' without giving occasion to this learned controversy. Vivritikara (Sri Raghavendra Swami) gives it this sense, though it may be conceded that 'therefore' cannot be deemed inappropriate or inaccurate.

11) अयनेषु च सर्वेषु यथाभागमवस्थिताः ।

भीष्ममेवाभिरक्षन्तु भवन्तस्सर्व एव हि ॥

|             |     |                                    |
|-------------|-----|------------------------------------|
| अयनेषु      | ... | in the regimental gaps and avenues |
| च           | ... | also                               |
| सर्वेषु     | ... | everywhere                         |
| यथाभागं     | ... | each in his respective place       |
| अवस्थिताः   | ... | stationed firmly                   |
| भीष्ममेव    | ... | Bheeshma alone                     |
| अभिरक्षन्तु | ... | guard on all sides                 |
| भवन्तः      | ... | you                                |
| सर्वे एव    | ... | every one                          |
| हि          | ... | wherefore                          |

“Wherefore, stationed each in this respective place, let every one of you guard Bheeshma, from every side, in every opening of the rank and file.”

“अयनेषु”. This seems to have a technical significance. It means the gaps or avenues that occur between arrays of troops.

This verse is a royal edict addressed to every one to keep firmly to his post and have an eye on every loophole of ingress to guard Bheeshma. Every leader fought personally in those days. His personal courage and strength counted as the most important factor. Victory or defeat depended largely on this. Hence every measure of precaution was to be taken to ensure the personal safety of the General.

Moreover, Bheeshma's safety was valuable from another stand-point also. He had vowed to kill every



day 1000 car-warriors and 10,000 foot-soldiers of the enemy's force. This had particularly pleased Duryodhana who therefore regarded it a great calamity if Bheeshma should fall and fail in this vow.

Besides, Duryodhana was keen on the value of unanimity and discipline in military affairs. Things would come to a crash, if authority remained divided, and independent commands, necessarily conflicting, were tolerated. Hence all were to obey Bheeshma.

“सर्वे एव” There were 12 persons who had been told off on special duty to guard the person of Bheeshma. This special guard consisted of Dussasana, Durvishaha, Durmukha, Dussaha, Vivinsiti, Chitrasena, Vikarna, Satyavrata, Puru-Mitra, Jaya, Bhurisrawas and Sala with 20,000 cars. The present order was not to be understood as superseding this guard. Hence he says ‘let every one have an eye to his safety and not alone the members of the guard.’

“यथाभागमवस्थिताः”. Stationed firmly in your respective places. This means that the new duty was to be attended to without prejudice to the disposition and allocation of the regiments by the command of Bheeshma. On the eve of the war, Bheeshma had gathered his followers and addressed them on their duty. He had issued directions as to where and how each chieftain was to place himself and carry out his allotted work. Duryodhana had no intention of countermanding any such arrangement. He was impressing on all, the necessity for following Bheeshma implicitly and ensuring his personal security.

“यथाभागम्”. The expression यथाभागम् also conveys the sense that the soldiers were not to dispose of themselves under hard and fast injunctions, irrespective of the fortunes, exigencies, and vicissitudes of the battle. Let every one protect Bheeshma according to emergency.

12) तस्य संजनयन् हर्षं कुरुवृद्धः पितामहः ।  
सिंहनादं विनद्योच्चैश्शंखं दध्मौ प्रतापवान् ॥

|            |     |                    |
|------------|-----|--------------------|
| तस्य       | ... | to Duryodhana      |
| संजनयन्    | ... | in order to arouse |
| हर्षं      | ... | cheerfulness       |
| कुरुवृद्धः | ... | the aged Kuru      |
| पितामहः    | ... | the grandsire      |
| सिंहनादं   | ... | the lion's roar    |
| विनद्य     | ... | sounding           |
| उच्चैः     | ... | aloud              |
| शंखं       | ... | the conch          |
| दध्मौ      | ... | blew               |
| प्रतापवान् | ... | the brave          |

“In order to cheer him, the brave, aged, Kuru and grandsire, sounded the lion's roar and blew the conch.”

सिंहनादं विनद्य ॥ Note the idiom ‘नादं विनद्य’ ‘sounding the sound’, corresponding to the idiom ‘speaking the speech’. Such idioms are not uncommon in sanskrit e.g. ओदनपाकं पचति.

Duryodhana was obviously down-hearted. He had argued himself into despondency by making out the relative weakness of his side. Bheeshma, having accepted the command, could not let the youngster grow disheartened. He roared the lion's roar and blew the conch to put courage into his drooping heart.

It was not unknown to Bheeshma and Drona that their leanings in favour of the Pandavas were suspected, and often made a point of, by unfriendly critics. Nor was the partiality untrue.

★ Every day, after ablutions, Drona and Bheeshma, it was known, prayed for the success of the Pandavas, but fought for the Kurus only because of their pledge.

As an honorable warrior, Bheeshma was, of course, determined to fight with all his might on the side he had espoused. He was therefore touched to the quick by the aspersion that his army was weak. He was a प्रतापवान् and therefore resented the insinuation against his prowess and co-operation. He blew the conch and roared as a lion to demonstrate his mettle, and this cheered up Duryodhana. Bheeshma was no doubt old. He was the most aged of the family. He was also a grandsire. In underrating his merits, Karna had used the advanced age of Bheeshma as a powerful argument against choosing him for the command.

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★ अहन्यहनि पार्थानां वृद्धः कुरुपितामहः ।

भरद्वाजात्मजश्चैव प्रातरुत्थाय संयतौ ॥

जयोऽस्तु पाण्डुपुत्राणामित्यूचतुररिन्दमौ ।

युयुधाते तवार्थाय यथा ससमयः कृतः ॥

He had said, "the words★ of elders should be listened to, says the Shastra. But not the words of very old people, because they are really in second childhood." Bheeshma knew that his detractors had called him too old. He jumped forward to give proof of vigour, though he was old and was a grandsire.

‘तस्य’. In order to please *him*, he roared, and blew the conch. Who is the person denoted by “him”.

a) Primarily it refers to Duryodhana.

b) It may also be construed as referring to “it”, meaning the army of Bheeshma; भीष्माभिरक्षितं being not far off as an antecedent. Bheeshma means to cheer up not only Duryodhana but also his army which might have got disheartened by his words.

c) The reference may also to be the enemy’s army. In this sense, जनयन् does not mean ‘in order to arouse,’ but simply ‘arousing’. The enemy was panting for action. Bheeshma’s roar and conch gave the signal, and every brave heart in the enemy’s camp leapt up with joy at the signal.

d) The reference may be to Bheema contained in the phrase भीमाभिरक्षितम्. Of all the soldiers in the enemy’s camp, it was Bheema that panted most eagerly for battle. He was counting every second to get into the fight, seize Duryodhana, split up his thighs, and

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★ श्रोतव्यं खलु वृद्धानामिति शास्त्रनिदर्शनम्।

न त्वेवं ह्यतिवृद्धानां पुनर्बालाहिते मताः ॥ *Udyoga. 26 Karna's words*



avenge Draupadi's wrongs. Bheeshma's signal gave Bheema the greatest joy.

e) Bheeshma knew fully that Bheema was Vayu★ and that in order to fight and exert, Vayu or Prana should help him. Bheeshma made a deep नद in order to secure the grace of Vayu for performing his duty.

f) The reference in the word तस्य "Him", may also be to the Supreme, to Sri Krishna, for whose grace and pleasure Bheeshma undertook and performed his duty. "That" is a name of Para Brahma. Bheeshma meant to please the Lord and intimate to Him that the awful hour was come. Bheeshma began the war, only to please God. He knew, by anticipation, the great philosophy of conduct that the Lord was going to teach Arjuna. He knew that every man should do his duty, not for the sake of fruits, but only and solely to please God. Now Bheeshma roared and blew the conch and commenced operations, not for winning glory or conquer dominion, but because it was His pleasure.

13) ततः शंखाश्च भेर्यश्च पणवानकगोमुखाः ।

सहसैवाभ्यहन्यन्त स शब्दस्तुमुलोऽभवत् ॥

|         |     |             |
|---------|-----|-------------|
| ततः     | ... | then        |
| शंखाः च | ... | and conches |

---

★ वायुर्भीमो भीमनादो महौजोः are the words of Bheeshma in Moksha Dharma.

|             |     |                  |
|-------------|-----|------------------|
| भेर्यः च    | ... | and kettle-drums |
| पणवाः       | ... | tabors           |
| आनकाः       | ... | drums            |
| गोमुखाः     | ... | cow-horns        |
| सहसा एव     | ... | simultaneously   |
| अभ्यहन्यन्त | ... | were sounded     |
| सः शब्दः    | ... | that sound       |
| तुमुलः      | ... | a tumult         |
| अभवत्       | ... | became           |

“Then conches and kettle-drums, tabors and drums, and cow-horns, blared forth simultaneously, and that sound rose to a tumult.”

The leader's action was the signal for commencing operations and was meant as a challenge. The eager followers who were waiting for the signal took it up and a babel of tumultuous sounds blared forth showing that all were prepared and dauntless.

14) ततः श्वेतैर्हयैर्युक्ते महति स्यंदने स्थितौ ।

माधवः पाण्डवश्चैव दिव्यौ शंखौ प्रदध्मतुः ॥

|              |     |              |
|--------------|-----|--------------|
| ततः          | ... | then         |
| श्वेतैः हयैः | ... | white horses |
| युक्ते       | ... | yoked        |
| महति         | ... | great        |

|            |     |             |
|------------|-----|-------------|
| स्यंदने    | ... | in chariot  |
| स्थितौ     | ... | seated      |
| माधवः      | ... | Sri Krishna |
| पाण्डवः    | ... | Arjuna      |
| च एव       | ... | and so      |
| दिव्यौ     | ... | divine      |
| शंखौ       | ... | conches     |
| प्रदध्मतुः | ... | blew        |

“Then Krishna and Arjuna, seated as they were in the great chariot yoked to white horses, blew their divine conches.”

‘स्थितौ एव’. Vivriti combines एव in the 2nd line with स्थितौ in the first. The combination conveys the sense that Madhava and Arjuna blew their conches seated as they were in the car with a degree of *nonchalance* that indicated an utter absence of fear.

In this and the next few verses, the order in which the conches followed one after another is given. Sri Krishna led the way. Then came Arjuna, Bheema and Dharma; the twins followed up. The order is not without significance.

By taking up the challenge first, Madhava, the Lord of Fortune, virtually decided the issue. Without the grace of माधव, राज्यलक्ष्मी was impossible to win.

15) पाञ्चजन्यं हृषीकेशो देवदत्तं धनंजयः ।

पौंड्रं दध्मौ महाशंखं भीमकर्मा वृकोदरः ॥

|            |     |                                      |
|------------|-----|--------------------------------------|
| पाञ्चजन्यं | ... | a conch of that name                 |
| हृषीकेशः   | ... | Sri Krishna, the ruler of the senses |
| देवदत्तं   | ... | a conch of that name                 |
| धनंजयः     | ... | Arjuna                               |
| पौंड्रं    | ... | a conch of that name                 |
| दध्मौ      | ... | blew                                 |
| महाशंखं    | ... | the great conch                      |
| भीमकर्मा   | ... | of fearful deeds                     |
| वृकोदरः    | ... | Bheema                               |

“Hrishikesa blew Panchajanya; Dhananjaya, his Devadatta; Vrikodara of fearful deeds blew his great conch Poundra”.

‘हृषीकेशः’ ॥ A word about the use of ‘Hrishikesa’; Sri Krishna was referred to as माधव in the previous verse. As He is the Lord and Consort of Fortune, the fortune of monarchy was entirely His gift. He is, besides, Hrishikesa the ruler of the sense, all the inner and outer ones. His support meant that the enemy would be easily paralyzed in action at the fiat of His will.

‘धनंजयः’ धनंजय contains an allusion to Arjuna’s military expedition to every part of India on the eve of



Rajasooya and the acquisition of immense wealth and subsidies for *the great sacrifice*.

16) अनन्तविजयं राजा कुन्तीपुत्रो युधिष्ठिरः ।  
नकुलस्सहदेवश्च सुघोषमणिपुष्पकौ ॥

|                 |     |   |
|-----------------|-----|---|
| अनन्तविजयं:     | ... | conch of that name                                    |
| राजा            | ... | king  |
| कुन्तीपुत्रः    | ... | the son of Kunttee                                    |
| युधिष्ठिरः      | ... | Dharma Raja   |
| नकुलः           | ... | Nakula  |
| सहदेवश्च        | ... | and Sahadeva (the twins the youngest of the brothers) |
| सुघोषमणिपुष्पकौ | ... | the conches of these names                            |

“The King Yudhishtira, son of Kunttee, blew Anantavijaya; Nakula and Sahadeva blew Sughosha and Manipushpaka.”

‘कुन्तीपुत्र’ : This reminds us of the heroic mother who sent a thrilling message to his eldest son to be stout of heart and give decisive battle. She appealed to him of her dependence and poverty, which, in her eyes, were worse than death. She pointed out how war to death was the only honourable course under the circumstances. (*Vide* passage in Sanskrit)

17) काश्यश्चपरमेष्वासः शिखण्डी च महारथः ।  
धृष्टद्युम्नो विराटश्च सात्यकिश्चापराजितः ॥

|               |     |   |
|---------------|-----|---|
| काश्यः च      | ... | and the King of Kasi  |
| परमेष्वासः    | ... | who wielded a mighty bow                                      |
| शिखण्डी       | ... | The Panchala prince who was so called as he had no moustaches |
| महारथः        | ... | the great car-warrior   |
| धृष्टद्युम्नः | ... | Dhrishtadyumna  |
| विराटः च      | ... | and Virata  |
| सात्यकिः च    | ... | and Satyaki   |
| अपराजितः      | ... | the unconquered   |

‘And the King of Kasi who wielded a mighty bow, and Sikhandi, and Dhrishtadyumna, the great car-warriors and Virata and Satyaki the unconquered (blew).’

18) द्रुपदो द्रौपदेयाश्च सर्वशः पृथिवीपते ।  
सौभद्रश्च महाबाहुः शंखान् दध्मुः पृथक् पृथक् ॥

|              |     |                                     |
|--------------|-----|-------------------------------------|
| द्रुपदः      | ... | King of that name                   |
| द्रौपदेयाः च | ... | and sons of Draupadi                |
| सर्वशः       | ... | every one of them; or, on all sides |
| पृथिवीपते    | ... | O ! King (Dhritarashtra)            |

|             |     |                               |
|-------------|-----|-------------------------------|
| सौभद्रः च   | ... | and Abhimanyu                 |
| महाबाहुः    | ... | of powerful arms              |
| शंखान्      | ... | the conches                   |
| दध्मुः      | ... | blew                          |
| पृथक् पृथक् | ... | separately; one after another |

“Drupada, and the sons of Draupadi, every one of them, O ! King, and Abhimanyu of powerful arms, blew their conches one after another.”

19) स घोषो धार्तराष्ट्राणां हृदयानि व्यदारयत् ।  
नभश्च पृथिवीं चैव तुमुलो व्यनुनादयन् ॥

|                  |     |   |
|------------------|-----|---|
| सः               | ... | that  |
| घोषः             | ... | sound   |
| धार्तराष्ट्राणां | ... | of the sons and followers of<br>Dhritarashtra |
| हृदयानि          | ... | the hearts                                    |
| व्यदारयत्        | ... | rent  |
| नभः च            | ... | and the skies or heavens                      |
| पृथिवीं          | ... | the earth                                     |
| च एव             | ... | and also                                      |
| तुमुलः           | ... | the tumult                                    |
| व्यनुनादयन्      | ... | reverberating                                 |

“That sound rent the hearts of the sons and followers of Dhritarashtra, the tumult reverberating and filling the earth and heavens.”

It may be observed that the roar and conch of Bheeshma followed up by the united blare of his military bands had risen to a huge uproar and tumult (verses 12 and 13). The Pandavas responded to this. Sri Krishna led the way: the five brothers (Pandavas) followed. So did others too of note. The uproar caused by the commingled resoundings filled the Earth and Heavens with terrific echoes. The hearts of the opposing troops were rent and shaken with fear. This observation about the effects of the Pandava roar is worthy of note. The roar of the Kurus had produced no such effect.

Sri Krishna's sympathy and support was the chief and primary cause of the difference of course. One other cause of the echo and the terrific thunder rending the heart may be remembered. In Vana Parva, it is said that Bheema once had an encounter with Hanuman in the course of his expedition to the Sougandhika forests. After a brief parley, they became friends. Hanuman then conferred a special boon on Bheema and Arjuna. vide passage quoted in Sanskrit He blessed them to the effect that whenever Bheema blew a martial blare, Hanuman would cause it to reverberate a millionfold, and whenever Arjuna did so, he would supplement it by fearful sounds from Arjuna's flag on which he (Hanuman) would entrench himself. This episode is of interest to account in a measure for the heart-rending ferocity and magnitude of the sounds and echoes.

20) अथ व्यवस्थितान्दृष्ट्वा धार्तराष्ट्रान्कपिध्वजः ।  
प्रवृत्ते शस्त्रसंपाते धनुरुद्यम्य पाण्डवः ॥



|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| अथ              | ... then                                       |
| व्यवस्थितान्    | ... arrayed for battle                         |
| दृष्ट्वा        | ... seeing                                     |
| धार्तराष्ट्रान् | ... the sons and adherents of<br>Dhritarashtra |
| कपिध्वजः        | ... monkey-bannered Arjuna                     |
| प्रवृत्ते       | ... when about to begin                        |
| शस्त्रसंपाते    | ... fall of missiles                           |
| धनुः            | ... bow (Gandeeva)                             |
| उद्यम्य         | ... lifting                                    |
| पाण्डवः         | ... the son of Pandu—Arjuna                    |

“Then seeing the party of Dhritarashtra ready to fight, the monkey-bannered Arjuna lifted up the bow when missiles were about to be thrown.”

“कपिध्वजः” The allusion is to Hanuman’s boon conferred in the Sougandhika expedition.

“व्यवस्थितान्”. This touches an important key-note. Arjuna had been firm and brave till the last moment. He saw the terror-stricken faces of his kith and kin resolved to fight and die. The situation was awful to face, and the rashness of the enemy, in rushing to certain destruction, produced revulsion of feeling.

“अथ” This little word calls up numerous ideas. It means “afterwards”.

(1) After seeing the array, after observing the con-

sternation of the troops, and after noticing the imminence of the attack.

(2) It introduces a new प्रकरण, marks the commencement of a new theme. The reader expects the story to continue in the direction of blows given and the slaughter effected, but the story takes a diversion. अथ marks the change of note.

(3) अथ gives notice of the virtual commencement of the Bhagavad Geeta. So far, it had been only a preface. The philosophy starts only from here with Arjuna taking up a wrong attitude and formulating his objections which the Lord answers by philosophy.

(4) The word is a sound of auspicious blessing. Like Veena, flute, or marital music, the very sound, quite apart from the sense of the word, sounds an augury of good. Hence the virtual Geeta begins with a blessing.

(5) It expresses the unexpected character of what was to follow, a sudden turn of mind which was surprising in, कपिध्वज.

In Sanskrit writings they speak of three essentials for effective instruction and pupilage.

(1) They insist on a suitable, impressive, occasion - an appropriate reason to accentuate the necessity for the teaching प्रसंगानुकूल्य. In the present instance, the occasion was the imminent carnage which Arjuna faced, noted and withdrew from.

(2) They insist on the pupil being qualified and eager to receive the lessons in question — one on whom the teaching would not be thrown away. This is secured by the epithet अथ and कपिध्वजः. Arjuna was a most eligible pupil, well qualified in every way and adhering to the brave standard of Hanuman. (मुख्यप्राण) (श्रोत्रानुकूल्य).

3) Thirdly they insist on a really wise and capable teacher. The answer comes from the word 'Hrisheekesa' in the next verse. The teacher was no less than the Omniscient ruler of the senses. (वक्त्रानुकूल्य) .

21) हृषीकेशं तदा वाक्यमिदमाह महीपते ।

अर्जुन उवाच-

सेनयोरुभयोर्मध्ये रथं स्थापय मेऽच्युत ॥

|              |     |                    |
|--------------|-----|--------------------|
| हृषीकेशं     | ... | to Harisheekesa    |
| तदा          | ... | then               |
| वाक्यम् इदं  | ... | these words        |
| आह           | ... | spoke              |
| महीपते       | ... | O! king            |
| अर्जुनः उवाच | ... | Arjuna said        |
| सेनयोः उभयोः | ... | of both the armies |
| मध्ये        | ... | in the midst       |
| रथं          | ... | chariot            |
| स्थापय       | ... | place or stay      |
| मे           | ... | my                 |
| अच्युत       | ... | O! Achyuta         |

He spoke the following words to Harisheekesa, O! King. Arjuna said "Between the two armies, station my chariot, O! Achyuta".

“वाक्यं आह”. Madhusoodana Saraswati points out that Sanjaya insinuates to Dhritarashtra that Arjuna spoke out his mind to Sri Krishna and, beyond speaking, committed himself to no rash violation or breach of duty – unlike Dhritarashtra’s sons who precipitated by rash usurpation.

22) यावदेतान्निरीक्षेऽहं योद्धुकामानवसिथितान् ।  
कैर्मया सह योद्धव्यमस्मिन् रणसमुद्यमे ॥

|              |     |                           |
|--------------|-----|---------------------------|
| यावत्        | ... | whereby, so that, or when |
| एतान्        | ... | these                     |
| निरीक्षे     | ... | I may behold              |
| अहं          | ... | myself                    |
| योद्धुकामान् | ... | longing to fight          |
| कैः          | ... | with whom                 |
| मया          | ... | by me                     |
| सह           | ... | along with                |
| योद्धव्यं    | ... | is to be fought           |
| अस्मिन्      | ... | in this                   |
| रणसमुद्यमे   | ... | war about to break out    |

“So that I may behold these standing eager for battle, and observe with whom I should fight (or who would fight me) in the war just breaking out.”



“यावत्”. Madhusoodana points out that यावत् may refer to place or time. Arjuna wished to be posted at a spot whence he would have a good view of the belligerents. He wished also to, be posted there long enough to enable him to make a survey.

“अहं”. This superadded to निरीक्षे which itself denotes the first person conveys the idea that he was anxious to see for himself first-hand, and satisfy himself instead of acting on report.

“योद्धुकामानवस्थितान्”. We were told by verse 19 that the uproar of Pandavas rent the enemy's heart. The troops were thunderstruck and shaken with fear. Yet Arjuna found that they were not in flight as might be expected but that they held to ground firmly and were prepared to fight.

23) योत्स्यमानानवेक्षेऽहं य एतेऽत्र समागताः ।

धार्तराष्ट्रस्य दुर्बुद्धेर्युद्धे प्रियचिकीर्षवः ॥

|                 |     |                               |
|-----------------|-----|-------------------------------|
| योत्स्यमानान्   | ... | ready to fight                |
| अवेक्षे अहं     | ... | I shall look at               |
| ये, एते         | ... | these who                     |
| अत्र            | ... | here                          |
| समागताः         | ... | are gathered together         |
| धार्तराष्ट्रस्य | ... | of the son of Dhritarashtra   |
| दुर्बुद्धेः     | ... | evil-minded                   |
| युद्धे          | ... | in battle, or by means of war |
| प्रियचिकीर्षवः  | ... | desirous of pleasing          |

“I shall gaze on these who are assembled here to please the evil-minded son of Dhritarashtra by means of battle.”

These five lines of Arjuna's speech call up a few important reflections.

1) Arjuna wished to have a good view of both the armies कैर्मया सह योद्धव्यं means firstly “those whom I have to fight” meaning the opponents. It also means “those with whose help I have to fight the enemy” i.e. his own troops. Verse 23 is consistent with both the senses. Applying it to the Pandava troops, they were also ready to fight. योत्स्यमानान्समागताः । They were there eager to do harm, अप्रियचिकीर्षवः to the evil-minded Duryodhana.

2) The speech of Arjuna sounds a note of apology for Duryodhana and mitigates his wickedness.

a) He could not ignore the fact that Duryodhana was, after all, the son of Dhritarashtra, his own paternal uncle, who deserved reverence. Hence he refers to Duryodhana as Dhritarashtra's son, and argues himself into an attitude of forbearance and forgiveness in consideration of the old uncle.

b) He refers to Duryodhana as दुर्बुद्धि as if to exculpate him, to some extent, and attribute his misdeeds to misguided and erring reason.

c) The expression योद्धुकामानवस्थितान् regarded as a single compound word also conveys the same idea of whitewashing the enemy's wickedness. They are, says

he, of unsettled mind because of too much eagerness for battle. It was the soldier's weakness that goaded him to battle, and his reason was unsettled by the propensities of the profession.

3) One other aspect remains to be noticed. It will be seen that Arjuna speaks with a distinct tone of command, asking Sri Krishna to drive the car to a commanding position. In speaking of the car, he lays stress on himself as the owner and master of it. मेरुथं 'my chariot' is worthy of note. Then follows निरीक्षे in the first person. "Let *me* see it". As if the first person denoted by the verb was not enough, he uses, in addition, the pronoun of the first person also अहं. He asserts his own mastery and wishes to see for himself and decide for himself. The next line is also in the same strain. "Let me see with whom I should fight". He takes it for granted that the fighting warrior was himself, that the true actor and free agent was himself. He took no note of God, Providence, or Sri Krishna, as having art or part in that business. In verse 23, अवेक्षे. "I shall see" followed by अहं *I myself* adds emphasis to the same strain of thought.

These six different expressions in the course of a few lines accentuate the egotism that took possession of Arjuna, the 'I and mine' that is at the root of all ignorance and accounts for Samsara; the fundamental delusion based on the स्वातन्त्र्य 'independence' of the Jeeva, which, the Lord is soon going to demolish by His teachings in the Geeta. These words of Arjuna laying so much emphasis on himself and so little on God and His will, form an appropriate prelude to the ensuing utter-

ances of his, which the Lord ironically calls प्रज्ञावाद 'Words of wisdom' in verse No.11 of chapter II.

संजय उवाच -

24) एवमुक्तो हृषीकेशो गुडाकेशेन भारत ।  
सेनयोरुभयोर्मध्ये स्थापयित्वा रथोत्तमम् ॥

|              |     |  |
|--------------|-----|--|
| संजयः        | ... | Sanjaya                                  |
| उवाच         | ... | said                                     |
| एवं          | ... | thus                                     |
| उक्तः        | ... | addressed                                |
| हृषीकेशः     | ... | Krishna                                  |
| गुडाकेशेन    | ... | by Arjuna—One who has<br>conquered sleep |
| भारत         | ... | O ! Dhritarashtra                        |
| सेनयोः उभयोः | ... | of the two armies                        |
| मध्ये        | ... | in the midst                             |
| स्थापयित्वा  | ... | stationing                               |
| रथोत्तमं     | ... | the eminent car                          |

Sanjaya said : Thus addressed by Gudakesa (conqueror of sleep - the vigilant Arjuna) Sri Krishna, stationing the great car between the two armies.

25) भीष्मद्रोणप्रमुखतः सर्वेषां च महीक्षिताम् ।  
उवाच पार्थ पश्यैतान् समवेतान्कुरुनिति ॥



|                    |                                    |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| भीष्मद्रोणप्रमुखतः | ... in front of Bheeshma and Drona |
| सर्वेषां च         | ... and also of all                |
| महीक्षितां         | ... chieftains                     |
| उवाच               | ... said                           |
| पार्थ              | ... O ! Arjuna                     |
| पश्य               | ... see                            |
| एतान्              | ... these                          |
| समेवतान्           | ... arrayed                        |
| कुरून्             | ... the Kaurava troops             |
| इति                | ... thus saying                    |

“In front of Bheeshma and Drona, as well as all the Chieftains, Said, O ! Partha, behold these Kauravas, arrayed.”

No sooner did Arjuna wish to be posted between the two armies than the Lord complied with the desire. In the twinkling of an eye, the car was there in position. Sri Krishna did not choose to remonstrate with Arjuna then and there and contradict him. There was, of course, not the slightest hesitation to make the move, the strategic wisdom of which just at the point of operations might be open to doubt. Sri Krishna was absolutely fearless and saw no harm in carrying Arjuna to the spot indicated. Verse 25 conveys an undertone of contempt for the warrior chieftains in front of whom the car was driven and stationed.

Not only did Sri Krishna station the car right in front of the foe, but He also spoke to Arjuna in their presence and hearing. ‘See, Partha, these Kurus ar-

rayed for battle.' A vein of ridicule is easily discernible in these words: 'Well, my dear cousin, what is your idea? Here they are, I have put them in prominent view for you. What is it that is ailing you, speak out,' is the purport of the Lord's words.

The prompt drive in the face of the marshalled array of Duryodhana's troops, the dauntless position taken up - the dialogue in the presence and hearing of Bheeshma, Drona, and all, and the esoteric effect of Sri Krishna's gaze which virtually sucked out the life and vitality of the army, are immortalized in Bhagavata in Bheeshma's dying words "सपदि सखिवचो निशम्य मध्ये निजपरयोर्बलयोरथं निवेश्य । स्थितवति परसैनिकायुरक्षणा हतवति पार्यसखे मतिर्ममास्तु ॥"

"May my mind rest on Partha's friend who, on hearing his friend's words, promptly stationed the chariot between his own and the enemy's troops, and, so stationed, pumped out, by his glance, the life of the opposing army."

26) तत्रापश्यत्स्थितान् पार्थः पितृनथ पितामहान् ।  
आचार्यान्मातुलान् भ्रातृन्पुत्रान्पौत्रान्सरसीस्तथा ॥

|          |     |   |
|----------|-----|---|
| तत्र     | ... | There: in both the armies: or<br>stationed where he was |
| अपश्यत्  | ... | saw   |
| स्थितान् | ... | those who were present                                  |
| पार्थः   | ... | Kuntree's son   |

|           |     |                       |
|-----------|-----|-----------------------|
| पितृन्    | ... | fathers, i.e., uncles |
| अथ        | ... | also                  |
| पितामहान् | ... | grand-uncles          |
| आचार्यान् | ... | Priests or preceptors |
| मातुलान्  | ... | maternal uncles       |
| भ्रातृन्  | ... | brethren              |
| पुत्रान्  | ... | sons                  |
| पौत्रान्  | ... | grandsons             |
| सखीन्     | ... | friends, comrades     |
| तथा       | ... | likewise              |

"There, he noted, present, uncles, grandsires, preceptors, maternal uncles, cousins, sons, grandsons, and comrades likewise".

27) श्वशुरान्सुहृदश्चैव सेनयोरुभयोरपि ।  
तान्समीक्ष्य स कौन्तेयः सर्वान्बधूनवस्थितान् ॥

|                |     |                               |
|----------------|-----|-------------------------------|
| श्वशुरान्      | ... | Fathers-in-law                |
| सुहृदः         | ... | friends                       |
| च एव           | ... | and only                      |
| सेनयोः, उभयोः, | ... | in both the armies throughout |
| अपि            |     |                               |
| तान्           | ... | them                          |
| समीक्ष्य       | ... | carefully observing           |
| सः             | ... | that (or he)                  |

|            |                |
|------------|----------------|
| कौन्तेयः   | ... Arjuna     |
| सर्वान्    | ... all        |
| बंधून्     | ... kindred    |
| अवस्थितान् | ... marshalled |

" Fathers-in-law and friends, in both armies throughout, He, Arjuna, observing them closely, none but kinsmen marshalled".

कृपयापरयाविष्टो विषीदन्निदमब्रवीत् ।

अर्जुन उवाच-

28) दृष्ट्वेमं स्वजनं कृष्ण युयुत्सुं समुपस्थितम् ।  
सीदन्ति मम गात्राणि मुखं च परिशुष्यति ॥

|          |                           |
|----------|---------------------------|
| कृपया    | ... by pitiful mercy      |
| परया     | ... great, strong         |
| आविष्टः  | ... affected, overpowered |
| विषीदन्  | ... grieving, sorrowful   |
| इदं      | ... thus                  |
| अब्रवीत् | ... spoke                 |
| अर्जुनः  | ... Arjuna                |
| उवाच     | ... said                  |
| दृष्ट्वा | ... seeing                |
| इमं      | ... this                  |
| स्वजनं   | ... kinsmen               |



|            |     |                |
|------------|-----|----------------|
| कृष्ण      | ... | O! Krishna     |
| युयुत्सुं  | ... | ready to fight |
| समुपस्थितं | ... | arrayed        |
| सीदन्ति    | ... | tremble        |
| मम         | ... | my             |
| गात्राणि   | ... | limbs          |
| मुखं       | ... | mouth          |
| च          | ... | and            |
| परिशुष्यति | ... | is dry         |

“Overpowered by a strong feeling of pitiful mercy, he spoke thus in sorrow. Arjuna said, "O! Krishna, seeing these kinsmen gathered for battle, my limbs fail, and my mouth is dry”.

‘कृपया परया’; A feeling of intense pity and mercy shot through the mind of Arjuna. He felt that war for the sake of self and power was morally wrong, and that war involving the slaughter of kith and kin was highly reprehensible. The standpoint of Arjuna is the standpoint of ordinary minds. War is felt by all civilized people to be an evil. Arjuna could conceive of no duty which called for the destruction of every one wedded to him by the silken bonds of affection.

His position was based on the footing that injury to life was a vice and a sin, that war is an evil which should not be resorted to under any circumstances, that to kill kinsmen was highly culpable and that war for the sake of dominion or riches was utterly unworthy.

There is a subtle fallacy in most of these notions. The world cannot get on for a moment if the law of punishments दण्डनीति were abolished. Arjuna himself is going to expatiate to Dharma on this theme in (राजधर्म).

He says in Adi Parva, "I cannot see any life living without doing harm. Animals live on animals, and the strong feed on the weak. Some men are deterred from wrong by the penal code of Kings; some by the punishments of Yama, some by the terrors of hell, and some, by the fear of mutual recrimination. Thus the world is upheld by the law of pains and penalties. Hence, the broad platform of the Buddhist and the Jain of absolute prohibition from harm is not a practicable basis of the philosophy of conduct which the Geeta inculcates". ★

That war is an evil may be true, broadly stated. But that is the only arbiter of justice when sovereigns and nations go wrong. It is deplorable that the necessity for the arbitrament of war does exist in the wickedness and misdeeds of men. When natural justice miscarries, war is a duty if no other course be available. The question then is, when war is a duty, however unpleasant, is it to be avoided on the sentiment of the

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★ सत्त्वैस्सत्त्वा हि जीवन्ति बलैश्च बलवत्तराः ॥ शान्ति ॥

राजदण्डभयादेके पापाः पापं न कुर्वते । (Ch. 15 (20)

यमदण्डभयादेके परलोकभयादपि ॥

परस्परभयादेके पापाः पापं न कुर्वते ।

एवं सांसिद्धिके लोके सर्वं दण्डे प्रतिष्ठितम् ॥

Jain? Then again, in such a righteous war, if kinsmen are to be trampled upon, is this to be done or avoided? It may be noble, in a sense, to sacrifice one's own likes, prejudices, and comforts, for the sake of kinsmen. But when a man has to take a wider outlook of duty, love, and charity, and consider the vaster claims of Dharma, he is no king and no soldier, who allows personal and selfish considerations to hinder the straight path of duty. Thus far, on the pedestal of morality. To go one step higher, true religion inculcates the greatness of God and the vileness of Satan. Whoever hates God and righteousness is a sinner. Duryodhana and his partisans were the enemies of God and virtue. It was a holy war that the Pandavas were called on to undertake to exterminate irreligion and vice. In such a war, kith and kin are necessarily nowhere. Holiness is judged with reference to God alone. "I and mine" are out of place herein. There is no place for agnates and cognates. All lovers of God are our friends and kinsmen, and all haters, our enemies. Judged from this position, Arjuna, as a true crusader, had no business to bring considerations of blood to bear on his duty.

In these circumstances, the doubt arises whether the epithet परया is very appropriate in describing Arjuna's feeling. If it means anything lofty and noble, it must be said that the whole trend of the Bhagavad Gita is opposed to it. There was little of loftiness about it. On the other hand, it was not even free from a tinge of selfishness, because, he wished to avoid war, to be spared the griefs of bereavement. He was too shortsighted to observe the claims of humanity for a more righteous government than Duryodhana's. I therefore

take it that परया is meant only to emphasize the intensity of the emotion rather than the moral or religious greatness of it. The Sanskrit words कृपया परया are so conjoined that in dividing the words, we get अपरया quite as grammatically as परया. अपरया indicates the inferiority of the emotion and makes very good sense.

It may also be observed that this is not the first time that Arjuna is thus overpowered by tenderness to cousins. He says in Udyoga Parva (I): ★

“I desire not harm even to a worm or an ant. Much less can I dream of doing harm to kith and kin. Hence I originally sought five villages.”

He had found out that this extreme tenderness was wrong, and had argued him out of it when deciding on war. But just at the awful moment, the feeling recurred with force. The कृपा now exhibited was अपरा *ie.* a *second* fit of mercy, one that had been stifled, but recurred at the crisis.

There remains a word to be said about his argument that for the sake of perishable self and power, it was ignoble to kill one's own kinsmen. The Geeta assents to this proposition and impresses on Arjuna and mankind, the great lesson, that duty is to be performed not for the sake of human or heavenly fruits, but only to please Him the supreme God.

★ न चाहं कामये पापमति कीटपिपीलयोः

किं पुनर्ज्ञातिषु बधं कामयेयं कथंचन ।

एतदर्थं मया तात पञ्चग्रामावृताः पुरा ॥ (Udyoga 163 (23))



29) वेपथुश्च शरीरे मे रोमहर्षश्च जायते ।  
गाण्डीवं स्रवते हस्तात्त्वक्चैव परिदह्यते ॥

|            |     |                          |
|------------|-----|--------------------------|
| वेपथुः च   | ... | and tremor               |
| शरीरे      | ... | in body                  |
| मे         | ... | my                       |
| रोमहर्षः   | ... | hair standing on end     |
| जायते      | ... | is caused                |
| गाण्डीवं   | ... | the Gandeeva bow         |
| स्रवते     | ... | falls off                |
| हस्तात्    | ... | from hand                |
| त्वक् च एव | ... | and the skin, altogether |
| परिदह्यते  | ... | is scorched              |

“My limbs tremble and hairs stand on end. The bow Gandeeva slips from hand, and the skin is parched altogether.”

“गाण्डीवं” This is the name of Arjuna’s divine bow. An esoteric significance is mentioned of Gandeeva in chapter 95 of Udyoga Parva. It is said that this bow could project 8 missiles *viz.*,

|          |     |  |
|----------|-----|--|
| काकुदीकं | ... | causing the foe to faint or sleep away                           |
| शुकं     | ... | creating मोहन or delusion bringing about a stampede of elephants |
| नाकं     | ... | maddening the men  |

|                   |                                      |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| अक्षिसन्तर्जनं    | ... dazzling the eye                 |
| सन्तानं           | ... causing one arrow to look a host |
| नर्तकं पैशाचं     | ... causing hysterics                |
| बोरं              | ... Rakshasa havoc                   |
| आस्यमोदकंयाम्य... | goadng to suicide                    |

These eight weapons are explained to be the same as the eight passions that debase human nature. They are lust, wrath, greed, vanity, insolence, pride, malice and selfishness. Jamadagni explains to Duryodhana that these are the missiles hurled by Nara under the protection of Narayana. Thus, taken literally, Gandeeva is an extraordinary bow from which arrows esoteric sense, Nara is the wielder, and he paralyses wicked men by means of various passions. When Arjuna trembled with passion, grief, fear and so on, the Gandeeva naturally fell from his hand. It required strength and firmness to wield it. He must be the vanquisher and subduer of passions and keep them under control to be able to hurl them at his enemies. If he became, however, a victim thereof himself, he could not sustain Gandeeva.

30) न च शक्रोम्यवस्थातुं भ्रमतीव च मे मनः ।

निमित्तानि च पश्यामि विपरीतानि केशव ॥

|           |     |                  |
|-----------|-----|------------------|
| न च       | ... | nor              |
| शक्रोमि   | ... | am I able        |
| अवस्थातुं | ... | to steady myself |

|            |     |            |
|------------|-----|------------|
| भ्रमति     | ... | whirls,    |
| इव         | ... | as if      |
| च          | ... | also       |
| मे मनः     | ... | my mind    |
| निमित्तानि | ... | omens      |
| च          | ... | and        |
| पश्यामि    | ... | I see      |
| विपरीतानि  | ... | adverse    |
| केशव       | ... | O ! Kesava |

“Nor am I able to steady myself, because my mind is whirling, as it were. I see adverse omens too, O! Kesava.”

‘भ्रमति इव मनः’. Arjuna felt a strong agitation of mind. It was not the weakness of the coward but a spirit of altruism acting on the pivot of self. Arjuna was by no means a really ignorant person. The worst attitude he ever exhibited was one of honest doubt.

‘निमित्तानि’. Arjuna saw and experienced omens of evil. In chapter 17 of Bheeshma Parva, a few omens are set out at length on the eve of the Great Battle. (*Vide Sanskrit portion*).

“The seven great planets fell blazing from the Heavens. The sun rose and shone as if in duplicate. He shot out great tongues of flame. Jackals and crows howled even during the day and licked the limbs eager for meat and blood.” These portents of misfortune, he evidently mistook as applicable to his side. He prob-

ably felt, in his own limbs, an experience of adverse omens such as the throbbing of the left eye. Hence पश्यामि has been construed to mean "I see" and "I experience". The belief in omens calls up the reflection that the moderner inhabiting any portion of the Indian continent is so very like his ancestor of many centuries ago in so many of his beliefs.

31) न च श्रेयोऽनुपश्यामि हत्वा स्वजनमाहवे ।  
न कांक्षे विजयं कृष्ण न च राज्यं सुखानि च ॥

|           |     |                                  |
|-----------|-----|----------------------------------|
| न च       | ... | nor                              |
| श्रेयः    | ... | good                             |
| अनु       | ... | subsequently or as a consequence |
| पश्यामि   | ... | do I see                         |
| हत्वा     | ... | by killing                       |
| स्वजनम्   | ... | kinsmen                          |
| आहवे      | ... | in battle                        |
| न कांक्षे | ... | I don't wish for                 |
| विजयं     | ... | victory                          |
| कृष्ण     | ... | O ! Krishna                      |
| न च       | ... | nor                              |
| राज्यं    | ... | kingdom                          |
| सुखानि च  | ... | and pleasures                    |

"Nor do I see any good as the result of slaying my kinsmen in battle. I don't wish for victory, kingdom or pleasures, O ! Krishna."



‘आहवे’. To kill kinsmen otherwise than in open war is, of course, manslaughter which is culpable. But in fair fight there is no objection, generally speaking, to attack an adversary with fatal results. To emphasize this well-known distinction, Arjuna uses the qualifying expression “in battle”, and says he can see no good even in that.

नच and अनु; These words are meant to refute the possible position that though war implying injury to life and limb may be deemed an evil, the after-results confer a blessing. Arjuna sees none such even in the future.

32) किन्नो राज्येन गोविंद किं भोगैर्जीवितेन वा ।  
येषामर्थे कांक्षितं नो राज्यं भोगास्सुखानि च ॥

|              |     |                   |
|--------------|-----|-------------------|
| किं नः       | ... | of what use to us |
| राज्येन      | ... | by kingdom        |
| गोविंद       | ... | O ! Govinda       |
| किं          | ... | of what use       |
| भोगैः        | ... | by enjoyments     |
| जीवितेन वा   | ... | or by life        |
| येषां अर्थे  | ... | for whose sake    |
| कांक्षितं नः | ... | by us desired     |
| राज्यं       | ... | kingdom           |
| भोगाः        | ... | comforts          |
| सुखानि च     | ... | and pleasures     |

"Of what use is kingdom, O ! Govinda; what is the benefit form enjoyments or life. Those for whose sake, kingdom, comforts and pleasures, are desired by us,"

“येषामर्थे” In commenting on this line, Sankarananda strikes a peculiar note. According to him, Arjuna proceeds as if on the established position that kingdom, comforts, pleasures, and life itself, will, if earned at all, be ill-gotten acquisitions secured by and through breach of Dharma. Why should we violate Dharma and acquire these? asks Arjuna. A possible reply is that a point may be stretched and unrighteous acts done to protect elders and dependants. So says Manu. Arjuna answers this by saying that sinful deeds are tolerated and approved only for the purpose of protecting kinsmen. But here are the very kinsmen waiting to be killed. for whose protection, sins are condoned. Hence the foundation of Manu's behest is cut off. (Sankarananda).

Apart from the argument based on the sinfulness of killing relations, Arjuna seems to urge the futility of fighting under present circumstances, on the ground that there is no fruit derivable after all, from this wild-goose chase. Whether the war be sinful or righteous, the end in view can be dominion, comforts, long life and pleasure. But joys are enjoyable and griefs endurable only if shared with relations Arjuna has evidently no faith in a life spent like that of Robinson Crusoe. Man is eminently a social and domestic animal. Kuntée exclaimed once, "Of what value, O! king, is the fortune acquired in some strange land where there is no enemy to envy it and no friend to rejoice over it?". Although Self plays a most important part among hu-

man motives, it seems at the same time a fundamental law of human nature, that no man can live wholly self-centered. Without a friend, a relation, or a partner, to congratulate or sympathise, few would consider life really worth living.

The conclusion that Arjuna drives at is that the fruits of this war are valueless. Sankarananda makes out this from the stand-point of the relations and dependants who happen to be the beneficiaries of this conquest as well as the victims of the destruction leading to that conquest. If conquest can be justified only because the goal is the welfare of A, and if the conquest also implies the destruction of A, the whole undertaking becomes unjust for want of the only sanctifying feature laid down by Manu. The other stand-point set forth above is, not with reference to the ultimate objects of the benefaction, but with reference to the conqueror himself. The conquest is valueless not because of the supposed sin failing to be sanctified by the charity of supporting dependants, but because psychological conditions make it impossible for the conqueror himself to find any relish in the fruits of conquest unless these are shared by partners.

33) त इमेऽवस्थिता युद्धे प्राणांस्त्यक्त्वा धनानि च ।

आचार्याः पितरः पुत्रास्तथैव च पितामहाः ॥

|           |     |           |
|-----------|-----|-----------|
| ते        | ... | they      |
| इमे       | ... | are these |
| अवस्थिताः | ... | standing  |

|           |     |                     |
|-----------|-----|---------------------|
| युद्धे    | ... | for battle          |
| प्राणान्  | ... | (love of) lives     |
| त्यक्त्वा | ... | having relinquished |
| धनानि च   | ... | and love of wealth  |
| आचार्याः  | ... | teachers            |
| पितरः     | ... | fathers             |
| पुत्राः   | ... | sons                |
| तथा एव च  | ... | and likewise        |
| पितामहाः  | ... | grand-fathers       |

"They are these, standing for battle, having relinquished all love of life and wealth, teachers, fathers, sons, and grand-fathers likewise".

34) मातुलाः श्वशुराः पौत्राः श्यालाः संबंधिनस्तथा ।  
एतान्नहन्तुमिच्छामि धृतोऽपि मधुसूदन ॥

|                     |     |                      |
|---------------------|-----|----------------------|
| मातुलाः             | ... | mother's brothers    |
| श्वशुराः            | ... | Fathers in-law       |
| पौत्राः             | ... | grand-sons           |
| श्यालाः             | ... | brothers-in-law      |
| संबंधिनः            | ... | relations            |
| तथा                 | ... | similarly            |
| एतान्               | ... | these                |
| न हन्तुं इच्छामि... |     | I don't wish to kill |



घ्नतोऽपि ... though they be assassins  
 मधुसूदन ... O! Krishna

"Mothers, brothers, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law and similar kinsmen. These I don't wish to kill, though they be assassins, O! Madhusudana.

35) अपि तैलोक्यराज्यस्य हेतोः किं नु महीकृते ।  
 निहत्य धार्तराष्ट्रान्नः का प्रीतिः स्याज्जनार्दन ॥

अपि ... even  
 त्रैलोक्यराज्यस्य हेतोः ... for the sake of the three worlds  
 किं नु ... much worse  
 महीकृते ... for the sake, merely, of the earth  
 निहत्य ... by killing  
 धार्तराष्ट्रान् ... the sons of Dhritarashtra  
 नः ... to us  
 का प्रीतिः ... what earthly happiness  
 स्यात् ... will result  
 जनार्दन ... O ! Krishna

"Even for the sake of the three worlds, and much less for the sake, merely, of the Earth, what temporal happiness can result to us, O ! Janardana, from killing the sons of Dhritarashtra."

36) पापमेवाश्रयेदस्मान्हत्वैतानाततायिनः ।  
तस्मान्नार्हा वयं हन्तुं धार्तराष्ट्रान्स्वबांधवान् ॥

|                 |     |   |
|-----------------|-----|---|
| पापं एव         | ... | only sin (resulting in unhappiness in the next world) |
| आश्रयेत्        | ... | will attach   |
| अस्मान्         | ... | to us   |
| हत्वा           | ... | by killing  |
| एतान्           | ... | these   |
| आततायिनः        | ... | murderous reprobates                                  |
| तस्मात्         | ... | therefore   |
| न अर्हाः वयं    | ... | we ought not  |
| हन्तुं          | ... | to kill   |
| धार्तराष्ट्रान् | ... | the sons of Dhritarashtra                             |
| स्वबांधवान्     | ... | our kinsmen   |

“Only sin will attach to us for killing these, murderous reprobates though they be; therefore, we ought not to kill the sons of Dhritarashtra, our own kinsmen.”

In the last line of the previous verse, it was pointed out that no temporal happiness was possible. Arjuna proceeds to say that no happiness could result in the next world either. He could foresee nothing but sin, no merit at all, from any standpoint.

‘आततायिनः ॥’ Arjuna uses a strong expression to denounce the character of his opponents. He calls them

Atatayins, 'Murderous reprobates.' It is desirable to have a clear notion of this expression. Vasishta defines it. The incendiary, the poisoned, the armed assassin, the brigand, the usurper of lands and the seducer of another's wife, are Atatayins. (*Vide Sanskrit portion*). Vishnu and Katyayana say: "The assassin killing with a sword, poison or fire, the hurler of curses, the user of black magic to kill, the political traitor and the seducer of wife, these seven are Atatayins."

It is enacted in the law of self-defence that "an Atatayin coming down to attack may be despatched without further ado. No penalty is incurred by the killer thereby". This rule of killing Atatayins was not unknown to Arjuna. He is of opinion, however, that the rule does not give him exemption from sin in the circumstances before him. His position is explained in various ways by the commentators.

1) The exemption in the case of Atatayins is said to occur in Artha (अर्थ) Sastra, and is therefore weaker than the rule of Dharma that no man shall injure his neighbour or any animal (न हिंस्यात्सर्वभूतानि). What is meant evidently is that, for the exigencies of the Royal Penal Code, a chapter of general exceptions, artificial in character, contains the rule of self-defence by reason of which one is able to protect oneself against offenders. This legal fiction cannot override the moral maxim which inflicts the penalties of sin on every wrong-doer. When the door is open for escape, why get into the clutches of the Atatayin at all, and kill him?

2) Assuming that the killing of Atatayins is justified by the moral and religious code too, some argue

that because it involves kith and kin and the destruction of the clan कुल itself, there is sin in killing them, though, if they were Atatayins without more, their destruction might be sinless. (Thus is Vivriti). स्वबान्धवान् suggests this explanation.

3) Looking at all the rules bearing on the question, in the Dharma Sastras, the law does not seem to be very clear. Katyayana sounds a note of dissent by creating an exception in favour of Atatayins who are elderly people deserving of reverence.

आततायिनि चोत्कृष्टे तपःस्वाध्यायजन्मतः ।

वधस्तत्रतु नैव स्यात् पापे हीने वधो मतः ॥ इति.

If the Atatayin is a superior personage by merit of penance or birth, he is not to be killed. The lynch law in question applies only to the low and the sinful. Brihaspati commends the person who abstains from killing a superior Atatayin, and says that he acquires, by the abstention, the merits of an Aswamedha. 'आततायिनमुत्कृष्टं वृत्तस्वाध्यायसंयुतं । यो न हन्याद्वधप्राप्तं सोऽश्वमेधफलं लभेत्' Hence it is, that, after the great war Aswamedha was specially prescribed to atone for the sins incurred by slaying the opponents, Atatayins as they were (अश्वमेधेन शुद्ध्यन्ति महापातकिनस्त्विमे).

4) The golden rule, vehemently insisted on by Christian scriptures of returning good for evil, of presenting the right cheek when the left is slapped, is the basis of Arjuna's theory that evil is not to be resisted. Only, he did not see that the theory of non-resistance



of evil is so utopian as to be entirely beyond the pale of practical politics. The golden rule of non-resistance is warmly advocated in many places in Santiparva.

तद्यदात्मनि चेच्छेत तत्परस्यापि चिन्तयेत् । Ch. 98. V.21.

न तत्परेषु कुर्वीत जानन्नप्रियमात्मनः । Ch. 98-19.

योनात्युक्तः प्राह रूक्षं प्रियं वा यो वा हतो न प्रतिहन्ति धैर्यात् ।  
पापं च यो नेच्छति तस्य हन्तुस्तस्येह देवाः स्पृहयन्ति नित्यम् ॥

Ch. 300. V. 17.

“Do unto others what you wish to be done unto you;” “Do not do to others what, if done to you, will be disagreeable.” “Whoever does not retort harshly, when foully abused, whoever does not retaliate, even if killed, and does not wish evil to the assassin, with him the Gods are pleased.”

Arjuna adopts this line of reasoning, that evil is not to be resisted, that the golden rule is the only holy rule of conduct to adopt and that to return good for evil is true merit.

The 1st line of this verse has been constructed in another way too. No doubt, they are Atatayins, because Duryodhana had committed arson, had tried poison, had tried seduction, had banished the Pandavas and had usurped their kingdom – in fact, had done almost everything to bring him within the purview of the definition. Assuming, however, that he was no atatayin by previous demerits, he would become one, says

Arjuna, if he should kill the Pandavas though these abstained from battle.

This is in answer to the objection that, though Arjuna might desist, Duryodhana would not abstain from battle. Arjuna says, if he killed an adversary who retired from battle, he becomes thereby an Atatayin, and sin would attach to him. Whereas the first interpretation gave the meaning, "only sin would attach to us by killing the Atatayins," the second meaning now explained is "sin attaches *only to them*, the Atatayins, if they choose to kill us (when we are unresisting and innocent.)"

37) स्वजनं हि कथं हत्वा सुखिनस्स्याम माधव ।  
यद्यप्येते न पश्यन्ति लोभोपहतचेतसः ॥

|              |     |                                 |
|--------------|-----|---------------------------------|
| स्वजनं       | ... | our kith and kin                |
| हि           | ... | because                         |
| कथं          | ... | how                             |
| हत्वा        | ... | killing                         |
| सुखिनः       | ... | happy                           |
| स्याम        | ... | may we be                       |
| माधव         | ... | O ! Madhava                     |
| यद्यपि       | ... | although                        |
| एते          | ... | these                           |
| न पश्यन्ति   | ... | do not see                      |
| लोभोपहतचेतसः | ... | their reason dominated by greed |

“For, how may we be happy after killing our kith and kin, O ! Madhava. Although, these, being dominated by greed, do not see.”

‘लोभोपहतचेतसः ।’ Arjuna begins a line of reasoning to draw a distinction between himself and Duryodhana. He proceeds to meet the point that, as the obligations and amenities arising from kinship were reciprocal, if Duryodhana’s party did not hesitate to kill, it was obviously Arjuna’s duty to retaliate. Arjuna points out that a difference existed between the two as to their moral turpitude, arising from the fact that, whereas one of the parties clearly perceived the guilt, the other did not, on account of the covetousness warping their intelligence. Arjuna is prepared to minimize and mitigate the wickedness of the enemy, for says he, they were carried away by greed and were therefore blind. Every code of religious and moral law allows a clear and important distinction between the conscious and wilful wrong-doer and the ignorant and unwitting offender. Yajnavalkya says that sin committed unknowingly is expiable; while if knowingly committed, it is not. By virtue of a special text, such a man may however be associated with”.

The word उपहत may be noted. ‘Upadhi’ is an adventitious cause which makes things look different from what they are. A pure white crystal looks red by the proximity of a red flower. It also denotes a deceptive medium. The greed of Duryodhana was the Upadhi which coloured and misled his reason. Hence he acted very much like drunken people who are not free agents and are morally irresponsible.

38) कुलक्षयकृतं दोषं मित्रद्रोहे च पातकम् ।  
कथं न ज्ञेयमस्माभिः पापादस्मान्निवर्तितुम् ॥

|               |     |                                    |
|---------------|-----|------------------------------------|
| कुलक्षयकृतं   | ... | brought on by extinction of family |
| दोषम्         | ... | sin                                |
| मित्रद्रोहे च | ... | and in hostility to friends        |
| पातकं         | ... | turpitude                          |
| कथं           | ... | how                                |
| न ज्ञेयं      | ... | is it not to be learnt             |
| अस्माभिः      | ... | by us                              |
| पापात्        | ... | from sin                           |
| अस्मात्       | ... | of this character                  |
| निवर्तितुं    | ... | to turn away                       |

“ The sin of extinguishing the family (clan) and the criminality of injuring friends; why should we not learn to turn away from such a sin.”

39) कुलक्षयकृतं दोषं प्रपश्यद्भिर्जनार्दन ।  
कुलक्षये प्रणश्यन्ति कुलधर्माः सनातनाः ॥

|                 |                                    |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| कुलक्षयकृतं ... | caused by extinguishing the family |
| दोषं            | ... sin                            |
| प्रपश्यद्भिः    | ... seeing clearly                 |
| जनार्दन         | ... O ! Krishna                    |



|             |                                 |
|-------------|---------------------------------|
| कुलक्षये    | ... by the extinction of family |
| प्रणश्यन्ति | ... die away                    |
| कुलधर्माः   | ... family observances          |
| सनातनाः     | ... ancestral                   |

“Knowing clearly, as we do, the sins brought on by family ruin, O ! Janardana: when the family is lost, ancestral family observances die away.”

(Verse 38) Arjuna argues thus. “The war that the other side is so anxious to engage in, causes the ruin and extinction of the family. This is fraught with extremely sinful results. Duryodhana does not see this. He is ignorant of it, as he is of other wrongs too that he is guilty of. He has not only this sin of extinguishing the clan to his credit, but also black ingratitude to boot. On our side, we always extended good will and cordiality towards him. He was our treasurer in the Rajasooya. We showed him every hospitality. But as soon as he turned his back on us, he began to scheme against us. He got us into the gambling. He exiled us for 13 years on the promise of restoring our kingdom to us at the end. But he refused to give us even a pinprick of earth. Duryodhana does not realize the dual crime he is committing viz.,

1) the family ruin and 2) treachery.

Luckily, we have no treachery to atone for. We are confronted only with the possible crime of bringing about the family extinction. He is blind to both. We are keenly alive to the only sin we are concerned with. Seeing it so clearly, are we not to turn away from it?

The objector may say that it is the duty of every Kshatriya to respond to every challenge for battle and every challenge for dice. Duryodhana having thrown down the gauntlet of war, it may be said that I am bound in duty to pick it up and fight. But no. There is no doubt a conflict of duties, but the sin of family-ruin in prospect is far more serious than the one involved in the breach of the soldier's duty. No soldier is bound, under all circumstances, to accept the challenge, even though it might imply serious sins such as the extinction of the clan. Hence the rule that a warrior must fight, if challenged, is subject to the qualification that no other sin is liable to be incurred thereby and that the party challenged is not conscious of such a sin. There is not only a serious sin involved, but I am also conscious of it. Hence I won't fight".

‘कुलधर्माः सनातनाः’. The ancient and ancestral observances that die away with the extinction of a family are traditional customs and practices such as Sraddha. The observances known as Kulachara are matters of great importance in India. Our ancient lawgivers view with peculiar sancity the strict perpetuation of traditional rites and ceremonies, and an unbroken continuance of lineage for this purpose.

40) धर्मे नष्टे कुलं कृत्स्नमधर्मोभिभवत्युत ।  
अधर्माभिभवात्कृष्ण प्रदुष्यन्ति कुलस्त्रियः ॥

|       |                   |
|-------|-------------------|
| धर्मे | ... righteousness |
| नष्टे | ... being lost    |

|                  |                                    |
|------------------|------------------------------------|
| कुलं कृत्स्नं उत | ... even the entire clan           |
| अधर्मः           | ... depravity                      |
| अभिभवति          | ... covers, seizes                 |
| अधर्माभिभवात्    | ... by the domination of depravity |
| कृष्ण            | ... O ! Krishna                    |
| प्रदुष्यन्ति     | ... become tainted                 |
| कुलस्त्रियः      | ... family women                   |

“When Dharma is lost, depravity envelopes the entire family. By the predominance of depravity, O ! Krishna, family women become tainted.”

“कुलस्त्रियः”. Family women get into ruin. Family women are referred to in antithesis to the class of dancing women. That this class of women who did not marry existed of old is clear from the story of Pingala, the contented prostitute, and other allusions, in Bhagavatha and Mahabharata.

The ruin of women follows close upon the decay of family Dharmas. The clan being thinned by the death of elders and chiefs, the youngsters suffer for want of teachers to guide them. The wives of men who brought the families to ruin cannot in the nature of things lead a chaste and upright life. They are tempted to go astray in sheer despair. They are found to seek husbands for sisters and daughters among prohibited castes and gotras. This leads us to the confusion of castes, वर्णसंकर in the next verse.

41) स्त्रीषु दुष्टासु बाष्ण्येय जायते वर्णसंकरः ।  
संकरो नरकायैव कुलघ्नानां कुलस्य च ॥

|             |     |  |
|-------------|-----|--|
| स्त्रीषु    | ... | women  |
| दुष्टासु    | ... | being degraded   |
| बाष्ण्येय   | ... | O ! Krishna  |
| जायते       | ... | arises   |
| वर्णसंकरः   | ... | confusion or admixture of castes                                 |
| संकरः       | ... | confusion  |
| नरकायैव     | ... | (leads) only to hell   |
| कुलघ्नानाम् | ... | those who have ruined the family                                 |
| कुलस्य च    | ... | and the family itself (the surviving youngsters and descendants) |

“When women are degraded, Varna Sankara (confusion of castes) is the result. Confusion leads, necessarily, into Hell, those who have destroyed the family as well as the ruined family itself.”

“वर्णसंकरः”. Arjuna dreads it as a serious evil that the castes would get intermingled. It is of interest to contrast this, for a moment, with the trend of modern social reform which looks upon this very inter-mixture as a consummation devoutly to be wished for. ‘Down with caste’ is the public cry of the age. ‘Preserve it intact’ is the ancient injunction.

Abbe Dubois was a French Missionary who lived in South India for about 30 years among all classes of



people and wrote a horrid treatise on 'Hindu manners and customs' in French, which, the East India Company purchased in manuscript and published in English. This book is now found in every Government library. Speaking of caste, this hostile witness, however, says, 'I believe caste division to be in many respects the *chef d'oeuvre*, the happiest effort of Hindu legislation. I am persuaded that it is simply and solely due to the distribution of the people into castes, that India did not lapse into a state of barbarism, that she preserved and perfected the arts and sciences of civilization, while most other nations of the earth remained in a state of barbarism.'

"Such an institution was probably the only means that the most clear-sighted prudence could devise for maintaining a state of civilization."

"We can picture what would become of the Hindus if they were not kept within the bounds of duty by the rules and penalties of caste, by looking at the position of the Pariahs or outcastes of India who, checked by no moral restraint, abandon themselves to their natural propensities."

"For my own part, I am persuaded that a nation of Pariahs, left to themselves, would speedily become worse than the hordes of cannibals who wander in the vast wastes of Africa and would soon take to devouring each other."

This quotation, though a long one, speaks for itself, coming as it does, from the pen of one who had not a single good word to say of the Hindus in general and the Brahmins in particular.

There is abundant testimony even among modern writings (Dr. Brycre's Romanes Lectures, for example), that the influence of the mother has a most important bearing on the character of children and that admixture of races tends to diminish the wealth of character and the potency for civilization.

Manu and others classify the products of intermixture as Anulomas and Pratilomas. Where the father is of a higher caste than the mother, the child born is Anuloma. If the order be reversed between the parties, the result is a Pratiloma. The following may be referred to, to show some details of this classification.

| <b>ANULOMAS</b>  |   |   |
|------------------|---|---|
|                  | <i>Father</i>   | <i>Mother</i>   |
| अपसदः            | Whose father is a<br>Brahmin or Kshatriya<br>or Vysia | and<br>whose mother is<br>Kshatriya Vysia or<br>Sudra |
| अंवष्टः          | Brahmin   | Vysia   |
| निषादः           | Brahmin   | Sudra   |
| उग्रः            | Kshatriya   | Sudra   |
| <b>PRATILOMA</b> |   |   |
| सूतः             | Whose father is<br>Kshatriya                          | Whose<br>mother is Brahmin                            |
| मागधः            | Vysia   | Kshatriya   |
| वैदेहः           | Vysia   | Brahmin   |

42) पतन्ति पितरोह्येषां लुप्तपिण्डोदकक्रियाः ।  
दोषैरेतैः कुलघ्नानां वर्णसंकरकारकैः ॥

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| पतन्ति               | ... fall                                  |
| पितरः                | ... ancestors: manes                      |
| हि                   | ... indeed                                |
| एषां                 | ... of these                              |
| लुप्तपिण्डोदकक्रियाः | ... deprived of rice-ball's and libations |
| दोषैः                | ... by misdeeds                           |
| एतैः                 | ... these                                 |
| कुलघ्नानां           | ... slayers of family                     |
| वर्णसंकरकारकैः       | ... creating confusion of caste           |

“Their ancestors fall, deprived of rice-balls and libations, owing to these misdeeds of family-slayers creating the confusion of castes.”

‘लुप्तपिण्डोदकक्रियाः’. It is to be observed that all sorts of artificial sons spoken of in the Smritis do not appear, after all, capable of conferring spiritual benefits on the parent. For instance, the Kshetrāja son is one of this class, being begotten on one’s wife by some one else, an appointed parent like Rishi Deergha Tamas who begot issue for a king. The point is whether the rice-ball and libation offered by him does reach the mother’s true husband. Neelakanta commenting on this verse of the Geeta says that it can reach only the true progenitor and not the mother’s husband. He is of opinion that he (क्षेत्रज) is tolerated and counted a son only for the

secular purposes of lineage and not the spiritual. Hence, when a family becomes extinct, artificial resuscitations do not and cannot transmit Pinda and water to the ancestors, and they have necessarily to fall.

The story of Asthika in Mahabharata is a touching description of the ancestor's condition under such circumstances. Jaratkaru was a young sage with a wise head on young shoulders. He believed not in wedded life, but resolved to be a life-bachelor. In his peregrinations into a forest, he looked into a ruined well by chance. There, he found a lot of people clutching at grasses and hanging down as if about to fall into a fathomless abyss. A few rats were busy gnawing at the roots of the grasses. Jaratkaru was horrified to see the imminent position of danger to which these people clung in despair and asked them what the matter was. They replied in tones of somber mournfulness that they were the ancestors of one Jaratkaru, and owing to his resolution not to marry and beget issues, they were about to be hurled into hell. Jaratkaru felt how sinful he had been and disclosed his identity. They advised him to go and marry at once. He reluctantly consented. So goes the story, at the end of the which we find a Rishi Asthika, born of Jaratkaru and serpent Vasuki's sister, who, young boy as he was, bearded Janamejaya and stopped his 'serpent-sacrifice'.

The point raised by Neelakanta, as explained above, is one of considerable academical and religious interest to Hindus and scholars of Dharma Sastra. Except the Dattaka or adopted son, all the other artificial sons have now become obsolete. Interest therefore centers on the adopted son as to his spiritual capacity



to benefit his adoptive ancestors by Pinda and water. Neelakanta quotes Veda and Yaska to disqualify every son but the Aurasa in this respect.

43) उत्साद्यन्ते जातिधर्माः कुलधर्माश्च शाश्वताः ।

उत्सन्नकुलधर्माणां मनुष्याणां जनार्दन ॥

|                    |                                     |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| उत्साद्यन्ते       | ... become extinct                  |
| जातिधर्माः         | ... caste duties                    |
| कुलधर्माः          | ... hereditary family-duties        |
| शाश्वताः           | ... ever-to-be performed, constant  |
| उत्सन्नकुलधर्माणां | ... whose family-duties are extinct |
| मनुष्याणां         | ... of the men                      |
| जनार्दन            | ... O ! Krishna                     |

“The ever-to-be performed caste-duties and family duties become extinct. Of the men whose family (and caste) duties are gone, O Janardana,”

44) नरके नियतं वासो भवतीत्यनुशुश्रुम ।

अहो बत महत्पापं कर्तुं व्यवसिता वयम् ॥

|       |                                 |
|-------|---------------------------------|
| नरके  | ... in hell                     |
| नियतं | ... with certainty, undoubtedly |
| वासः  | ... abode                       |
| भवति  | ... becomes or is               |

|                |     |                 |
|----------------|-----|-----------------|
| इति अनुशुश्रुम | ... | thus have heard |
| अहो बत         | ... | alas !          |
| महत्पापं       | ... | great sin       |
| कर्तुं         | ... | to commit       |
| व्यवसिताः      | ... | are engaged     |
| वयं            | ... | we              |

“The abode is undoubtedly in hell, thus have we heard. Alas! we are engaged in committing an enormous sin,”

“अहो बत”. This interjection deserves a passing notice. It is but a single word. It denotes grief and sadness. It expresses disgust at something despicable (धिक्). It conveys pity and commiseration. It expresses surprise. In the speech of Arjuna, he had given expression to all these feelings. The reader may easily recall to memory the passages striking the various notes, sadness, censure, mercy and wonder.

45) यद्राज्यसुखलोभेन हन्तुं स्वजनमुद्यताः ।

यदिमामप्रतीकारमशस्त्रं शस्त्रपाणयः ॥

|               |     |                                      |
|---------------|-----|--------------------------------------|
| यत्           | ... | because                              |
| राज्यसुखलोभेन | ... | from greed of kingship and pleasures |
| हन्तुं        | ... | to kill                              |
| स्वजनं        | ... | kinsmen                              |
| उद्यताः       | ... | have tried                           |

|             |     |                        |
|-------------|-----|------------------------|
| यदि         | ... | if                     |
| मां         | ... | me                     |
| अप्रतीकारं  | ... | unresisting            |
| अशस्त्रं    | ... | devoid of weapons      |
| शस्त्रपाणयः | ... | having weapons in hand |

“Because we are about to kill kinsmen from greed of royalty and its pleasures. If they, weapons in hand, attack me though I am unarmed and don't retaliate,”

धार्तराष्ट्रा रणे हन्युस्तन्मे क्षेमतरं भवेत् ।

संजय उवाच —

46) एवमुक्तवार्जुनः संख्ये रथोपस्थ उपाविशत् ।  
विसृज्य सशरं चापं शोकसंविग्रमानसः ॥

|                |     |                                 |
|----------------|-----|---------------------------------|
| धार्तराष्ट्राः | ... | the sons of Dhritarashtra       |
| रणे            | ... | in fight                        |
| हन्युः         | ... | if should kill                  |
| तत्            | ... | that                            |
| मे             | ... | to me                           |
| क्षेमतरं       | ... | productive of greater happiness |
| भवेत्          | ... | will be                         |
| संजयः उवाच     | ... | Sanjaya said                    |
| एवं            | ... | thus                            |

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| उक्त्वा         | ... having spoken                      |
| अर्जुनः         | ... Arjuna                             |
| संख्ये          | ... in the battle-field                |
| रथोपस्थे        | ... on the back portion of the chariot |
| उपाविशत्        | ... sat down                           |
| विसृज्य         | ... having cast aside                  |
| सशरं            | ... with arrows                        |
| चापं            | ... bow                                |
| शोकसंविग्रमानसः | ... his mind overpowered by sadness    |

“If the sons of Dhritarashtra should kill me in fight, that would be all the better blessing for me. Sanjaya said: ‘Arjuna spoke this on this on the battle-field and sat down on the back side of the chariot, having cast aside bow and arrow, with mind overpowered by sadness.’”

“यदि हन्युः तत्क्षेमतरं”. Arjuna uses a big “if” in respect to the probability of the enemy attacking him even if he remained unarmed and declined to retaliate. He had some reason to doubt such a contingency. He is probably thinking of the understanding arrived at, the evening before, among the belligerent leaders to the effect that the battle should be fought on the footing of honourable rules of fair play. It was understood (*vide* the Sanskrit passage quoted) that an armed warrior should not attack an unarmed opponent, that car should attack only car, cavalry should oppose cavalry and so on. Arjuna therefore thinks that, if he desisted from the strife, the enemy would probably retreat. But if, out of disregard for the rule, they should



attack and kill him, he would deem it a great blessing for the two-fold reason that he had avoided slaying kinsmen and that Swarga was assured to him because of his death on the battle-field.

Thus ends the first chapter of the Bhagavad Geeta. It is more or less a purely prefatory chapter. Sri Madhwa has not commented on the verses of this chapter, observing that the meaning is more or less plain. Sankaracharya and Ramanujacharya have adopted much the same course.

It will not be useless, however, to recapitulate the contents a little, lest we should fail to note the salient points. The chapter opens with a speech of Duryodhana addressed to Drona. Duryodhana surveys the situation and recounts the chief leaders of the enemy and his own. His conclusion about the relative strength is conveyed in verse No.10. Commentators have differed widely over the purpose and purport of Duryodhana's speech. Some read nothing but self-boast and self-confidence in it. Others read therein a note of despondency, real or feigned, whereby he tells Drona and possibly Bheeshma too, that his own army was not equal to the occasion. Sridhara, Vedantacharya and Raghavendraswami, incline to the latter interpretation. Sankarananda, Madhusoodana Saraswati, and Neelakanta, support the former construction. Vedantachariar has a long note of cogent reason in support of his position. The names and number of the Pandava leaders mentioned by Duryodhana, the praise bestowed on them, to some extent exaggerated obviously, the half-hearted mention of a few leaders on his own side, the sequel of Bheeshma starting the roar and

the conch *to put cheer into his heart*, leave no room for doubt that the Vaishnava commentators have hit the right point.

In this connection, most commentators have to note the true significance of Duryodhana putting Bheema's name against Bheeshma as the rival, although technically he should have mentioned Dhrishtadyumna, or for other reasons, Dharma Raja or Arjuna. The true reasons lay in the circumstances that Bheema was in truth and fact, *the hero of heroes* whom Duryodhana dreaded. But for the Achilles of Mahabharata, Duryodhana would never have quailed. Sri Madhwa has read the purport of Mahabharata a right in elevating Bheema as the pre-eminent Vayu without a peer among the Jeevas. Thus, in understanding verse 10, the followers of Sri madhwa will read it with the key furnished elsewhere by the master, and conclude not only that Duryodhana meant to praise the Pandava force but his terror was largely due to Bheema's acknowledged prowess.

To resume the thread, Bheeshma demonstrated his strength and dauntlessness by his unique roar and conch. The Pandava leaders gave a lusty response. The din echoed and re-echoed with such a terrific sound that the troops of the enemy felt their hearts rending. The challenge being given and responded to, blows were about to begin.

At this juncture, Arjuna became suddenly and unexpectedly affected by a strange mood. He had just sounded his conch, Devadatta. But the awful moment of action brought into his mind an influx of new ideas and unforeseen currents of thought.

Here again, there is difference of opinion as to how we may characterize the reasoning of Arjuna. Before dealing with this aspect, let us recall to memory briefly, what he says:—

i) Kingdom, wealth and fortune are valueless for one bereft of kinsmen. In their joy is his joy, in their grief, is his grief. If all kith and kin are gone, the purpose for which conquest has to be made and enjoyed, vanishes. The Earth and Heaven are alike not worth achieving at this price. So much for the temporal gain.

ii) In the next world, nothing but sin awaits us for the misdeed.

The sin arises in several ways:—

- a) There is the sin directly arising from killing relations.
- b) There is the sin involved in the extinction of families by reason of which women get degraded and castes get intermingled.
- c) There is the sin in ancestors falling into hell deprived of Pinda and water.
- d) There is the sin of the youngsters going astray for want of elders to teach Dharma, and the posterity becoming ruined.
- e) From the stand-point of society, which loses its leaders and Dharma, sin will surely follow.

iii) He anticipates the objection that, the obligations of kinship being reciprocal, it was his duty to fight if and when challenged by his cousins. He speaks

somewhat apologetically of his cousins' wickedness and mitigates it by attributing it to greed and ignorance. He therefore thinks that it might be excusable in Duryodhana to challenge and fight, but not in himself.

The Lord allowed Arjuna to pour out the whole bile and listened patiently without a word of interruption.

Now what is the worth and value of this reasoning? The feeling of mercy or pity that prompted his speech is described as पराकृपा. What is the true meaning of this expression? Was it a highly noble and elevated sentiment that he felt and voiced, or but an ill-digested, inferior sentiment mistaken for altruism?

Ramanujacharya describes Arjuna as being a परमकारुणिक, one possessing a most exalted tenderness.

Sankarananda and Madhusoodana Saraswati praise the speech as a bit of true Vairagya (disattachment to the world) leading to altruistic sanyasa. They entirely approve of Arjuna's sentiments. Holding these views, it is not surprising that they consistently construe प्रज्ञावाद in verse No. 11 of chapter II as denoting "words of wisdom".

The obvious fallacy in accepting Arjuna's words as wise is in the fact that Sri Krishna demolishes it and calls on Arjuna over and over again to fight and kill the very kinsmen.

At the very outset, Arjuna brought into great prominence his own individuality, and greatly empha-



sized. "I and mine" (see verses 21, 22, 23). This position was utterly indefensible in a truly religious spirit.

The next fallacy was in assuming that he was called on to fight for the sake of worldly enjoyments, or for the protection of kith and kin, or for the joint participation of sensuous pleasures with his relations. The Lord is going soon to dislodge this basic error. He was to fight only because it was his duty and because he was only a tool in the hands of God.

Another fallacy lay in the assumption that the slaying of persons like Duryodhana could ever result in sin. He was an enemy of God and Virtue, and his destruction meant Salvation to the country. No man ought, strictly speaking, to claim any one as kindred who is an enemy of God and Dharma. We ought to recognize none as cognates or agnates unless we are connected with him in spiritual brotherhood.

Arjuna indulged in a great deal of imagination in dreading the extinction of families, the confusion of castes and the destruction of social orderliness. These were based on wrong hypotheses.

Thus, as the trend of his long logic drifted him to the abandonment of obvious duty, his reasoning was inherently weak and fallacious. It therefore seems clear that he put forth only a plausible argument and that his sentiments were neither truly sound nor really altruistic.

It is a curious point to notice here that Ramanujacharya and Sankaracharya hold Arjuna to be a very ignorant person full of mundane delusions.

On the other hand, Sri Madhwa regards Arjuna as one of the great seers who had visioned God, as an अपरोक्षज्ञानी, being no other than Nara and Indra. Yet Arjuna's speech is regarded by Sri Madhwa as unwisdom though deemed wise by others. The explanation lies in the fact that Arjuna's intellectual vision had been partly dimmed by his human environments. Moreover, he only took up the plausible position of a staunch objector, in order that the hollowness thereof might be thoroughly exposed by the Lord. He put himself in the place of a typical man and stated all that would occur to the unaided reason of ordinary men.

END OF CHAPTER - I

॥ श्रीः ॥

## CHAPTER - 2 द्वितीयोऽध्यायः ।

संजय उवाच —

- 1) तं तथा कृपायाऽऽविष्टमश्रुपूर्णकुलेक्षणम् ।  
विषीदन्तमिदं वाक्यमुवाच मधुसूदनः ॥

|                     |     |   |
|---------------------|-----|---|
| संजयः               | ... | Sanjaya                                 |
| उवाच                | ... | said                                    |
| तं                  | ... | him                                     |
| तथा                 | ... | in that manner                          |
| कृपाया              | ... | by tenderness                           |
| आविष्टं             | ... | overborne                               |
| अश्रुपूर्णकुलेक्षणं | ... | with smarting eyes filled<br>with tears |
| विषीदन्तं           | ... | despondent, grieving                    |
| इदं                 | ... | this                                    |
| वाक्यं              | ... | speech                                  |
| उवाच                | ... | spoke                                   |
| मधुसूदनः            | ... | Krishna                                 |

“Sanjaya said: Sri Krishna spoke thus to him who was grieving tearful, and distracted by tenderness as aforesaid.”

‘संजय उवाच’. The present verse is a continuation of Sanjaya’s speech from the last words of the preceding chapter. This being a new chapter, to avoid confusion, ‘Sanjaya said’ is repeated.

‘तथा’. In that manner, seated in a wrong place and position indicative of a resolution not to go on with the bloody business.

‘कृपया’. This has throughout been a difficult word to construe with clearness. Not infrequently, is it used to denote a condescending feeling of compassion. This would imply that Arjuna was certain of victory and pitied the victims. But in verse 6 of chapter II he conveys the doubt that he might not be the victor. The feeling referred to is only tenderness of attachment to kith and kin.

2) कुतस्त्वा कश्मलमिदं विषमे समुपस्थितम् ।  
अनार्यजुष्टमस्वर्ग्यमकीर्तिकरमर्जुन ॥

|            |     |                          |
|------------|-----|--------------------------|
| श्रीभगवान् | ... | the great Lord           |
| उवाच       | ... | said                     |
| कुतः       | ... | wherefore, why or whence |
| त्वा       | ... | you                      |
| कश्मलं     | ... | weakness or failing      |
| इदं        | ... | this                     |



|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| विषमे        | ... at the crisis                               |
| समुपस्थितं   | ... come upon                                   |
| अनार्यजुष्टं | ... cherished (only) by non-Aryans<br>(ignoble) |
| अस्वर्ग्यं   | ... obstructive of Swarga                       |
| अकीर्तिकरं   | ... disreputable                                |
| अर्जुन       | ... O! Arjuna                                   |

“The Great Lord said: Whence has this weakness come upon you at the crisis – such as is cherished only by non-Aryans, is obstructive of Swarga, and is disreputable, O! Arjuna.”

‘कुतः’. This word conveys surprise and censure. It denotes the Lord’s reply that the whole of Arjuna’s reasoning was unworthy and fallacious. The Lord uses a few expressions by way of antithetic contrast with the significance of the word Arjuna. The word Arjuna means white, spotless. Arjuna himself has thus explained the meaning of his own name in Virata Parva to Prince Uttara:—

★ “In the four quarters of the Earth, it is difficult to see one of my colour. Besides, I engage only in stainless action, and so they know me as Arjuna.” The Lord emphasizes the word Arjuna to point out how utterly inconsistent therewith is the failing and weakness he exhibited, and how surprising it was that he, Arjuna, of all persons, should have yielded to it. (कुतः त्वा कश्मलं).

---

★ पृथिव्यां चतुरन्तायां वर्णोमे दुर्लभस्समः ।

करोमि कर्मशुद्धं च तेन मामर्जुनं विदुः ॥

‘विषमे’. There was little time for argument. Just at the perilous crisis, the weakness had come upon him. The Lord makes a home-thrust appeal and says briefly that the crisis was altogether inopportune for words. The word विषमे denotes a mis-matched pair such as oxen yoked to a cart. Here, it is meant that the कर्मल or dirt, soiling the whiteness of Arjuna, was quite unworthy of it.

The second line of the verse hurls three sharp arrows, pointed and piercing. Of them, the 3rd अकीर्तिकरम् appeals to what Milton describes as the last infirmity of noble minds, *viz.*, love of fame. Disrepute and disgrace here below would be gall and wormwood to any honourable soldier. The second arrow अस्वर्ग्यं bangs the door of Heaven upon Arjuna. The Lord repudiates the idea of any पुण्य or religious merit from the course that Arjuna proposed to adopt, and says that the very opposite would be the result. Thus Arjuna’s retirement meant no good in Heaven or Earth.

‘अनार्यजुष्टं’. The first censure अनार्यजुष्टं requires a little explanation to realize the full force of its significance. It may be observed that this expression अनार्यजुष्टं is of frequent occurrence in Mahabharata, manu and other old writings. It is a sort of technical expression meant to convey a strong censure. In modern Sanskrit, आर्य is a respectable, revered person. The word denotes religious and moral elevation, a person of noble character, one who walks in the straight path of duty. But in ancient times, the word denoted a race of men who were superior in courage, capability, and character, to other

racers referred to as Mlechas, Dasyoos, and so on. The Rig Veda speaks of Dasas, Adevas, and Aryans. Manu has a long discussion about the offspring of parents one of whom is an Aryan and the other a non-Aryan. (*Vide* Sanskrit verses). In Mahabharata, Aswamedha Parva, Aryans are mentioned along with Mlechas, Kiratas, Chinese and others among the followers of Arjuna. As a trait of the Aryans, it is said that they do not 'Mlenchise' in language, nor practise deceit. Hence the word primarily had a racial significance and gradually came to signify nobility of character, the racial origin being sometimes forgotten. By the expression अनार्यजुषं the Lord refers to Arjuna's aristocratic birth and censures his weakness as becoming only aboriginal plebians, barbarians, Dasyoos, Mlechas and the like.

3) क्लैब्यं मा स्म गमः पार्थ नैतत्त्वय्युपपद्यते ।  
क्षुद्रं हृदयदौर्बल्यं त्यक्तवोत्तिष्ठ परंतप ॥

|               |                              |
|---------------|------------------------------|
| क्लैब्यं      | ... cowardice (impotence)    |
| मा स्म गमः    | ... don't fall into          |
| पार्थ         | ... O ! Arjuna               |
| न एतत्        | ... not this                 |
| त्वयि         | ... in you                   |
| उपपद्यते      | ... is appropriate           |
| क्षुद्रं      | ... paltry—easily shaken off |
| हृदयदौर्बल्यं | ... faint-heartedness        |
| त्यक्त्वा     | ... setting aside            |

उत्तिष्ठ ... get up  
परंतप ... vanquisher of foes

‘Do not get into impotence, O ! Partha. It is not appropriate for you. Get up, O ! Vanquisher, casting aside the paltry faint-heartedness.’

‘क्लैब्यं’. It is not improbable that the Lord conveys a gentle insinuation that, though Arjuna spent a year in Virata’s town as a eunuch incognito, yet such was not his true character as he was no chicken-hearted coward by nature.

‘पार्थ’. This word refers to Arjuna being the son of Pritha or Kuntree.

The day before the battle, Kuntree had sent a message to Arjuna, saying, that mendicancy was forbidden to him, agriculture was unbecoming, and as he was a Kshatriya, he was bound to protect all as a soldier whose profession lay in the strength of his arm. The Lord gently reminds Arjuna of his mother’s message by the word पार्थ.

अर्जुन उवाच—

4) कथं भीष्ममहं संख्ये द्रोणं च मधुसूदन ।  
इषुभिः प्रतियोत्स्यामि पूजार्हावरिसूदन ॥

अर्जुनः ... Arjuna  
उवाच ... said



|                 |                       |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| कथं             | ... how               |
| भीष्मम्         | ... Bheeshma          |
| अहं             | ... I                 |
| संख्ये          | ... in battle         |
| द्रोणं          | ... Drona             |
| च               | ... and               |
| मधुसूदन         | ... O! Madhusoodana   |
| इषुभिः          | ... with arrows       |
| प्रतियोत्स्यामि | ... shall I fight     |
| पूजाहौं         | ... deserving worship |
| अरिसूदन         | ... conqueror of foes |

"How can I shoot Bheeshma and Drona with arrows, and fight them on the field, O ! Madhusoodana, deserving worship as they do, O ! Vanquisher of foes".

5) गुरूनहत्वा हि महनुभावान्  
 श्रेयो भोक्तुं भैक्ष्यमपीह लोके ।  
 हत्वार्थकामांस्तु गुरूनिहैव  
 भुञ्जीय भोगान् रुधिरप्रदिग्धान् ॥

|             |                             |
|-------------|-----------------------------|
| गुरून्      | ... preceptors, elders      |
| अहत्वा      | ... avoiding the slaying of |
| हि          | ... is it not               |
| महानुभावान् | ... most exalted            |

|                 |                        |
|-----------------|------------------------|
| श्रेयः          | ... better, blissful   |
| भोक्तुं         | ... to eat             |
| भैक्ष्यं        | ... the food of alms   |
| अपि             | ... even               |
| इह लोके         | ... here below         |
| हत्वा           | ... by killing         |
| अर्थकामान्      | ... attached to wealth |
| तु              | ... though             |
| गुरून्          | ... elders, preceptors |
| इहैव            | ... here alone         |
| भुञ्जीय         | ... we shall taste     |
| भोगान्          | ... pleasures          |
| रुधिप्रदिग्धान् | ... blood-mixed        |

"It is better to eat the bread of mendicancy, here below, rather than kill these esteemed Gurus. For, by killing them, the Gurus, attached yet to worldly enjoyments, as they are, I should, in fact, taste pleasures mixed with blood".

Arjuna harps perpetually on two strains, the results, here below, and the fruits to be reaped after death. He prefers mendicancy to the riches earned by slaying persons like Bheeshma, Drona, and Kripa. He thinks, in the first line, of hell and the tortures in the other world. His mind then swings back to the awful results in this world itself. As if to say, "why go so far as the next world and to a future so distant as death; here, in this very world, the revels of conquest are associated with blood. We have to wade through slaughter to the

throne and purchase the fruits of victory dearly with blood. The pleasures so associated with blood are nauseating". Arjuna shows that he is not unaware of the fact that Bheeshma and Drona have not yet risen above the attraction of wealth. Bheeshma, in fact, confessed once to Yudhisthira that Duryodhana held him by mercenary fetters. How Drona sough a cow of Drupada and sowed the seeds of the Great War by reason of a little insult offered by Drupada is well known to every student of the Epic. Arjuna says that, though these are persons clinging to worldly pleasures, still, they are elderly preceptors whose blood will stain the fingers, and make enjoyments sticky and disagreeable. By calling them अर्थकामाः, Arjuna urges a worldly appeal. "It is such a pity to despatch them when they are unprepared to take leave of the world and its joys. They cling to life, wealth, and pleasure. Why not let them taste these to satiety?

6) नचैतद्विद्मः कतरन्नोगरीयो

यद्वा जयेम यदि वा नो जयेयुः ।

यानेव हत्वा न जिजीविषाम-

स्तेऽवस्थिताः प्रमुखे धार्तराष्ट्राः ॥

न च

... nor

एतत्

... this

विद्मः

... do we know

कतरत्

... which of the two

|                |                                    |
|----------------|------------------------------------|
| नः             | ... to us                          |
| गरीयः          | ... is preferable                  |
| यद्वा          | ... whether                        |
| जयेम           | ... we succeed                     |
| यदि वा         | ... or whether                     |
| नः             | ... us                             |
| जयेयुः         | ... they conquer                   |
| यान् एव        | ... whom alone                     |
| हत्वा          | ... by killing                     |
| न जिजीविषामः   | ... we do not wish to survive      |
| ते             | ... those                          |
| अवस्थिताः      | ... are standing                   |
| प्रमुखे        | ... in front                       |
| धार्तराष्ट्राः | ... the adherents of Dhritarashtra |

'Nor do we know which, for us, is preferable, that we conquer (them), or they conquer us. Those after killing whom we care not to live, are standing in front, the party of Dhritarashtra.'

Which is better for us, of the two? asks Arjuna. There is some difficulty in understanding the two things he hit against each other and finds it difficult to choose between. Sankarananda takes the two things to be mendicancy and war, and understands Arjuna to raise the question of casuistry whether to beg was better as it involved no injury to life, or to fight was better as it was the duty of the Kshatriya. The first line, according to him, raises in fact two doubts: 1) to fight or to beg, which is better? 2) Secondly, shall we win or lose?



Vivriti and Sridhara take the whole of the first line to set out but one doubt, *viz.*, which is better, that we win or lose. The two things Arjuna finds it difficult to choose between are victory and defeat, and not mendicancy and battle.

As against Sankarananda's construction, it has to be noted that, as between alms and fighting, Arjuna had decisively preferred the former in the previous verse (No.5). In the present verse, he proceeds to a new point and weighs the relative value of victory and defeat.

As the problem could not be solved and the choice of war in preference to mendicancy led to this dilemma, Arjuna feels driven to the other alternative of poverty and alms.

The particle च (and) in the opening part of this verse (न चैतत्) shows it is an additional point he urges to drive the nail home in favour of Sanyasa or mendicancy.

7) कार्पण्यदोषोपहतस्वभावः

पृच्छामि त्वां धर्मसंमूढचेताः ।

यच्छ्रेयस्स्यान्निश्चितं ब्रूहि तन्मे

शिष्यस्तेऽहं शाधि मां त्वां प्रपन्नम् ॥

कार्पण्यदोषोपहतस्वभावः ...

my natural courage being  
affected by the weakness  
of distressful doting

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| पृच्छामि       | ... I ask                                  |
| त्वां          | ... you                                    |
| धर्मसंमूढचेताः | ... mind being perplexed by moral dilemmas |
| यत्            | ... what                                   |
| श्रेयः         | ... preferable, good                       |
| स्यात्         | ... will be                                |
| निश्चितं       | ... with certainty                         |
| ब्रूहि         | ... tell                                   |
| तत् मे         | ... that to me                             |
| शिष्यः         | ... pupil, disciple                        |
| ते             | ... of you                                 |
| अहं            | ... I                                      |
| शाधि           | ... command                                |
| मां            | ... me                                     |
| त्वां          | ... you                                    |
| प्रपन्नं       | ... one who has surrendered                |

“I ask you, my natural courage being affected by the weakness of distress and doting, and my mind being perplexed by moral dilemmas. What will be good for me, tell me that with certainty; I am your disciple; command me. I have surrendered myself unto you.”

‘कार्पण्यं’. This word is usually applied to the miser’s extreme fondness for his treasure. It also denotes great distress of mind. Arjuna is showing too much of fondness for his unworthy cousins like a miser fondling his

coins, and is further in a state of acute mental conflict and agony. The word expresses all this. The word is also used in the sense of a slave a man purchased for money. If anything distinguishes the bondman from the free, it is his dependence. Arjuna is showing himself a slave of the ties of blood. He feels it and makes an anxious appeal.

In the Upanishads कृपण is defined to be one who dies without having obtained a knowledge of God. Advaitic commentators lay stress on this definition and make out that Arjuna was pleading utter ignorance of the soul and God, not knowing how these were the only verities compared with everything else which is illusive. In their view, स्वभाव refers to the absolute reality of Brahman. But this construction of कृपण and स्वभाव seems obviously far-fetched. There is no reference in Arjuna's speech to the eternality of soul or its verity, and the transience of the world or its illlusiveness.

It is to be observed that Arjuna places himself at the disposal and service of Sri Krishna. He proclaims himself a pupil and disciple. He implores the Lord to command him and throws himself at His feet in complete self-surrender.

It is, of course, very interesting to trace the working of Arjuna's mind among the various points touched by him in Chapter I and 10 verses of Chapter II. One thing that is clear is that Arjuna did not care to be very consistent. His aversion to blood-shed, and fondness for kith and kin, are prominently brought out. He makes a rambling effort to impress into service even

the penalties of after-life. He speaks often as if he is not sure of his own ground. He waxes eloquent over a gloomy future when degraded women would mix up castes. He even thinks of departed ancestors and their doom.

Arjuna does not however lose sight of the fact that his cousins were wretched reprobates, and that, born as a Kshatriya, it was his duty to fight them. He goes through complicated entanglements of reasoning to overthrow these facts staring him in the face. At last, he works himself into the decision that to retire was the best course. This cost him acute conflict and agony, and brought tears to his eyes.

The Lord listened to it all and hurled a few darts of scathing condemnation. Arjuna felt the puncture, and broke forth again, clutching at Bheeshma and Drona and referring to their revered position. Though his words were indicative of decision and resolution, his mind was wandering and ill-at-ease, engaged in balancing pros and cons. He thinks of alternatives and sees ruin in victory as well as defeat. Then he concludes as if his mind was in a chaos of doubt in spite of all the reasoning he had dragged himself through. He surrenders in despair, full of doubt and vacillation, reducing himself to the position of a disciple seeking knowledge of a Great Teacher. It is a study to note the doubts and perplexities of a very trying situation, plausible arguments advanced and firm conclusion firmly pronounced, the mind shooting away as if yet unconvinced to find new arguments, violent emotion upsetting calm reason, inconsistency of words and thoughts now and again, followed by total surrender and despair.

8) न हि प्रपश्यामि ममापनुद्यात्  
 यच्छोकमुच्छोषणमिन्द्रियाणाम् ।  
 अवाप्य भूमावसपत्नमृद्धं  
 राज्यं सुराणामपि चाधिपत्यम् ॥

|              |                          |
|--------------|--------------------------|
| न हि         | ... verily not           |
| प्रपश्यामि   | ... do I see             |
| मम           | ... of mine              |
| अपनुद्यात्   | ... will drive away      |
| यत्          | ... what                 |
| शोकं         | ... grief                |
| उच्छोषणं     | ... scorching, consuming |
| इन्द्रियाणां | ... of the senses        |
| अवाप्य       | ... obtaining            |
| भूमौ         | ... on earth             |
| असपत्नं      | ... foeless, undisputed  |
| ऋद्धं        | ... supreme              |
| राज्यं       | ... kingdom              |
| सुराणामपि    | ... and of gods          |
| च आधिपत्यं   | ... and rulership        |

“Verily, I do not see what will drive away my grief which consumes the senses, even though I get an earthly empire free from enemies and also the rulership over Devas.”



‘शोकं’. Arjuna is of opinion that Earth and Heaven, though he secure the lordship of either or both, cannot compensate him and dispel his grief. The doubt arises as to what is the grief he alludes to. Be it remembered that he qualifies the grief by describing it as ‘sense-consuming.’ Sankarananda says it is the grief of Samsara, what every mortal suffers in the revolution of births and deaths – the ills that flesh is heir to. The rulership of an Empire is, after all, a material acquisition that lasts only for a time and causes grief. In the opinion of Sankarananda, Arjuna asks for the means of transcending materiality altogether. Vivriti suggests that the grief alluded to is not the general unhappiness of mortal and material embodiments, but the special troubles set forth at length by Arjuna, the bitter anguish of killing kinsmen and surviving them. He speaks of this distress as calculated to burn away the senses. The qualifying clause lends support to Vivriti. Sankarananda suggests the throne of Vishnu and Brahma among the possible goals, and interprets Arjuna to say that even if he should become Brahma or Vishnu, still, his sorrows as a Samsarin would not cease. In the first place, to become Brahma or Vishnu is an utter impossibility for Arjuna. Secondly, Vishnu is God Supreme. He is ever outside the pale of Samsara, and is never affected in the least by matter. There is no justification for this commentator indulging in this fling at Brahma and Vishnu.

संजय उवाच-

- 9) एवमुक्त्वा हृषीकेशं गुडाकेशः परंतपः ।  
न योत्स्य इति गोविन्दमुक्त्वा तूष्णीं बभूव ह ॥

|            |                          |
|------------|--------------------------|
| एवं        | ... thus                 |
| उक्त्वा    | ... having spoken        |
| हृषीकेशं   | ... to Hrishikesa        |
| गुडाकेशः   | ... Arjuna               |
| परंतपः     | ... Vanquisher of foes   |
| न योत्स्ये | ... I shall not fight    |
| इति        | ... thus                 |
| गोविदं     | ... to Krishna           |
| उक्त्वा    | ... saying               |
| तूष्णीं    | ... quiet, silent        |
| बभूव       | ... became               |
| ह          | ... surprisingly, indeed |

*Sanjaya said,*

“Having thus spoken to Hrishikesa, Arjuna, the Vanquisher of foes, said to Govinda, ‘I will not fight, and, indeed, became silent.’”

The first line says that Arjuna set out the reasons for not fighting. The second line says he summed up by declaring his determination. Then he became silent. His conclusion was matter for great surprise. It was so inconsistent with Arjuna’s pronounced and well-known character.

The silence referred to, conveys the hint that, though he had emphatically declared his resolution, he was still open to conviction. He did not run away or take any further action. He had already sought

guidance, and the silence assumed was the quiet attitude of a pupil ready to hear and take lessons.

10) तमुवाच हृषीकेशः प्रहसन्निव भारत ।  
सेनयोरुभयोर्मध्ये विषीदन्तमिदं वचः ॥

|              |                         |
|--------------|-------------------------|
| तं           | ... Him (Arjuna)        |
| उवाच         | ... addressed           |
| हृषीकेशः     | ... Sri Krishna         |
| प्रहसन्निव   | ... as if smiling       |
| भारत         | ... O ! Dhritarashtra   |
| सेनयोः उभयोः | ... of both armies      |
| मध्ये        | ... in the middle       |
| विषीदन्तं    | ... despondent          |
| इदं वचः      | ... the following words |

“O ! Dhritarashtra! Hrishikesa smiled, as it were, and addressed the following words to him who was despondent in the middle of the two armies.”

It may be presumed that Sri Krishna's lips curled a little as in smile. No offence was taken by the Lord for the cocksure words and the provoking attitude of Arjuna. Sri Krishna did not begin a tirade of censure. The situation was doubtless provoking. Placed between the armies when blows were about to begin, Arjuna, the leader on whom all hopes were centered, the observed of all observers; collapsing at the crisis! But the Lord was Hrishikesa and he could control the mind

and senses of every one, and could hypnotise the enemy from striking the blow. So, the Lord put on a gentle smile to convey a host of meaning. There was some ridicule, some contempt, for the reasoning and conclusion of Arjuna, a covert insinuation that he had grievously misapprehended things. A smile of outright ridicule would have provoked Arjuna, and brought on a mental attitude hostile to the receptivity of the pupil. But the gentle smile was calculated to produce a different effect. It was meant to disarm opposition and prepare Arjuna for a complete demolition of his position. It said, as it were, "How mistaken you are Arjuna! I don't blame you, but your attitude is utterly wrong and indefensible".

‘सेनयोरुभयोः’. These words might qualify विषीदन्तं “despondent”, so as to bring out the idea that, having been a party to all the preparations for war up to the very last act of being arrayed on the field, he suddenly changed mind. The words might qualify उवाच so as to indicate that Hrishikesa did not mind the place, the battle-field, for the teachings though, under ordinary circumstances, it would be a very inappropriate place for the purpose.

11) अशोच्यानन्वशोचस्त्वं प्रज्ञावादांश्च भाषसे ।

गतासूनगतासूंश्च नानुशोचन्ति पण्डिताः ॥

|           |     |                       |
|-----------|-----|-----------------------|
| अशोच्यान् | ... | undeserving of sorrow |
| अन्वशोचः  | ... | you have sorrowed for |
| त्वं      | ... | you                   |

|               |     |  |
|---------------|-----|--|
| प्रज्ञावादान् | ... | words of unaided reason;<br>or words unbecoming the wise |
| च             | ... | and  |
| भाषसे         | ... | you speak  |
| गतासून्       | ... | those who are on the eve of death                        |
| अगतासून्      | ... | the living   |
| च             | ... | just as  |
| न अनु शोचन्ति | ... | don't grieve   |
| पण्डिताः      | ... | the wise   |

“You have grieved for those unworthy of sorrow, and you speak words prompted by your own reason. The wise do not grieve for the dying, just as none does for the living.”

Here virtually commence the teachings of the Geeta. The Lord characterises the objects of Arjuna's grief and commiseration as unworthy, and condemns his reasoning. He says that the wise do not grieve under such circumstances.

‘प्रज्ञावादान्’. This expression has been variously construed. Literally, it would mean words of wisdom. Sankaracharya and Ramanujacharya both understand it in this sense. The former thinks so because Arjuna has apparently referred to high themes of life below and life hereafter. The latter thinks so because Arjuna's words proved that he knew and realized the essential characteristics of, and differentiations between, body and soul. Sankarananda is prepared to see in Arjuna's speech the quintessence of spiritual



wisdom fully endorsed by scriptures. Sri Madhwa, however, sees no wisdom in Arjuna's words. Arjuna had argued against obvious duty, and the argument was clearly fallacious. Hence, he construes the expression to mean words of unwisdom.

‘च’. The difference of opinion in respect to the meaning of प्रज्ञावादान् leads to a divergence of interpretation as to the word ‘च’ ‘also’ immediately after the said word. Sankaracharya and Ramanujacharya make out the point to be that, though the words were wise, Arjuna's action in sorrowing was unwise, and that, therefore, there was a grievous inconsistency between his speech and action. ‘च’ in their view means ‘but,’ to imply contrast. Sri Madhwa thinks that it is merely a copulative in the sense of ‘and’, and that what is meant is that he had grieved wrongly and also spoken unwisely.

‘गतासून्’. In saying that the wise don't grieve for the dead, it must be remembered that Bheeshma and others were not yet dead. The ‘dead’ means, therefore, the ‘dying’, those about to die.

*The point of the 2nd line:* Literally, the 2nd line says, ‘the wise do not grieve for the dead and the living.’ It was hardly relevant to make any reference to the living and to any sorrows on their behalf. Arjuna had pointedly spoken only of the death of relations, and had said nothing about any considerations that call for grief on behalf of the living. It is obvious that he had not grieved for the living at all. Professor

Rangachariar justifies the reference to sorrow for the living, by drawing attention to the burdens and responsibilities of life, and to the usually pessimistic view of samsara taken in India. Sankaracharya makes out that the wise don't grieve for the dead or living because everything is unreal. But the unreality of the Universe is hardly in point, and furnishes no answer to Arjuna. As for that matter, Arjuna's grief and speech, Arjuna himself, and Sri Krishna, together with their dialogue are all unreal, i.e. have only a subordinate reality in the Monist's school. While on this plane of 'व्यावहारिक' reality, it would be no answer to dispel his grief from the standpoint of the absolute.

Sankarananda has a somewhat original and curious interpretation of the 2nd line. He divides men into three classes: 1) the ignorant, 2) the learned (in scriptures), 3) and the wise. He says that grief for the dead is felt by the first group, the ignorant; grief for the living is felt by the 2nd group, *viz.*, the learned in Shastras, while the 3rd group, *viz.* the wise, care for neither. This is very ingenious, but there is no basis for the distinction between the learned in Shastras and the wise, and there is no reason why the former should grieve for the living. Ramanujacharya avoids the difficulty by taking गतासून् to mean the physical bodies, and अगतासून् the souls, He sees no reference to life or death made in the verse. The difficulty arises from assuming that anybody grieves for the living, that Arjuna made any allusion to this circumstances, and that the

Lord admitted the fact and denied it in the case of the wise. Sri Madhwa says that the reference to the living is only by way of illustration and that the line means that the wise do not grieve for the dead just as nobody grieves for the living. Here, again, the particle च, in the 2nd line, is responsible for the divergent views. Whereas one view is that it is an ordinary copulative conjunction in the sense of 'and', Sri Madhwa understands it to have the same sense as इव 'like', meant only to institute a comparison. Just as Arjuna did not allude to the living and any sorrows on their account, the Lord too does not state that any one does grieve for the living, but states the very reverse of it, and points out that there is no reason for the differentiation between the living and the dying in respect to grief or no grief.

12) न त्वेवाहं जातु नासं न त्वं नेमे जनाधिपाः ।  
न चैव न भविष्यामस्सर्वे वयमतः परम् ॥

|          |                    |
|----------|--------------------|
| न तु     | ... nor            |
| अहम्     | ... I              |
| जातु     | ... at any time    |
| न आसं    | ... was I not      |
| न त्वं   | ... nor you        |
| न इमे    | ... nor these      |
| जनाधिपाः | ... princes of men |

|             |                          |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| न च एव      | ... non certainly        |
| न भविष्यामः | ... shall we cease to be |
| सर्वे वयं   | ... all of us            |
| अतः परम्    | ... hereafter            |

“Verily, never was I not, nor you, nor these princes of men; nor verily, shall any of us cease to be hereafter.”

This verse lays down the eternality of souls and says that God and Jeevas (individual souls) have always existed in the past and will continue to exist for ever.

Those who accept from Vedanta the eternality of God, and doubt it of other souls, will read the reference to God’s eternality as made for comparison. Just as I, the Supreme God, am known to have always existed, so you and they have existed before and will persist for ever. Ramanujarchaya thus construes the verse. Sri Madhwa is also of the same view. With regard to those who dispute the eternality of God as well as of souls, the verse is to be understood as laying down the ever-lasting character of both.

The query may occur whether any one who has accepted God from Vedanta will still find room to doubt the eternality of souls. Such a doubt is however not impossible. Vedanta declares God, the eternal of eternals. (नित्योनित्यानाम्). Eternity and infinity don’t admit of degrees. A thing can be either finite in time or not. There can be no third alternative. Hence the doubt that, God being eternal, Jeevas who are said to be not

eternal in the same sense are not really such at all. This doubt is met by Sri Krishna who declares all souls to be as eternal in point of time as God Himself.

This is the famous question of to be or not to be, tackled at the very threshold. Do we live after death?

Max Muller infers the immortality of souls from the irrepressible desire for existence, implanted in every being. Nature makes no mistakes. It never mocks or shams. The instinct is there and for a purpose. It is the beacon-light of a great truth. Not only do we abide for ever, being Sat in essence, we are also Chit=knowledge, and Ananda = bliss. There is no being that is not ever eager to know, to have more light—nor one which does not long for happiness. These intuitive longings point to a great truth.

The next great truth laid stress on in the verse under comment is the oneness of God and the multiplicity of souls. Sri Krishna speaks of Himself and the many men around. He refers to all the Jeevas of the Universe.

This reference in the plural (जनाधिपाः) is a hard nut for the Monist. Sankaracharya observes that the plurality is to be understood as referring to the multiplicity of bodies, though the soul is throughout one and the same. This idea is elaborated by Sankarananda who goes into a very long note and concludes by saying that Arjuna was told not to feel sorrow because the Universe is truly Brahman in truth and in essence.

But the verse as it stands is utterly opposed to this view. The plural assertion stares us in the face. As



Desikar points out, the verse strikes at the Buddhist who views the souls as transient and momentary, at the Vaiseshikas who hold to a variety of the same creed, (आगमापायिवादिनः) and at the Monists who think that plurality of souls is untrue.

Sankaranabda observes that Brahma himself cannot reconcile an infinity of souls in space and time, with their infinity in number. But neither Ramanujacharya nor Sri Madhwa says that each soul is infinite in space. They hold that souls are countless and atomic.

But why could not Sri Krishna have made the plural assertion with reference only to the multiplicity of bodies? No; this is impossible. It is difficult to conceive that Sri Krishna began the teaching in words that assert plurality if he meant to say the very opposite. If he meant to say that all were one, and hence, that there was no occasion for grief, why not say so? Why not lay down: 'We are all one in truth and verily there is no sorrower, no sorrowed for, and no sorrow?' Was he deficient in expression, and did he teach dualism when he meant Monism and leave Arjuna to twist his words and distil or evolve Monism out of them?

If Sri Krishna taught Monism in fact, the doubt arises whether he could be a Teacher at all. Being an Iswara who had never had any delusions such as may be possible in the case of human seers like Suka, He was an Adwaita-gnanin out and out, from eternity to eternity. A seer who has realized Adwaita might, even after vision and realization, be a teacher, because it is said he had been a deluded mortal before, and had had

personal experience of Samsara, so that this experience of difference might haunt him still. But a seer who is Iswara stands admittedly on a different footing as he has had no experience of Samsara and ignorance. Hence Sri Krishna of realized unity is inherently incapable of being a Teacher.

13) देहिनोऽस्मिन्यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं जरा ।  
तथा देहांतप्राप्तिः धीरस्तत्र न मुह्यति ॥

|                 |                                |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| देहिनः          | ... to the embodied soul       |
| अस्मिन्         | ... in this, present           |
| यथा             | ... just as                    |
| देहे            | ... in body                    |
| कौमारम्         | ... childhood                  |
| यौवनं           | ... youth                      |
| जरा             | ... old age                    |
| तथा             | ... so                         |
| देहांतप्राप्तिः | ... attainment of another body |
| धीरः            | ... the brave wise man         |
| तत्र            | ... at it                      |
| न मुह्यति       | ... does not lose heart        |

"Like childhood, youth, and old age, that occur in the present body, so is the attainment of another body. The wise, brave man does not lose heart at it.

This verse may be taken as a further elucidation of verse No. 11 which condemns grief. Are you to grieve

for the loss of the soul? No, the soul is immortal (*Vide verse 12*). Are you to grieve for the loss of body? No. The dead man is sure to get a new body. You don't regret childhood and youth that are past. If, after old age, you die, you need not bemoan the loss of a decrepit body, for, in its place, you step into a fresh one. This is one meaning. Or, the verse may be taken to be an elucidation of verse No.12 alone. If the soul be said to be immortal, further light is needed on the point. Is there a soul apart from the body? If so, how does it exist in the course of its eternal existence;□does it continue embodied or disembodied?

On the one hand, there is the materialist like Charwaka who denies the soul altogether and repudiates the authority of revelation. That school sets up the body, the senses, or the mind, as the knower. The atheist and the Materialist account for man and the Universe on the analogy of the watch with the watch-maker dismissed from consideration.

On the other hand, there are the Theological creeds like the Crescent and the Cross which believe in the soul, but don't accept its transmigration from body to body.

The present verse lays down two propositions: (1) an eternal soul other than the physical body. (2) Matempsychosis or transmigration of souls from body to body. The word देहिनः (of the embodied soul) is very significant. The affix इनि denotes owner or possessor. It conveys the lesson that the owner of the physical frame is something outside the physical parts taken collectively or individually.

The Dehin or the soul is of spiritual essence, is the vivifier of the system, the true thinker, actor, and enjoyer, dwelling in a perishable house. The limbs, the senses, and the mind, are but inert matter, non-conscious, and non-intelligent, useful only as vehicular medium. We speak of sensing *through* organs, of willing, thinking, and feeling *through mind*, and this shows that these are but instruments and avenues of knowledge, the windows of the soul. It may be noticed that Dehin does not refer to God but only to Jeeva. God has no material body, and His body, such as He has, is not different from Himself. Nor does it pass through the transient stages of childhood, youth, and age.

In addition to the affix इनि in Dehin, the reader may note the singular number of the word (genitive case). This denotes the singleness of the soul passing through a multiciplity of bodies from time to time. Unlike the Christian and the Mohammedan, the Hindu believes in every soul undergoing numberless births under the stress of Karma.

In order to bring home the conviction of (1) the soul existing apart from the body and (2) of the soul incarnating repeatedly in a series of births, the Lord makes use of a very subtle and suggestive illustration. When a man passes from childhood to youth, he does not give way to grief, nor is he distracted by grey hair and wrinkles. One reason is that it is merely a stage passing away, succeeded by another. Another reason as suggested by Ramanujacharya, is that there is, underneath, the conscious certainly of the "Self" being the same throughout. Through all the vicissitudes of



physical change, the unity of consciousness, linking and bridging the past and the present, prevents or mitigates regrets of memory. This unifying recollection (प्रत्यभिज्ञा) proves the Self as distinguished from the states and stages. This analogy is pressed home upon Arjuna, and he is exhorted to apply it to the case of death also. Just as, in the journey through the span of a single life, changes of condition occur, so, upon death a fresh embodiment occurs taking the soul only to a fresh stage.

The youth remembers his past childhood and recognizes the Ego as a distinct entity. Similarly, the newborn baby gives proof of past existence in the shape of instincts. No doubt, Darwin and his school have solved a great deal by the philosophy of inherited experience. But the Indian Seers think that the instincts and characteristics of men cannot be fully accounted for by heredity alone. They have therefore pressed into service the theory of Metempsychosis and traced the character of every man along the two parallel lines of (1) his physical ancestry and (2) his own past Karma.

Sri Krishna does not overlook the circumstance that the change of childhood, youth, and age are subtle, gradual, and imperceptible, while death brings about a palpable change. Hence, a certain amount of close and firm reasoning is necessary for following the analogy. The unity of Self-consciousness being the vital point, why treat death on a different footing from the bodily changes such as childhood, so long as the rationale based on प्रत्यभिज्ञा applies to both? To realize the analogy undoubtedly costs an effort. No doubt secu-



larists like Charwaka have laughed away spiritual philosophies and revealed religions. But sound reason and authoritative scripture uphold the soul's re-incarnation. Sri Krishna compliments the believer as a Dheera (brave and wise), because he realizes the true basis of the analogy and bravely sticks to it, in spite of untrue and unsound allurements to the contrary.

Madhusoodana Saraswati justifies "Dehin" in the singular number as denoting *the unity* and *infinity* of the soul pervading every body in the Universe, in the past, present, and future. Adwaitins do not accept an atomic soul. They believe in but One Soul and say that it pervades the Universe.

It is difficult to follow this annotation. The souls of men were declared eternal (verse 12). An objection to this position, based on the mortality of human bodies, is answered by the teaching of the transmigration of soul. In this argument, the theory of the Universal soul immanent in the Universe is out of place. According to this commentary, it comes to this that what is taught is the existence of one soul in myriads of bodies, *at the same time and at all times*, and not the existence of the soul in body after body in succession of time. The two notions are quite different. But the meaning of the Sanskrit is clear. Even Sankaracharya and Sankaranada agree in the meaning that transmigration is the point inculcated. Madusoodana confuses the Universal soul with the Jeeva when he quotes the Vedic text treating of one soul imbedded in the Universe. The soul there described is the Supreme God.

14) मात्रास्पर्शास्तु कौन्तेय शीतोष्णसुखदुःखदाः ।  
 आगमापायिनोऽनित्यास्तांस्तितिक्षस्व भारत ॥

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| मात्रास्पर्शाः    | ... the contacts of sense objects with<br>senses                      |
| तु                | ... alone, is it?   |
| कौन्तेय           | ... O!, Arjuna  |
| शीतोष्णसुखदुःखदाः | ... Cause pleasure and pain<br>through sensations of heat and<br>cold |
| आगमापायिनः        | ... they come and go  |
| अनित्याः          | ... impermanent   |
| तान्              | ... them  |
| तितिक्षस्व        | ... render ineffectual, frustrate                                     |
| भारत              | ... O ! Arjuna  |

"Do the contacts of sense-objects alone cause pleasure and pain through sensations of heat and cold, O ! Arjuna? They come and go, impermanent, Render them abortive, O! Bharata".

Sri Madhwa's interpretation of this verse is highly instructive. It is necessary to see what was the doubt in Arjuna's mind that this verse was meant to set at rest, and how the verse effects the purpose. Arjuna had been taught that souls were immortal and that grief was out of place in respect to them. He had been told also that death meant only a change of body and was not different in principle from the disappear-

ance of childhood when youth is reached, or of youth, when old age is reached. Arjuna was then told not to grieve for the body or the soul. Assimilating these lessons, he still urges a doubt which the Lord dispels by the verse under notice.

Arjuna may be supposed to formulate his doubt thus:- "Bheeshma and others are immortal in respect to their souls. If they die, they may acquire fresh bodies. But my grief is not for their soul or for their bodies. It arises from my being deprived of their company, their association, their conversation, their domestic and social amenities. The bereavement agonises me, and this holds good, though their souls be immortal after death, and though their bodies are renewed".

Arjuna chafes at the inevitable pangs of bereavement, and the agony of seeing his kith and kin maimed and slain, in the carnage of the battlefield.

The Lord gives a crushing reply to this. Sankaracharya and Ramanujacharya interpret the verse so as to make out an exhortation to Arjuna that he must endure all the ills of the flesh. Sankaracharya colours the reasoning with his favourite theory of Universal Delusion. Ramanujacharya makes out that as the ills of the flesh can't be helped, they must be endured till Mukti. According to these commentators, the Lord says, "I can't help it, you must suffer bravely".

Sri Madhwa tackles the problem of how one might live amidst sense-objects and environments and yet be not affected by them. He goes into the psychology of sensuous pleasure and pain and dissects their ingredients to find a solution.

At first sight, it would appear that, given an object and the impact of a sense, the conditions are fulfilled for the sensation of pleasure or pain. But a little reflection is enough to show that one more ingredient is needed for the result. While asleep, the sensory organs are present, and the sense-objects too. Yet no pleasure or pain is derived from the contact. The organ of touch is in contact with the bed and yet the feeling of heat or cold is absent. So in a trance. Even in wakeful hours, we see that the same object causes varying emotions in various persons. A friend's house on fire distresses the friend; an enemy's provokes a different feeling. Hence, it is impossible to classify objects absolutely into agreeable and disagreeable, since pleasure or pain depends on the *mental attitude of the man*, otherwise determined. Every man sees things through coloured glasses and imparts to the object, the colour of his 'अभिमान'.

A superficial rendering of the verse gives us the following notion that the Lord says: "Sense-contacts produce pleasure and pain. Now, why should the Lord state what looks like a truism? Why should such a proposition be laid down? What is the object in making what looks like an axiomatic statement? It may be said that the object was to predicate of it, uncertainty and impermanency, and to exhort Arjuna not to mind the pleasure and pain. But the problem is not solved by the exhortation. It is no answer and no consolation to tell him that he must suffer. Senses, objects, pleasures and pain, may all be unreal, as Sankaracharya's followers put it, with reference to the Absolute. They may be transient and will disappear at Mukti, as



Ramanujacharya puts it. But these are beside the point. Bheeshma's death causes the sufferings of bereavement, during the term of Arjuna's life. The uncertainty and impermanency with reference to a longer period or eternity does not solve the problem."

Hence, Sri Madhwa reads the verse so as to make out the very opposite of what Sankaracharya and Ramanujacharya deduce from it. The verse does not assert that sense-contact produce pleasure and pain but disputes and questions the assertion. 'तु' means alone. It is pronounced in an interrogatory voice and provokes a negative reply like a leading question. The Lord means to say that sense contacts cannot cause pleasure and pain by themselves. But why? because *Abhimana* is a necessary ingredient. Arjuna is taught the great psychological truth that Bheeshma's death could not afflict Arjuna, unless he chose to love him and got linked to him by attachment. What is impermanent is not sense or objects, or contacts, but their power to cause pleasure and pain, as this is dependent on *Abhimana*, As *Abhimana* is something under Arjuna's control, he is exhorted to give it up, and disregard the sense-contacts, which in this event, become abortive of results.

The Adwaitic commentator Madhusoodana Saraswati chalks out a line of construction somewhat original and peculiar. He assumes that the previous verse established the position that there is but one *soul in all the universe*, infinite and all pervading. As Bheeshma and Arjuna and all others were but One soul, there was no occasion for grief on the part of any one. Arjuna is supposed to concede the infinity of the



soul, and to controvert the unity alone. As pleasure and pain are attributes of the soul and as every animate being has its own individual sensations of pleasure and pain, it follows that souls, however infinite each may be, are distinct unconnected entities. Vaisheshikas, Tarkikas, Meemasakas and Sankhyas hold thus. Arjuna is supposed to adopt this view, and urge his own individual grief for the possible bereavements of the impending war. This doubt the Lord proceeds to set at rest.

According to Madhusoodana: Reply:- Souls in the plural don't exit. The systems that believe in the plurality of omnipresent souls are unsound. Pleasure and pain are not attributes of the soul but belong only to the Mind. The Mind is a perishable, material stuff. As pleasure and pain are attributes of the mind, and differentiate one mind from another, and as minds are short-lived, Arjuna is told to bear the ills of the mind with courage.

This elucidation of Arjuna's doubt and the reply are not intelligible. One wonders where Sri Krishna has so far established the unity of all Jeevic souls, or the position that the Jeeva is an all-pervading entity. Pleasure and pain may belong to the region of the mind; but surely the Jeeva, Ego, or Sakshi, cognizes them taking photographs, as it were, of the mental images, and becomes affected thereby. Then again, assuming the ultimate unity of the absolute soul, it is no consolation and no answer to Arjuna who is speaking of grief in the lower Vyavaharic plane, and refuses to fight in that plane. No doubt, Madhusoodana Saraswati is a commentator of repute. But it is ex-

tremely difficult to follow his reasoning where, in verse after verse, he tortures the text to squeeze Monism into it. In the verse under comment, he makes out that Arjuna, *meaning his soul*, is the same as *Bheeshma the soul*, and that Arjuna, the mind comprising a bundle of consciousness and feelings, is different from Bheeshma similarly viewed. Be it so. Still Arjuna's agony from the mental plane is there, pressing for relief whatever.

Professor Rangachariar thinks that this verse repudiates the Moral Philosophy which makes right and wrong depend on pleasure and pain. He is evidently thinking of the utilitarian who defines virtue as the greatest good of the greatest number. He translates the first line thus: 'Those things which give rise to sensations of heat and cold and pleasure and pain, are, however, of limited contact in relation to the soul.' The phrase 'limited contact in relation to the soul' is not very intelligible. He proceeds to point out that the physical body and organs which are in contact with the soul and cause sensations, are unreal, because they are not eternal. It is hard to see how unreality follows from transiency. This is evidently a loan from the monistic cult. He however takes it for granted, and argues that, as they are unreal, we must put up with experiences as they come. Then follows the conclusion that pleasure and pain should not be criteria of moral conduct, and secularists like Charwaka are wrong in this doctrine of ethical philosophy.

*Firstly.* It is to be observed that the contact spoken of in this verse is the contact of senses and sense-objects according to every one of the commentators.

None of them has understood the expression as referring to any supposed contact between the body and the soul. *Secondly*, the limited character of this contact is a peculiar idea of the professor. It is supposed to consist in the impermanency and unreality of the contact. This is hardly in point to answer Arjuna's doubt. *Thirdly*, as body and soul therefore are not permanently wedded together, it is said, that Arjuna should bear the agonies of bereavement, and pay no heed to pleasure and pain. This does not follow. *Fourthly*, as Arjuna is to bear every kind of human pleasure and pain with equanimity, because of their transiency, it is difficult to see how the moral corollary follows that sound ethics should not be based on pleasure and pain.

15) यं हि न व्यथयन्त्येते पुरुषं पुरुषर्षभ ।  
समदुःखसुखं धीरं सोऽमृतत्वाय कल्पते ॥

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| यं          | ... whomsoever                                   |
| हि          | ... indeed                                       |
| न व्यथयन्ति | ... do not afflict                               |
| एते         | ... these (sense-contacts)                       |
| पुरुषं      | ... living in and alive to material environments |
| पुरुषर्षभ   | ... O! Prince of men                             |
| समदुःखसुखं  | ... indifferent to pleasure and pain alike       |
| धीरं        | ... brave man of self-control                    |
| सः          | ... he   |

अमृतत्वाय ... for immortality or salvation  
 कल्पते ... becomes fit

“Whichever seer, living in and alive to sense contacts, is unafflicted by them, because of his brave self-control, his indifference to pain and pleasure alike, and freedom from *Abhimana*, that seer becomes fit for emancipation.”

Arjuna being advised to face pleasure and pain by renouncing attachment, the query follows whether the same result could not be achieved by retreating from the battlefield and giving a wide berth to every such occasion of pain. Arjuna asks, ‘why stay here and fight, and then, in order to secure peace of mind, renounce all likes and dislikes. Why not retire at once and save my skin as well as mental peace?’ Sri Krishna replies that occasions of pleasure and pain are not to be avoided, but should be faced with firmness, fortitude, and self-control, because this discipline is the path to emancipation. To an ignorant mind, it may appear that prevention is better than cure and prudence the better part of valour, but the moral and spiritual gain in abandoning *Abhimana* is so great that, apart from the immediate freedom from pain that follows, Mukti itself will come to be within reach. Briefly and in a few words, the verse touches on the stages of this discipline.

‘पुरुष’. We mark the use of the word पुरुष. Ordinarily it means a man. But surely women are as competent for salvation as men. The word is not meant to exclude women but is used in a literal sense. It denotes any person who is not in sleep or trance, and who lives in



the midst of sense environments and is alive to their impressioning influence. He who is *in* sleep or trance is, of course, not afflicted by sense-contacts, but there is no merit in him. To be in the world but not *of* it, alone implies merit and credit. In this connection, it may be remembered that the goal is said to be attained only through knowledge by the seer; तमेवं विद्वानमृतः. To reconcile the text with this tenet, 'पुरुष' is susceptible also of the meaning, "he who know the Perfect".

'धीरं'. Taking the moral condition of an ordinary wakeful person, we are told that he must rise to be a धीर, to be a brave wise man who keeps temptations at bay with a strong effort, and commands self-control.

'समदुःखसुखं'. After rising to the stage of Dheera, the discipline leads him onward to a condition of indifference to pain and pleasure. Sensual pleasure being as much an impediment to Mukti as pain, both alike are to be treated with contempt. He thus rises to be a समदुःखसुख. This is indeed a high level to reach. It is however not the highest. He rises still higher and renounces *Abhimana*. He ceases to love or hate. He believes not in material comforts. He has no kinsmen or foes. Material attractions and repulsions cease to impress him with joy or grief. He is calm, with feelings dead to the material world. He is no longer a Dheera who struggles hard to subdue passions. He is above that. He is no longer a समदुःखसुख who suffers pain and pleasure and scorns both alike as his foes. He is above that too. Spontaneously and without effort, he is unaffected by sensations. At this stage, he is bound to be a sage who is



trustful in God and has visioned Him. The goal is then assured.

We thus note, as pointed out by Sri Madhwa, the significance of पुरुष, धीर, समदुःखसुख and व्यथाभाव. “न व्यथन्ति” “do not afflict” is only a paraphrase of “तितिक्षस्व” “nullify” used in the last verse.

“अमृतत्व”. *Amritatwa* is the goal; relinquishment of likes and dislikes is the means. What holds us in bondage is this world of love and hate. We are slaves so long as desire rules us and keeps us in fetters.

Sankaracharya and Ramanujacharya make no reference to *Abhimana* as the cause of bondage and its renunciation as the means of *Mukti*. According to Sankaracharya, senses do not afflict the Seer because he has realized unity. Madhusoodana Saraswati says that senses do not affect him because the soul is absolutely beyond the pale of physical influence and is not susceptible, by any means, of knowledge or emotion. The words of the verse are twisted to yield this sense. (Vide Sanskrit commentary for the etymological discussion.)

“पुरुषर्षभ”. Ramanujacharya thinks that Arjuna does not deserve the compliment of being addressed as ‘पुरुषर्षभ’ (excellent man). He reads it in an ironical sense with a query implied in the voice, and make out that Arjuna was the very reverse of the sage described in the verse. There is hardly any justification for the fling.

In explaining the phrase ‘समदुःखसुख’ Ramanujacharya and Desikar point out that what is

asked to be despised is only pain दुःख and the exhortation is to regard pain as so much pleasure. The conduct of a sick man swallowing bitter medicine as if it were sweet, having regard to the ultimate end in view, is referred to by way of example. Sri Madhwa dissents from this, on the ground that pain as well as material pleasure should be shunned as impediments, and there is nothing in this or the preceding verse to put material pleasure on a higher level than pain and make it worthy of seeking.

16) नासतो विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः ।

उभयोरपि दृष्टोऽन्तस्त्वनयोस्तत्त्वदर्शिभिः ॥

|         |     |                                  |
|---------|-----|----------------------------------|
| न       | ... | not                              |
| असतः    | ... | to the unmanifest material cause |
| विद्यते | ... | there exists, occurs             |
| अभाव    | ... | non-existence                    |
| न       | ... | not                              |
| अभावः   | ... | non-existence                    |
| विद्यते | ... | there is or occurs               |
| सतः     | ... | to Brahman                       |
| उभयोः   | ... | of both                          |
| अपि     | ... | also                             |
| दृष्टः  | ... | is seen                          |
| अंतः    | ... | the truth                        |
| तु      | ... | verily                           |

अनयोः ... these  
तत्त्वदर्शिभिः ... by seers of truth

“The unmanifest (material cause) has never not been, nor will it ever cease to be. Brahman has always been and will ever be. The truth is thus seen and handed down by Seers in respect to both of these.”

Another rendering by Sri Madhwa in Geeta-Tatparya is as follows:—

न ... not  
असतः ... from wrong  
विद्यते ... arises  
भावः ... good  
न ... not  
अभावः ... bad  
विद्यते ... follows  
सतः ... from right

“From wrong, no good or happiness can flow; from right no evil or unhappiness can result. The truth is thus seen and handed down by Seers in respect to both of these.”

The verse reads very much like a riddle. Prof. Rangachariar renders it: “That which is not, has no existence; that which is, has no non-existence”. Thus rendered, the truism is apparent that what is, is and what is not, is not. Elaborate commentaries have endeavored to solve the riddle and put sense into the apparent truism.

Sri Madhwa renders 'असत्' as the unmanifest cause, the Prakriti, the root of material effects. Verse No. 12 laid down the syllogism that what is beginningless is also endless, and God was given as example. To those who put God on the same footing as the Jeeva and do not concede His eternality, an illustration had to be furnished from beyond the region of animate beings. Sri Krishna instances Moola Prakriti as an entity without beginning and without end.

An alternative construction is furnished by Sri Madhwa in Geeta-Tatparya. Arjuna had said, 'Only sin would follow by killing them, reprobates as they are.' Sri Krishna replies that from good deeds no misery would result, and that from bad deeds happiness could never ensue. To fight with the reprobate cousins being a righteous deed, it was bound to confer nothing but good. According to Sri Madhwa, Asat means (1) the material unmanifest cause, or (2) bad deeds.

Ramanujacharya renders 'असत्' as Deha, the material body. It has no existence for it is perishable in nature. सत् is चेतन or the soul. Being eternal, it knows no non-existence. He does not believe in the world of matter, it being but the mirage like effect of illusion. Still he calls the world *Asat* having regard to its perishable character. In verse No. 11, गतासून् was construed to refer to Deha or material body, and its perishability. Verse No. 12 was construed to refer to the immortality of the soul. Why exactly the same idea, without the slightest shade of a change in respect to stand-point or aspect, should be repeated in the present verse has not been explained.



Sankaracharya and his followers exult in the language of the verse as peculiarly favourable to their school. The world is unreal and does not exist. All name and form are the effects of causes. Tracing effects successively into their cause, we arrive at Para-Brahman as the cause of all causes, in the sense that He is the background for illusive perceptions like the mother-of-pearl. Thus, the world has no reality, and Brahman has no perishability. This is the truth seen by sages.

The elastic language of the verse has tempted other theorists to hang their own systems, too on it. One school holds that nothing is born in the world, and that everything is eternal, unlike the Buddhists and others who hold just the contrary, and say that everything is momentary and ephemeral. Sri Madhwa argues that effects are born though they have existed before in the shape of causes. Nothing can come out of nothing is undoubtedly true in a sense. But what exists as a cause with potential capacity is born into an effect. To deny the birth of any material effect is to deny the operation of cause and effect wholesale, and contradicts experience.

The school of Sankaracharya uses this verse to make out that the world is something unspeakable (अनिर्वाच्य); being midway between the Absolutely Real and the Absolutely Unreal – ‘‘सदसद्रिलक्षण’’. भाव is said to mean perception or knowledge. The unreal, such as the hare’s horn, is no object of knowledge. But the world is an object of knowledge. Hence the world is different from the hare’s horn (असत्). Brahman, the *Sat*, is not liable to disappear on knowledge of any kind being

attained. The world is liable to disappear on the Seer realizing Brahman by knowledge. Hence the world is different in kind from Brahman, the *Sat*. Being other than असत् and other than सत् also, it is सदसद्विलक्षण and मिथ्या.

The theory of absolute and relative reality is the subject of a very lengthy discussion in the writings of Ramanujacharya and Sri Madhwa. Space forbids the discussion. A thing is either real or unreal, exists or does not. There seems no room for a third and intermediate alternative, according to common sense, at any rate.

To revert for a moment to Sri Madhwa's exposition, the reader may note that, in the first quarter of the verse, after विद्यते the word may be taken to be अभावः or भावः. Sri Madhwa adopts both and gives two different interpretations. Cause and effect are often referred to in books as 'Asat' and 'Sat' the unmanifest and manifest. What is subtle and invisible is the causal world that lies behind, and at the root of manifestations. It is easy to obtain this sense from the said words both by etymological derivation and from authoritative lexicons.

In every discourse on the genesis of the Universe, Hindu books speak of Purusha and Prakriti together. Purusha is the efficient cause, and Prakriti, the material cause. They co-exist in Time and Space, and are more intimately intertwined and wedded together than words can express. Sri Krishna could not help speaking again of Brahman's eternality when context led him to speak of Prakriti (नाभावोविद्यते सतः).

The appropriateness of the other construction, emphasized by Sri Madhwa, does not require explanation. Arjuna feared hell by killing his wicked cousins in battle. Sri Krishna points out that, never, never can any ill befall a man engaged in good. Happiness and unhappiness are the effects of actions, good and bad, and this causal connection is never upset in the economy of moral events. The superficial moralist may stare at this pronouncement and shake his head in scepticism. But a deep study of social, moral and spiritual philosophy, may carry the conviction that Sri Krishna's words point to a great truth. It has to be conceded that the righteousness and propriety of a given conduct being granted, as a duty, nothing but happiness ought to flow from its performance. In proof of the lesson inculcated, Sri Krishna urges the authority of sages. He quotes their spiritual and moral vision handed down by tradition as the guiding authority.

17) अविनाशि तु तद्विद्धि येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।  
विनाशमव्ययस्यास्य न कश्चित्कर्तुमर्हति ॥

|         |              |
|---------|--------------|
| अविनाशि | ... immortal |
| तु      | ... indeed   |
| तत्     | ... that     |
| विद्धि  | ... know you |
| येन     | ... by which |
| सर्वं   | ... all      |

|           |                      |
|-----------|----------------------|
| इदं       | ... this             |
| ततं       | ... is pervaded      |
| विनाशं    | ... destruction      |
| अव्ययस्य  | ... of the immutable |
| अस्य      | ... this             |
| न कश्चित् | ... none whatever    |
| कर्तुं    | ... to cause         |
| अर्हति    | ... is competent     |

“Know that to be immortal by which all this is pervaded. None whatever is competent to cause the destruction of this, the immutable.”

or

|           |                               |
|-----------|-------------------------------|
| अविनाशि   | ... perfectly immutable       |
| तु        | ... but                       |
| तत्       | ... that (Brahman)            |
| विद्धि    | ... know you                  |
| येन       | ... by whom                   |
| सर्वं इदं | ... all this universe         |
| ततं       | ... is pervaded               |
| विनाशं    | ... destruction or limitation |
| अव्ययस्य  | ... to the unconditioned      |
| अस्य      | ... this                      |
| न कश्चित् | ... none whatever             |
| कर्तुं    | ... to compass                |
| अर्हति    | ... is competent              |

“Know you that Brahman by whom all the Universe is pervaded is absolutely immutable. None whatever can cause limitation to this, the unconditioned.”

It was said that souls are deathless, as they are beginningless. God was referred to as an example (verse No.12). To one who puts God and souls on a par and disputes the eternality of both, primordial Prakriti was suggested, in the alternative, as example (verse 16). If, for any reason, Prakriti and Purusha be deemed unsatisfactory examples, Sri Krishna instances the Alphabet (वर्ण) and Space, as further examples, by declaring a sort of general concomitance that whatsoever is a universal pervader in space is also indestructible. This is how the subject-matter of the present verse is connected with the previous verses and the context. The second half-line reads redundant at first sight. What it says is that no agent, instrument, curse, or person, can possibly affect the soul and reduce its dimension, and much less compass its destruction. The possibility of something *naturally* undying being destroyed by adventitious causes is negatived by the second line.

English readers not acquainted with the trend and logic of Sanskrit philosophical literature may feel startled by the notion of *Varnas* being all pervasive. It is believed that *Varnas* (or the *ethereal* sound-vibrations of the alphabet) are both omnipresent and eternal. In the course of articulation, the action of the vocal organs does not create the alphabet given expression to but only discloses and exhibits what remains embedded in the *Akasic* record. In pronouncing a letter, we speak of it as the same as the uttered by us or



others before. This recollection of identity would be a delusion, if the *letter* be but a momentary product born and dead with the pronouncement.

In the verse under comment, it is said that what is all pervasive is eternal. This dictum of concomitance is not to be taken too literally. Though Time, as a whole is an eternal verity, its division such as seconds, minutes etc., are not so. But these, however, are omnipresent. Thus omnipresence is sometimes associated with transiency. As a general rule, however, the concomitance mentioned here holds good.

Sri Madhwa gives also an alternative interpretation in Geeta Tatparya. The Universal Pervader referred to is Brahman, the Supreme being. Taking the particle तु in the sense of 'but', attention is drawn to the vast difference and disparity between God and the Jeeva-host. By reason of the soul's immortality, repeatedly impressed, one might come to fancy that God and Jeevas are immutable in the same sense and the same degree. तु repudiates such an idea. अविनाशि is meant to accentuate the supremacy of God, by pointing out that God alone is the eternal of eternals. Things may be classified under 4 different kinds of mutability. (1) They may be subject to change out-right (अनित्यत्वं), (2) Though undying in essence, they may be liable to put on and put off mortal sheaths (देहहानिः), (3) They may be affected by joys and griefs, and undergo sufferings (दुःखप्राप्तिः), (4) They may be imperfect in various other ways. (अपूर्णता). None of these possible imperfections or limitations, which affect the things of Brahmanda

in some shape or other, applies to Him. He is therefore one who is absolutely immortal and immutable (अविनाशि तु).

“तत्” . The next important idea of the verse remains compressed in a small word तत्. Universal immanence is taught herein. To be present *everywhere, at all times, and in limitless perfection*, is a description applicable only to Him. The Jeeva may exist always, but he is an atomic unit, and does not, individually speaking, pervade everything. He is moreover very imperfect. Lakshmi is omnipresent and eternal, but is not perfection. Such are Varnas too and Space. So let us understand Pervasion in the most comprehensive sense, and we get at God as the only Being that is absolutely perfect, eternal, and omnipresent.

We are here introduced to a great tenet of monotheism, the theory of Divine immanence. God is in everything, subtler than the subtlest, and vivifying all inspiring all, the Creator, Maintainer, and Destroyer, of all. The conception of the Universe as a huge image or idol vivified by the presence of the Divinity is a grand idea if we but think of the august picture.

Max Muller waxes eloquent over the Infinite being the background of the Finite, and explains how every perception of the Finite implies and connotes a perception of the Infinite as a necessary mental condition and function. This theory of the oriental savant answers Bain and Spencer who say that Infinity is inconceivable and unperceivable in any sense. Sri Krishna says that the Infinite pervades all, and is truly

the background and much more, of every knowledge and of every entity and verity in Brahmanda and beyond.

To the Supreme thus declared the Absolute, none is competent, says the 2nd half-line, to do damage, and much less destruction.

Ramanujacharya reads the verse as a reference only to Jeevas (the individual souls). His argument runs thus: *Collectively*, the Jeevas are everywhere. The pervasion तति, mentioned here, denotes that the soul is subtler than any material object, and this furnishes a reason why the soul is immortal. To destroy means that the weapon of destruction is sharper and subtler than the thing destroyed and can make an entry into that substances so as to split it up. Sharper and subtler than the soul, there is no other thing, if we may except God for a moment. As for God, He is omnipotent, but it is His Divine will that no soul shall cease to be. Hence souls are indestructible.

Sankaracharya and his followers explain Pervasion or तति to denote that solitary background of delusion, the Brahman, which pervades all. One school among monists inclines to the view that Brahman is the material cause of the world by actual transformation like mud shaped into pot. Another school thinks that Brahman is not transformed but is the background merely of delusion like the mother-of-pearl mistaken for silver, like the rope mistaken for snake, like the mirage mistaken for water. Sankarananda and Madhusoodana Saraswati are among the commentators devoutly adhering to this school.

In passing, the reader may turn just for a moment to Sankaracharya's exposition of the second line. Adverting to "न कश्चित्कर्तुमर्हति" "none whatever can cause its destruction", he adds the gloss "not even God can" (ईश्वरोऽपि न). Having regard to the well-known definition of God as an omnipotent Being, it is hardly appropriate to indulge in this fling at His power. It is easy to get over the difficulty by saying that, though God is all powerful, He does not choose to extinguish the eternal verities. They are such by His will and tolerance.

I hope the different standpoints of the three commentators (Bhashyakaras) are thus fairly clear. Sankaracharya understands the verse to describe Brahman, in elucidating the clause (नाभावोविद्यते सतः) of the preceding verse. Like the sky or a huge mother-of-pearl, the absolute is everywhere, utterly indifferent to and non-cognizant of the Universe superimposed on it. According to him, the verse applies only to Brahman. Ramanujacharya reads the verse as meant to give a reason for the immortality of souls (नाभावोविद्यते सतः) viz., that barring God they are the subtlest and are immune from peril, as all else is grosser than they. According to him, the verse applies only to Jeevas.

Sri Madhwa understands the verse in a dual sense: (1) as a reference to other entities of verities equally beginningless and endless with Prakriti, Purusha, and Jeevas, (2) and as a description of the Supreme Being, immanent, immortal, and immutable, in a perfect and absolute sense. As man is dependent on God, and as he has to do his appointed duty to please



God, deeming every task as worshipful service unto Him, a description of His supremacy is relevant to the context. The verse refers to God, or to eternal verities like Varna and Space.

We shall have read the verse to little purpose, if we omitted to note the distinction, strongly and clearly pointed out, between the pervader and the pervaded. The reader may perhaps draw a further inference too that the Pervaded, generally speaking is distinguished from the Pervader by being (व्यय) mutable, and विनाशि destructible, whereas the pervader is not व्यय and विनाशि. In Understanding the Pervaded Universe as mutable and, destructible, it is to be remembered that ultimate matter is not really destructible. A cardinal point to modern physical science is the doctrine, relating to the indestructibility of the matter. Sri Madhwa construes verse No. 16 (नासतोविद्यतेऽभावः) to refer to this doctrine, and says, that Primordial matter, the unmanifest cause, is an irreducible minimum, and the residuum, that abides for ever and ever. Hence the Pervaded Universe distinguished from the pervader, if deemed mutable and mortal, is the cosmos of conditions and forms, which, being products, undergo change, decay, and death, in the course of a huge evolution.

As for the Pervader or Pervaders, *it may be a non-soul or non-souls, such as Veda, primal Akasa, etc.* Or it may be the supreme Being as already pointed out: in which view, we are taught the monotheistic doctrine of Divine Immanence: or it may be the totality of Jeevic souls, the pervaders into every nook and corner of matter. This last is Ramanujacharya's view.



In this presentment, we are face to face with a very great truth, *viz.*, that the principle of consciousness vivifies and animates every atom of the organic and inorganic world, that there is not a particle of stone, wood, mineral, or other so-called 'dead' matter, that is in fact not throbbing with life. Professor J.C. Bose of Bengal is revolutionizing scientific notions on the subject by remarkable experiments in this direction. He demonstrates how a piece of iron, for instance, can be lulled into sleep or trance, how it can be poisoned and recovered, and how it can even be killed, thus bringing about, by suitable appliances, conditions prevailing in *animal* life and demonstrating the animateness of the so-called inanimate matter.

Though Jeevas may thus fill the Universe, we are not driven, however, by this doctrine to Pantheism. The Supreme Being, the cause of all causes, the life of all lives, controls and guides everything.

18) अन्तवन्त इमे देहाः नित्यस्योक्ताश्शरीरिणः ।  
अनाशिनोऽप्रमेयस्य तस्माद्युध्यस्व भारत ॥

|           |                     |
|-----------|---------------------|
| अन्तवन्तः | ... perishable      |
| इमे       | ... these           |
| देहाः     | ... bodies          |
| नित्यस्य  | ... of the immortal |
| उक्ताः    | ... are called      |
| शरीरिणः   | ... Jeeva           |
| अनाशिनः   | ... of the constant |

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| अप्रमेयस्य | ... of the immeasurable, the omni<br>present or of one resembling that |
| तस्मात्    | ... therefore  |
| युध्यस्व   | ... do you fight   |
| भारत       | ... O! Arjuna  |

'These bodies of Jeevas are perishable. Yet the Jeevas are eternal and constant as they are the reflected images of God who is Omnipresent. Therefore do you fight, O Bharata.'

In Geeta-Tatparya the verse has been rendered in another way also.

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| अनाशिनः    | ... to worship God who is free from<br>death, mutation, or<br>imperfection, in every sense, |
| अप्रमेयस्य | ... to worship Him; Him who is infinite,<br>in time, space and attributes                   |

'These bodies of Jeevas are perishable. Yet the Jeevas are eternal. But God is imperishable in the most comprehensive sense, (eternal in essence, eternal in body, ever free from sufferings, and absolute in perfection). He is infinite in time, space and attributes. For His sake, do you fight, O ! Arjuna.'

There are some obvious difficulties in getting at the real import of this verse.

(1) The immortality of the soul and the perishable character of material bodies were taught in verses 12 and 13. If so, what is the object in repeating the same lesson?

(2) The words नित्यस्य and अनाशिनः both refer to the deathlessness of the Jeeva. The redundancy is obvious. Why use both the words to convey the same sense?

(3) 'शरीरिणो देहाः' means the bodies of the embodied. The unembodied have obviously no bodies. Why qualify 'bodies' by the expression of the embodied, as if the unembodied could possess bodies.

(4) अप्रमेयस्य usually means of the unknowable. The Jeeva is knowable by self-consciousness. God is knowable through the Vedas. This adjective is not, therefore, intelligible with reference to either.

Sri Madhwa understands the verse in two ways.

(1) He calls attention to the word इमे "these". By its import, emphasis in pronunciation, and perhaps an appropriate gesture such as finger pointing, Sri Krishna meant to draw attention to other bodies not perishables as these are. He had already taught, no doubt, the lesson of material mortality. But the objector urges that the soul cannot be immortal, because its vehicle (उपाधि) is mortal. The soul is understood to be a reflected image. A reflection implies (a) a reflecting medium such as the mirror; (b) the original form which is reflected and (c) their mutual relation such as contact, facing etc. If the Jeeva is a reflected image, being reflected; through the body, the latter serves as the mirror in the analogy. If the body be mortal, the reflected image should be so, likewise. Such is the objection. Sri Krishna says, *these* bodies are perishable, implying that the Jeeva has an inner body which is

eternal, and which serves as the reflector. This eternal frame of his, endures even in Mukti (emancipation). The mortality of bodies is not herein asserted as a new lesson, but it is referred to only for emphasizing the fact that this outer stuff of ours alone is mortal, as contrasted with the inner spiritual embodiment which abides and endures for ever.

By the word नित्यस्य, no doubt, the soul's immortality is stated. But it is done to impress the lesson in this form, "although these bodies are ephemeral, *still* the soul is immortal". this forcibly points to the spiritual body, the eternal Reflector, accounting for the eternality of the spirit. 'नित्यस्य' is meant to set at rest the doubt that, the Reflector being transient, the Reflected is bound to be so. The reply given is, the Reflector and the Reflection are both immortal, the perishability of the outer vehicles (these bodies) being beside the point and not mattering at all.

There remains the further doubt that the Jeeva may cease to exist if, for any reason, easily conceivable, the original Form and the Reflecting mirror slide away from each other's presence. We are already told that the Reflecting mirror is the spiritual body. Which is the original? The reply is, God (बिंब). Let us well realize the great truth that God made man after His image. God, the original, is an omnipresent Being (अप्रमेय). Hence the reflecting mirror cannot possibly get beyond the zone of the Divine presence. The relation or contact between the "Upadhi" and the "Bimba" is therefore eternal too. The permanence of this contact is denoted by a new term अनाशिनः



The Combined effect of नित्यस्य and अनाशिनः is to make out the permanence of the *Upadhi* and the contact. अप्रमेय "the Infinite God" is of course eternal. The verse is thus meant to answer a possible objection to the immortality of the soul.

The reader may note, that, in the course of this explanation, the difficulties Nos. 1-2-4 have received an answer. There remains the redundancy No.3, शरीरिणो देहाः "the bodies of the embodied". It is to be observed that शरीरि is a term denoting the Jeeva apart from derivation. So says Amarakosha. The object is to differentiate the Jeeva from God. The predication as to perishable bodies is applicable only to Jeevas and not to God.

The second interpretation of Sri Madhwa as explained in Geeta-Tatparya may be noticed here. The verse is meant to draw attention still further to the greatness of God and the littleness of man. The foregoing verse spoke of His universal Immanence and His absolute perfection, immutability, and immortality, in every sense. The present verse quotes the same ideas and uses synonymous expressions अनाशिनः, Cf. (अविनाशि), अप्रमेयस्य (येन सर्वं तत्) "Bow to Him who is thus Supreme and do your duty, viz, to fight, for His pleasure". The genitive case of अनाशिनः and अप्रमेयस्य connotes the purpose, viz *His Divine pleasure*. The first half of the verse points out how small and little man is. He is invested with perishable bodies. Their decay and death give him suffering. He is imperfect in power, knowledge, bliss and everything. All this is expressly and impliedly

emphasized. The word इमे “these” taken with bodies, impliedly refers to the silver lining of the clouds, namely, that the Jeeva has an imperishable body within, which abides and shines forth in Mukti. How to attain this state comes to be the next question. ‘By worship of God’ is the answer suggested by the second line.

The total effect of the two lines may be summed up:— Man is a very imperfect being. But he has a great future. He is blessed with an inner body which is spiritual and immortal. Its spiritual greatness shines in Mukti. If even an emancipated soul is great in spiritual body and bliss, how much more should it be the case with God who is perfection itself ? Mukti is attainable through His grace. Therefore do your duty for His pleasure.

Reverting, for a moment, to the theory about (1) the Original, (2) the Reflector, and (3) the Reflected, the reader will be careful not to push the analogy of optical images too far. That the Infinite Being is reflected in the finite Jeeva means (1) that the latter is an absolutely dependent being, (2) that he is quite different from the original and (3) that he bears some resemblance to God in that he is *Sat, Chit and Ananda*, in a way.

Vedanta Desikar has a long and learned note on this verse. According to Ramanujacharya, verses Nos. 17 and 18 contain arguments to confirm the syllogistic conclusion about the mortality of bodies and immortality of souls. Verse 17 said, the soul is immortal because of its utmost subtlety. Further reasons are mentioned in verse 18. Bodies are mortal, because they are

of material stuff. इमे refers to their materiality composed of the elements. देह refers to their composition, based on limbs, organs and other stuff, which combine into a structure and dissolve, in course of time (the root दिह means growth). शरीरिणः denotes a further reason by pointing out how bodies come to sheathe us goaded by Karma and fall off, when Karma ceases to urge or is exhausted. अनाशिनः is an epithet use to show that the soul is inherently incapable of destruction, because it is endowed with qualities other than those predicated of material bodies, viz., 1) they are not material, 2) are not products liable to growth and decay, and 3) are not born of Karma. अप्रमेयस्य is a peculiar expression. प्रमेय means 'the object of knowledge' (the known). The material body is always the known and is never the knower. It is always the enjoyed and is never the enjoyer. The soul is however, both knower and enjoyer. अप्रमेयस्य means other than the प्रमेय or the enjoyed भोग्य, because the soul is भोक्तृ. This is the last of the four reasons for establishing the mortality of bodies and the immortality of souls. Briefly.

1) इमे is one reason.

2) देहाः is another.

3) शरीरिणः is the third.

4) अप्रमेयस्य is the fourth.

Other points of argument are incidentally pointed out. It is observed, for instance, that the plural देहाः shows the multiplicity of the form assumed. On the other hand, the words नित्यस्य, अनाशिनः, and अप्रमेयस्य, used with reference to the Jeeva, are all in the singular, indicating that the Jeeva is one indivisible, limbless, and partless being, animating every part of the body and ever referred to as the unit of self-consciousness (अहम्).

These syllogisms and some apparent fallacies thereof are briefly discussed in the Sanskrit annotation. They are not reproduced owing to the difficulty in rendering technical ideas. One of the points may be mentioned as an illustration. Jeevas are said to be eternal because of their superlative subtlety. It is explained that no sword, no fire and no weapon can penetrate the soul to create a split or wound. But the fallacy is this: that whatever is not cleavable by sword or fire is not necessarily eternal. There is air, there is ether, (भूताकाश), not so cleavable, but still, not eternal.

Sankaracharya explains the verse to lay down over again the reality of the universal soul and the unreality of all else. Jeeva and Brahman being identical, the verse refers to Brahman in the words नित्यस्य, शरीरिण, अनाशिनः and अप्रमेयस्य. The verbal redundancy in नित्यस्य and अनाशिनः is got over by the explanation that the former refers to one kind of नाश or loss, and the latter, to another kind. For instance, disappearance is often spoken of as नाश. Mere change, such as by dis-



ease, is also referred to by the word नाश. नित्य implies absence of one kind of नाश and अनाश refers to another. शरीरि "the embodied" is explained on the footing that the soul is connected with the body only by the link of "illusion". अप्रमेयस्य is the expression on which a great amount of monistic learning has been expended. Commentator after commentator is eloquent in pointing out that Brahman is beyond the pale of Knowledge, Perception, Inference and Scripture; none of these can teach us Brahman. Hence It is, pre-eminently, the unknowable.

Winding up all, Arjuna was told of the reality of the One, and the unreality of all else. The verse concludes by saying, "Do you therefore fight". The incongruity of this behest is obvious. The appropriateness of "therefore" is far from comprehensible. Monists hold that action is forbidden to one who is to realize Brahman and cast aside all else as unreal. If Arjuna was to realize this lesson, it was most inappropriate to command him to fight. Sankaracharya and his followers take up the word युध्यस्व "do you fight" and explain it saying that it is not a command but only a suggestion not to desist from a line of action he had chosen to adopt. Everything being unreal but the soul, there was no reason why Arjuna should not fight. This is the substance of the exhortation as explained by these commentators.

I cannot help making a few observations on the aspects presented by the monistic school.

Firstly, as to the redundancy of the verse with reference to verses Nos. 12, 13, and 16 which convey exactly the same lesson in identical standpoints, Sankaracharya, Sankarananda, and Madhusoodana Saraswati have offered no light. If all these verses say that bodies are perishable like the mirage, and unreal, from an absolute point of view, then, it is but a single lesson throughout without any shade of difference. Moreover, if *all be* unreal, why refer to *these bodies* in particular as perishable and unreal. The word इमे conveys no force. Neelakanta of the same school and camp evidently feels the difficulty. He interprets this particular verse to refer to a lower plane of reality. The 'अंत' end, according to him, is not predicated with reference to the absolute reality of Brahman. The cosmos enjoys a reality (व्यावहारिक) for all intents and purposes, a qualified or subordinate reality. In this plane of subordinate verities, some things are eternal and others transient. Arjuna has been taught in verses 12, 13, and 16 the classification of the real and the unreal in relation to the absolute. He could not follow the lesson. Sri Krishna, therefore, descended to the lower plane, and in the world of qualified realities, proceeded to show how 'these bodies' were ephemeral, while other entities were eternal in the same plane. Neelakanta's explanation overcomes the redundancy of the verses and gives some significance to इमे. It is ingenious. But it overthrows the commentary of the more eminent members of the school from the founder downwards. The split in the camp is serious. There is no word or

expression to indicate the so called division of realities into the absolute and subordinate. He construes the words 'अन्तः' = (end) and 'नित्य' = (*endless*) in the first line, with reference to the lower plane of qualified reality, and construes अनाशिनः (*endless*) and अप्रमेयस्य (*unknowable*), similar adjectives of the soul in the second line, with reference to the higher plane of absolute reality. Adverting to the conclusion युध्यस्व (do fight) at the end, the descent is again made into the lower region. This flight and descent, at the sweet caprice of the commentator, is without any justification whatever.

If अप्रमेयस्य means "the unknowable out and out", the objection is unanswerable that the Vedas, Scriptures and Revelations have no purpose to fulfill. It is a quibble to say that these but remove ignorance and impediments, and do not and cannot reveal God. It is one thing to say that God is not *fully* knowable, and another to say that He is absolutely beyond the pale of knowledge. All theists including Max Muller adopt the former position, but monists alone adopt the extreme dogma of the latter position.

The tortuous construction of युध्यस्व "do you fight" hardly calls for comment and seems to stand-condemned.

Sankarananda is evidently not satisfied with the explanation of Sankaracharya to get over the redundancy of अनाशिनः and नित्यस्य. It may be remembered that,

according to Sankaracharya, one of the words refers to disappearance, and the other, to mere mutation. Sankaracharya says that अनाशित्व is the reason for नित्यत्व. It is अनाशी, and *therefore*, नित्यः. अनाशी means full, all-pervading, परिपूर्ण. The proposition is that whatever is full, i.e., *all-pervasive* is alone eternal. They do not admit that anything *atomic* or *not omnipresent* can be eternal. Sri Madhwa and Ramanujacharya hold the Jeeva to be atomic in size, and to be still, eternal. Madhusoodana and Neelakanta get over the redundancy in their own way. नित्य indicates, according to them, a subordinate eternality. Time and Akas are eternal. But they dissolve into the Atman. 'Akas' is eternal, because it endures as long as Time endures. Existence as long as Time lasts denotes one kind of eternality, and this is expressed by the word नित्य. But अनाशी indicates existence even beyond the limits of Time, an absolute reality and eternality. Hence, they say, the expressions are not redundant. How they make out Time to have an end and say that anything exists beyond the limits of Time is not conceivable.

19) य एनं वेत्ति हन्तारं यश्चैनं मन्यते हतम् ।  
उभौ तौ न विजानीतो नायं हन्ति न हन्यते ॥

यः ... whoever  
एनं ... him



|             |                      |
|-------------|----------------------|
| वेत्ति      | ... considers        |
| हन्तारं     | ... a killer         |
| यः च        | ... and whoever      |
| एनं         | ... him              |
| मन्यते      | ... considers        |
| हतम्        | ... killed           |
| उभौ तौ      | ... both of them     |
| न विजानीतः  | ... are ignorant     |
| न अयं हन्ति | ... he does not kill |
| न हन्यते    | ... nor is he killed |

“He who understands a man to be a killer, and he who considers a man killed, both of them are ignorant. He does not kill, and he is not killed.”

It is necessary to see what is the new point or aspect taught by this verse. What is taught seems, at the first blush, to be that no soul can kill another soul and therefore, no soul can be killed. If this were all, it must be conceded that this is not a new lesson at all. Ramanujacharya and Desikar give the following explanation. Verse No.17 taught us the inherent indestructibility of the soul. Verse No.23 is going to state that no weapons, fire, water, or air can kill the soul. These two points, *viz.*, indestructibility and the non-existence of any material destroyer, are asserted in the verse under comment in an emphatic and forcible manner, by censuring the persons, who hold otherwise, to be deluded men.

Sankaracharya does not notice the tautology. According to him, what is meant to be taught is that the notion that Arjuna can kill, and Bheeshma is liable to be killed, is false. But the falsity of this notion and of all other notions in this false world, having been, according to him, taught over and over again, the necessity for the repetition is not clear.

Madhusoodana and Sankarananda introduce the verse as an answer to the objection urged that Sin would result from slaying kinsmen in battle. According to them, Sri Krishna gives the answer, that, "Atman" being actionless, no sin can possibly affect it. Let us pause for a moment at this position. 'To kill is sinful,' says Arjuna. 'No,' says Sri Krishna, 'because the soul is incapable of any affection, sin, or anything else.' What a reply! It is subversive of morality. 'The King can do no wrong' said Hobbes. 'Man can do no wrong' is the present proposition. Such a reply is shocking to the moral sense, and if well founded, tears up ethics by the roots.

Sri Madhwa explains the context thus. Verse No. 11 infers the soul's immortality on the ground that it is beginningless. God was referred to as an example. Verse 16 gave instances of eternal verities, such as the unmanifest cause. Verse 17 gave further instances, the all-pervasive Varna and Space. Verse 18 answered a possible objection based on the transience of human bodies and pointed out the spiritual body as the true Reflector (the real *Upadhi*). Verse 19 under comment is an answer to another objection based on the current notion and saying that one man kills another. If man does not and cannot kill man, what about the common

notion that he does? The Lord replies it is based on a delusion, and this position will be explained, later on.

Thus verses 16, 17, 18 and 19 touch on many a different aspect, to confirm and fortify the syllogism about the soul's immortality, by pointing out examples and answering objections and doubts.

‘नायं हन्ति न हन्यते’. Taking the concluding words of the verse first, “he does not kill, he is not killed”, it is admitted on all hands that this is not the chief predicate of the sentence. It is to be understood with a “because” preceding it; it is meant to furnish the reason why the two men (उभौ तौ) before mentioned are deemed ignorant persons.

The verb used is ‘to kill’ (हन्ति). It conveys, ordinarily a two-fold sense. In the case of perishable objects, it means annihilation. In the case of animals it means death or separation of the outer body from the soul. The notion that A kills B is set down as false. In what sense is it false? A is seen to kill B and is hanged for it by law. This surely is no delusion.

We may, for the sake of convenience, consider the controversial points of this verse under a few issues:-

- i) What is the sense of “kill” here?
- ii) Does it include the common import of death, *viz.*, to separate the outer body from the soul?
- iii) May not “kill” stand here for every kind of human action and activity?

iv) If so, the soul turns not "actionless". Is this position sound?

v) The second line speaks of *two* men as ignorant. Who are the two?

i) Ramanujacharya understands killing as denoting annihilation only. He explains the verse as negating the existence of any killing cause, such as the sword. We have no objection to this notion. But we do not agree that annihilation is the only sense.

ii) If "death" as ordinarily understood, meaning the separation of the physical body, is taken to be the sense, this also fits into the verse. For, we say that that man is an ignorant person who thinks that any one cause the death of any other, *of his own choice and will*. Let us not forget that God is the only independent actor in everything. A is said to kill B; A can't kill unless God wills it, and at His bidding, Karma goads him. B can't be killed without the Divine will and other causes.

iii) & iv) We have no objection to the verb here standing for action and activity of every kind. Monists adopt this sense. The difference between them and us is that they make out, as the nett result of the lesson, that man is no agent, does no action, and is not a responsible being at all, whereas we say that man is not actionless, that he has moral responsibilities, and that he does commit sin or earn merit by his doings, but within the limits of the choice and freedom granted to him by God.

The monist quotes scriptures which speak of Atman being actionless. But those texts apply to God,



and mean action grounded on *matter* and *material energy*. The Brahma Sutras establish the position that the Jeeva is an actor and is subject to the injunctions of “do and refrain” contained in the Shastras (*Vide* Sanskrit exposition).

v) There remains the somewhat difficult allusion to *two* persons being ignorant. The difficulty is this. When A is said to kill B, C understands A to be the killer and B to be the killed. C is an ignorant person in taking A to be a killer and B the killed. C is but a single person. Why talk of two ignorant persons? Ramanujacharya explains it by saying that C who assumes the existence of a killing cause, is one man, and D who takes B to be killed, is another. So we get C and D, two persons, C being one who assumes the existence of an instrument of killing, and D the object of killing.

If, with reference to (1) the instrument and (2) the object in relation to the same verb, the persons deluded may be spoken of as *two*, we may as well speak of them as *many*, having regard to other aspects of the verbal relation, as denoted by the nominative, dative, genitive or locative cases.

Sankaracharya thinks that the two persons alluded to are the killer and the killed who respectively imagine “I am the killer” and “I am the killed”. It must be remembered that there is a verse in Kathopanishad reading very much like the present one.

हन्ता चेन्मन्यते हन्तुं हतश्चेन्मन्यते हतम् ।

उभौ तौ न विजानीतो नायं हन्ति न हन्यते ॥

"If the killer thinks he is competent to kill, and the killed thinks that he can be killed, both these are ignorant. He does not kill and he is not killed". Adwaitic commentators think that the Geeta verse conveys exactly the same idea. Here again, the difficulty is, if, with reference to the subject and object in relation to the same action, it is admissible to think of *two* men, why not as well speak of them as many, having regard to other cases in relation to the verb. The Upanishad verse cannot help us here. The first line therein is not the same, word for word, as the Geeta verse. Whereas the former speaks of the killer and the killed as the two, the Geeta speaks of the killer and the killed as the two, the Geeta speaks of other individuals, independent knower, as two. This makes, a vast difference.

Madhusoodana feels the difficulty and says, in one of two alternative expositions, that the first line is worded, as it is, for the sake of literary effect. In an alternative exposition, he says, that the *two* persons are (1) he who takes the soul to be a doer and (2) he who takes the soul to be mortal. This is, of course, a conclusive answer to the difficulty. The verbs are different, and it is admissible to speak of two men, with regard to two different notions, not related to the same verb. This exposition requires change in one respect only. It makes out the soul to be actionless. Instead of this, if we substitute the phrase "Void of independent action", the sense is perfect. This is just what Sri Madhwa has done. According to him, the verse says "he who takes the Jeeva to be an independent doer either in respect to killing, or any other act of his, is one

ignorant man; and he, who takes one Jeeva to be capable of destroying another Jeeva or one Jeeva as being liable to be killed by another Jeeva, that is, who takes the soul to be mortal, is another ignorant person". In this exposition, reference occurs to the supremacy of God.

Ramanujacharya, in particular, sees very little of relevancy in alluding to God in this context. He construes every verse hereabouts as relating only and solely to Jeeva. As to Sankaracharya, there being no distinction between Jeevas and God, the doubt does not arise as to whether the verses apply to both or either of them. Sri Madhwa interprets the verses from 12 onwards as alluding to both. God is relevant as the Being whose reflection is the Jeeva, who controls the activity and doings of the Jeeva, and who commands worship unto Him in order to confer Mukti.

Arjuna had laid stress in the first chapter on himself as the warrior who had to fight and kill, and Bheeshma and Drona and others as being liable to be killed by him. It therefore became necessary to convince him that he was not a free agent, and that the whole battle was in the hands of God, Arjuna being but a subordinate agent. In these circumstances it is quite relevant to speak of God's independence and Jeeva's dependence.

If we look to proof for confirming this interpretation, we may turn to XIth Skandha of Bhagavata, chapter 16, verse 7, which contains an allusion to Arjuna. Sri Krishna says to Uddhava, "My dear friend, Arjuna refused to fight on this wrong idea that he was a killer

and the foe was liable to be killed by him. I dispelled his doubt thus". The Lord then proceeds to set out how He dispelled the doubt, by repeating विभूत्यध्याय of the Geeta, chapter X. This chapter relates to the God's presence in every thing excellent. It is meant to show that God alone is the true Doer. Hence, it is clear that the Geeta verse under notice is the text which is expounded by chapter X of the Geeta. Here they occur separated by a wide gap of nine chapters. But, in Bhagavata, the verse corresponding to the one under comment and the *Vibhuti* verses occur in juxtaposition in one and the same chapter, and their relation is unambiguously set out.

Sri Madhwa has, I think, hit the right point in observing that the two persons censured as ignorant are:—

1. the believer in the Independence of man, and
2. the believer in the mortality of the Jeeva.

This view had been borrowed by Madhusoodana, with just a little alteration to suit the monistic cult of the soul being altogether actionless.

The commentator Venkatanatha has a long note on this verse. He differs from every other commentator of his school and of other schools. He thinks that the verse teaches the existence of the soul as an entity distinct from the body. As the verse reads like Mantra No. 19 of Kathopanishad, he says that the Geeta verse and the said Mantra are on-all fours in every respect.

Venkatanatha seems to be in error for the following reasons:—



Firstly, the reading of the Geeta verse is different from that of the mantra. Hence there is no identity of sense.

Secondly, it is wrong to say that the Mantra teaches the existence of the soul in reply to the tenet of Charwaka, the Materialistic Atheist. In the Upanishad, one Nachiketas asks Yama for three boons. The first boon he prayed for was the good grace of his own father. The second boon related to a special sacrifice leading the votary to Swarga. The third boon related to Mukti and God. The story shows that Nachiketas was, by his father's curse, sent to Yama's abode, and there occurred this philosophical dialogue. Sankaracharya thinks that the third boon sought a knowledge of the great problem, 'to be or not to be;' in other words, that the boy wished to know if souls lived after the death of physical bodies.

The reader is referred to Mr. Basu's learned preface to the Kathopanishad, where he points out that this interpretation is wrong. Nachiketas was a person of faith. He objected to his father making gifts of old and useless cows, lest the donor should be punished with hell. He went to Yama's abode after dying and held conversation with Yama. Hence, his own experience afforded him a sufficient answer to the problem of the soul surviving physical death. The second boon he sought related to a Fire-sacrifice and Swarga. This presupposed the survival of individual personality after death. After a full teaching on this subject, Nachiketas could hardly ask again as to whether any one lives after death or not.

20) न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचि कदाचि-  
 न्नायं भूत्वा भविता वा न भूयः ।  
 अजो नित्यश्शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो  
 न हन्यते हन्तयमाने शरीरे ॥

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| न जायते        | ... is not born                        |
| म्रियते वा न   | ... nor does (he) die                  |
| कदाचित्        | ... ever                               |
| अयं            | ... he                                 |
| भूत्वा         | ... having been                        |
| भविता वा भूयः  | ... or again is born                   |
| न              | ... not                                |
| अजः            | ... birthless, image of the birthless  |
| नित्यः         | ... deathless, image of the deathless  |
| शाश्वतः        | ... the immutable, ever a shadow of it |
| अयं            | ... he                                 |
| पुराणः         | ... the embodied                       |
| न हन्यते       | ... is not killed                      |
| हन्यमाने शरीरे | ... while the body is killed.          |

“The Jeeva is not born, nor does he die. He is not one who, having existed already, still produces himself again. For he is the image of the birthless, deathless, and immutable God. Though an embodied being, still, he dies not when the body is killed.”

The verse is rendered in another way too, the first line as applying to God, and the second, to the Jeevas.

|                 |     |   |
|-----------------|-----|---|
| न जायते         | ... | (God) is birthless, both in body and in spirit    |
| (न) म्रियते वा  | ... | and does (not) die                                |
| कदाचित्         | ... | ever  |
| ना अयम्         | ... | this Purusha                                      |
| भूत्वा भविता    | ... | is not one who having                             |
| वा न भूयः       |     | existed as spirit is still born (with body) again |
| अजः             | ... | (The Jeeva too) is birthless                      |
| नित्यः          | ... | is deathless                                      |
| शाश्वतः         | ... | permanently dependent                             |
| अयं             | ... | this Jeeva  |
| पुराणः          | ... | the embodied; wanderer from body to body          |
| न हन्यते        | ... | is not killed                                     |
| हन्यमाने शरीरेः | ... | though the body is killed                         |

“This Purusha (God) is not born and does not die, in any sense; He does not produce himself again and again with a body. The Jeeva too is birthless and deathless, but is ever a dependent being. He is liable to wander from body to body but he does not die when the body is killed.”

This verse is a quotation from Kathopanishad with just a few alterations. Sri Krishna quotes the Veda as authority for the lessons already taught. Human

reasoning is inherently weak, especially, in respect to subjects beyond the pale of the senses. Revelation is the only source of knowledge in respect to God. Hence, Sri Krishna, having used syllogistic logic, quotes the revealed word in support of his teaching, thus impressing on us the great truth that these abstruse teachings rest only on Vedic authority, and setting an example to teachers that they should be careful not to call for silent trust in their own words, but should always adduce proofs in the shape of revelation.

So far, the eternality of God, *absolutely*, the eternality of the Jeeva, *in a subordinate sense*, having regard to his bodily prison and imperfections, and the supremacy of God contrasted with the dependence of the Jeeva, have been taught. These are exactly the points brought out in the quotations under comment.

The verse may be understood as wholly applying to Jeeva. Thus construed, the verse says, the Jeeva is not born, nor does he die. This is to be understood as applying to the soul; for, birth and death as ordinarily understood, *viz.*, as appearing with a body emerging from the mother's womb, and leaving it when life ebbs away, cannot be gainsaid or denied. The Jeeva, however, though birthless and deathless, is not so constant and immutable, as for instance, *Divine knowledge*. Speaking of God's volition and knowledge, we say often, "He willed, He saw". But Divine attributes and functions are eternal and immutable. In some inscrutable way, God makes it appear that He *knew*, *knows*, or *will know*. But human birth and death do no rest on such an inscrutable level. It is accounted for by the well-understood experience of donning a fresh body



and doffing it in proper time.

Why is the Jeeva birthless and deathless, in spiritual essence? Because, the second line conveys the lesson, he is a similarity of the birthless, deathless, and immutable God. The next doubt arises, whether, being such an image, he is as great as God. The answer bids us be humble, and points out how the Jeeva is liable to wander from body to body, (प्राण), the only merit and virtue of the Jeeva being that, while the body perishes, his spirit does not.

Now a few words about the alternative interpretation adopted in Gita-Tatparya. We have shown already how God has been often referred to in various contexts, while describing the nature and position of the Jeeva. The first line of the verse under comment is a description applicable to God. He does not take birth. He does not die. His spirit is birthless and deathless, as also is His body, for He does not suffer from the material prison. He is not subject to the anomalous predicament of the Jeeva who, though eternal, puts on and casts off a material coating, and undergoes birth and death in this sense.

The second line turns to the Jeeva, and compares and contrasts his nature and position. He *too* is birthless and deathless. But there is a limitation. Let no one, for this reason, lay the flattering unction to his heart, that his spiritual eternality raises him to Divinity, because he is but a shadow ever dependent on God. He is tossed like a foot-ball from body to body, utterly regardless of his will and wish only his spirit is not annihilated, when body comes and body goes.

The explanation, that the verse is a quotation in support of lessons already taught, saves us the trouble of answering external tautologies. But there remain, demanding an answer, a few internal tautologies in the verse itself, and no commentary is sound, unless it explains, for instance, why and how न जायते, न म्रियते of the first line differ in sense from अज and of the 2nd line. नायं भूत्वा भवितावान् भूयः is a difficult clause that has given rise to a variety of meanings. Sankaracharya makes out the meaning to be that the self does not come into existence, and it does not go into non-existence from existence. In other words, it is a paraphrase of "He is not born. He does not die". This rendering gives rise to three sets of synonymous expressions.

(1) न जायते न म्रियते

(2) नायं भूत्वा भविता न

(3) अजो नित्यः

The reply given is that No. (1) is the proposition, No. (2) is the explanation, and No. (3) is the conclusion. But there seems not a shadow of variety in the sense conveyed by the three phrases or clauses.

Ramanujacharya explains the first two expressions noted above, by saying that No. (1) refers to the present time and to all times between Kalpa and Kalpa. As the Puranas speak of some beings living with the same body from Kalpa to Kalpa, expression No. (2) negatives birth and death to the spirit even at the beginning of a Kalpa or at its end. No. (3) represents the

conclusion summed up in the 2nd line, by the generalization that souls are birthless and deathless at all times and in every body, however lasting and enduring the latter may be. One would have thought that the word 'कदाचित्' "at any time whatever" might cover any length of time, Kalpa and all, and that a separate clause to cover Kalpas alone was unnecessary. Sri Madhwa's point of view has already been set out, and the reader may recall to mind how he overcomes the apparent redundancy of the three expressions. No. (1) lays down the eternality of the Jeevic spirit; No. (2) qualifies this by negating absolute constancy and immutability, which are the sole attributes of God; No. (3) gives the reason for eternality, by pointing attention to the fact the man is an image of the birthless and deathless God and hence is endowed with those attributes and known as such.

Leaving this point of redundancy alone, the Adwaitic annotators consider that the purport of the verse is to deny to the spirit the six mutations set out by Yaska. (1) To be born, (2) to exist, (3) to grow, (4) to be transformed, (5) to decay, and (6) to die, are the incidents of the human body. The first is negative by न जायते and अज,; the last by न म्रियते and नित्यः. No.3 is negative by the word पुराण which means literally "new, even of old" and repudiates growth. शाश्वत (*permanent*) cuts at No. (5) decay. न हन्यते "is not killed" applies to absence of transformation or mutation of every kind. There remains No. (2) अस्तित्व or existence, which he says, may be squeezed by implication into some one of

these negations. Sankarananda has done this service to his Guru by squeezing No. (2) into the clause 'नायं भूत्वा भविता न भूयः'.

Though Ramanujacharya does not go into these details, the main purpose of the verse is according to him, to deny the attributes such as birth, death, decay, change and death of matter to the spirit. Hence we may be squeezed by implication into some one of these negations. Sankarananda has done this service to his Guru by squeezing No. (2) into the clause 'नायं भूत्वा भविता न भूयः'

Though Ramanujacharya does not go into these details, the main purpose of the verse is according to him, to deny the attributes, such as birth, death, decay, change, and death of matter to the spirit. Hence we may take it that, on the whole, he agrees with Sankaracharya on this point.

Sri Madhwa quotes the authority of Vishnu Purana, where, it is said, that शाश्वत is applied to God and to Jeeva, on account of their permanent relation of being original and shadow. He likewise quotes, in Upanishad Bhashya, an authority for interpreting पुराण to mean a dweller or wanderer in bodies. Hence, there is authority for the position that two of the mutations, viz., "decay" and "growth" are not meant to be negated by these two expressions. For getting at a better clue of the real import, let us turn to the



Kathopanishad, II Valli and look at the verses from NO. 16 to 20 (quoted in my Sanskrit commentary). No. 16 extols God and says, whoever knows Him gets all his desires. No. 17 extols Him, as the only great refuge, and says, whoever resorts to Him is said to be honored in Brahmaloaka. No. 18 is the verse analogous to the Geetic verse under comment.

Let us pause a bit. The 2nd line is a verbatim quotation. In the first line the Sruti has 'विपश्चिन्नायं कुतश्चिन्नवभूवकश्चित्,' whereas the Geeta substitutes, in its place, a new clause 'कदाचिन्नायं भूत्या भवितावानभूयः'.

This change is, of course, advisedly made. The Sruti context shows that three Beings were being spoken of:

- (1) God,
- (2) the Emancipated Seer, मुक्तज्ञानी, and
- (3) the Samsari Jeeva.

Of the first it said, He is birthless and deathless absolutely, i.e., in body and spirit. Of the second it said, he too is birthless and deathless in body and spirit, for, after emancipation, he is no longer liable to be imprisoned in material body. Of the third, spoken of as पुराण 'the embodied', it said, spiritually he is birthless and deathless, but he must pass through perishable bodies, his spirit alone enduring all through.

Now the exigencies of the Geeta required authority for the position describing and contrasting only God

and the *Samsari Jeeva*. Mukta, the emancipated soul, being irrelevant for the context, is ruled out. Sri Krishna therefore alters the reading so as to confine the sense to No. 1 & 3 *viz.*, God and the *Samsari Jeeva*. Hence, Sri Madhwa construes the first line of the Geetic sloka, to refer to the absolute eternality of God, and the second line, to the subordinate eternality of the (पुराण) or *Samsari Jeeva*, with due emphasis laid on his ephemeral bodies and enduring spirit.

In the Upanishad, the six changes of matter are not expounded. To construe the Geetic sloka on the lines of the Upanishad is, besides being the only sound line of construction, fraught with an additional advantage. The struggle for overcoming the tautology of the first line with the second is effectually set at rest, because, if the first line applies to God and the second to the *Jeeva*, there is no question of redundancy at all.

21) वेदाविनाशिनं नित्यं य एनमजमव्ययम् ।  
कथं स पुरुषः पार्थ कं घातयति हन्ति कम् ॥

|           |     |   |
|-----------|-----|---|
| वेद       | ... | knows   |
| अविनाशिनं | ... | (1) not destructible by external causes,<br>(2) undying even in respect of body |
| नित्यम्   | ... | inherently eternal  |
| यः        | ... | whoever   |
| एनं       | ... | (1) <i>Jeeva</i> , or (2) God   |

|           |     |  |
|-----------|-----|--|
| अजं       | ... | unborn   |
| अव्ययम्   | ... | (1) immutable or (2) independent               |
| कथं       | ... | how  |
| सः पुरुषः | ... | (1) that man or, (2) that knower of<br>Brahman |
| पार्थ     | ... | O ! Arjuna                                     |
| कं        | ... | whom   |
| घातयति    | ... | fancies he can cause to kill                   |
| हन्ति     | ... | fanices he kills                               |
| कं        | ... | whom   |

I. *As applying wholly to Jeeva*: "Whoever knows the Jeeva to be indestructible, eternal, unborn, and immutable, how and whom does he think he can cause to kill or kill?" II. *Applying to God*: "Whoever knows God as absolutely indestructible, eternal, unborn and independent, how and whom does such a seer think he can cause to kill or kill? "

This verse presents the converse aspect of the teachings in verse No.19. In the latter verse, two persons were set down as ignorant, viz., (1) he who identifies body with soul thereby taking the latter to be perishable, and (2) he who thinks that man is a free agent to accomplish any task or end. The teaching is not complete unless and until the reverse side is also presented and the characteristic of the wise set forth. Sri Krishna does this in the present verse by pointing out what the wise man thinks under the circumstances. Thus, verse No. 21 is the complement of No. 19, each presenting a partial aspect, and both together constituting a com-

plete presentment of a single point. The intervening verse No.20 is but a quotation of authority from the Upanishad, and does not interfere with the setting of the Geetic verses.

Sankaracharya explains the relation thus: verse 19 denied *to the self* the attributes of being the subject or object of any action. Verse 20 denied *to the self* every kind of movement or change. The present verse states the conclusion. His followers are not evidently quite satisfied with the position that the present is only a statement of the conclusion, for, if verses Nos. 19 and 20 denied between them every conceivable motion, energy, activity and action to the "self", there remained nothing more to be said on the point. Madhusoodana and Neelakanta, therefore, adopt an original line of thought, by pointing out that the clause in verse no.19, नायं हन्ति न हन्यते "He does not kill. He is not killed", consists of two parts, one pointing to the soul being no agent, the other to the soul being no object. Verse No. 20 furnished an exposition of the second point only and explained how the soul can never be an object of action. The present verse (No.21) takes up the other part adverted to and explains the point that the soul is incapable of agency. This reasoning would be flawless, if versé No. was interpreted by these commentators as confined only to the point that the soul can never be an object of action. In the course of elaborate expositions, they then made out, for the soul, a wholesale universal repudiation of action, in any aspect whatsoever; they made out that the soul was unborn, does not endure, does not grow, does not change, does not decay, and does not perish. This wide range of nega-



tion covers the activity of the subject as well as the liability of an object. Hence, there was very little left unsaid which verse No. 21 could take up.

In this, as in several of the preceding verses, there are a few expressions which sound redundant. There is considerable difference among the commentaries, and ingenuity too, in solving the redundancies. But the chief difficulty of the verse seems to lie in the last clause of the second line to which we may, therefore, address ourselves first.

*"How and whom does he cause to kill or kill?"*  
This clause seems to predicate of the seer that he does not kill or cause to kill, for the simple reason that the Jeeva is incapable of destruction. But this reason holds good, even if the swordsman or warrior be an ignorant person. The knowledge or ignorance of the killer does not matter, so long as the victim is always unkillable. The verse obviously says something about the seer to distinguish his thoughts, words, or action, from those of the ignorant. If it says that the seer does not kill, why, forsooth, the non-seer does not kill too, for, seer or non-seer, no one can kill what cannot be killed. Hence the clause in question can't be construed in the superficial sense, but ought to mean something different, if it is to convey sense at all.

Let us turn to the Monists to see what they make out of this clause. They say that the negation contained herein is not of the action of killing, but of action in general. The Shastras are addressed to the ignorant. The scriptural commands of "do and refrain" are to be obeyed only by the ignorant. But the seer visions unity,

and then he has nothing more to do. He forsakes rites and observances, and renounces the world. The verse says that the sage does not *kill or cause to kill*, because, for that matter, he no longer participates in any action whatsoever. Renunciation is his only duty and function. Duty and work are within the province only of the ignorant. Such is Sri Krishna's view, and it is repeatedly urged by Him in this verse and many others. So says Sankaracharya.

Madhusoodana and Neelakanta see a special significance in the use of the causative form, घातयति. They say that Arjuna feared that sin would accrue to himself as the killer, and to Sri Krishna as the abettor, and that the Lord had to reply by exculpating Arjuna, too, from the principal offence. The causative is meant, according to them, to rescue God from the suspected implication. The Lord pleads "I am no abettor and you are no offender for neither of us can do anything. The soul is beyond action."

It is difficult to follow this favourite creed of Monism that the soul is beyond action. It does not will. It does not wish. It does not think. It does not act. It is but the background on which a universe of volition, feeling, thought, and action is superimposed. This line of thought simply draws Arjuna away from his point but does not answer it.

To say that Shastras, are addressed only to the ignorant is a startling proposition. It amounts to a warning that no Mumukshu shall turn to the Shastras; for he has nothing to do with them.

The Monists use a great deal of argument for making out some kind of hostility between Gnana and Karma. What does this antipathy consists in? Light and darkness are hostile. The cat and the mouse are hostile. Knowledge and ignorance are hostile. We understand the incompatibility of these pairs. But why should not the sage be a seer and still do duty for duty's sake, simply to please God? Where is the inherent hostility between wisdom and work? Suka, Janaka, Narada and other sages were engaged in work. Seers as they were, they behaved like men and spread wisdom by their teachings and conduct. It is a dangerous doctrine that an aspirant to Heaven has no duties to fulfill, and that the code of ethics and religion is not binding on him. Sri Krishna is not tired of repeating, throughout the Gita, the common refrain, "do your duty", "do fight," etc etc. Arjuna sought wisdom. He prayed for salvation and the knowledge leading to it. When he prayed for bread why should the Lord give him a stone? If renunciation was the true path, why urge Arjuna, again and again, to turn from renunciation and betake to action and battle?

The notion that Sri Krishna felt the need to exonerate Himself from the charge of abetment, and proceeded to do so by pleading 'not guilty' to any incitement, is very singular. That the Lord repeatedly urged Arjuna to fight is obvious. What is the plea urged in exculpation? "I never asked you to kill." Goodness gracious! He has been doing this times without number. If the truth be "Neither I nor you can act or incite," why not say so, in one word, and shorten the Geeta to a single verse. It is derogatory to the divinity of Sri

Krishna that he blew hot and cold. It is scant justice to Him that he was capable of incurring sin. The true devotee resigns himself into the Lord's hands, and seeks from Him inspiration and guidance. He attributes his own doings and the doings of every one to God's will. True devotion consists in self-surrender in the conviction that God is the true doer in everything.

Thus the theory of the soul being incapable of any action is incomprehensible. That even God is utterly inefficient to act is all the more so.

Ramanujacharya reads the clause, "*He does not cause to kill, He does not kill,*" to mean that the seer does not grieve like the ignorant. No doubt, neither the seer nor the boor can kill the soul as the soul is unkillable. But the difference between the two lies in their mental attitude. One is calm and grieves not, while the other goes into hysterics of grief over the occurrence of a bodily death.

Sri Madhwa understands the verse in the same line of thought. The seer who realises the eternality of the Jeeva, does not think that he kills any soul, or causes any soul to be killed, whereas the ignorant indulges in this notion. In the alternative interpretation, the seer who has known God as the true dispenser of destinies, does not arrogate to himself the act of killing or causing to be killed. He is placid and calm, relying on God as the true source of every deed.

"How does that person kill? how does he cause to kill? whom does he cause to kill? and whom does he kill?" is a forcible way of presenting the impossibility.



"How" negatives the weapon or instrument wherewith to kill; whom negatives the victim; "that person" emphasizes the inconsistency between his knowledge or wisdom, and any notion that he kills or causes to kill. The causative implies, he cannot get any one, however powerful, to kill for him. All this is an emphatic way of impressing the immortality and immutability of the Atman. Some things are hard to die; but they suffer death if a suitable weapon be found, or a sufficiently powerful Hercules be hired or secured. Ramanujacharya lays stress on कम् 'whom', and points out that this is meant to show that, though you search out all the worlds and examine every soul in the kingdom of Gods, men, animals, vegetables and minerals, moveable or immoveable, you cannot light upon a soul which is mutable or mortal.

The standpoints of the three schools may for one moment be summed up.

Monists : The soul is an inert mass of inaction. It does not and cannot act. He who realizes this is a Seer. His duty is renunciation of action.

Ramanujacharya : Souls are, every one of them, immortal and immutable. None can kill any soul. The seer knows this and grieves not. The ignorant knows it not and grieves.

Madhwa : Souls are eternal. The seer knows it and never thinks he can kill or cause to kill. He does not yield to the delusion of the ignorant spoken of in verse 19.

In comparing these three stand-points, we see that Ramanujacharya and Madhwa agree largely. The context relates to the soul and its eternality from verse No. 11 onwards. The inertness of the soul seems hardly to the point. Arjuna's grief is the occasion for the teaching. A reply, that takes note of the grief and dispels it, is to the point. That there is but one soul in all bodies, that that soul is inert and actionless, that it is incapable of willing, feeling, knowing, and acting, cannot allay Arjuna's grief and cannot induce him to resume his bow. If the duty of the sage is to renounce, Arjuna will surely take the hint, and become confirmed in his resolve not to engage in action. Hence, the present verse must be construed as but a link in the chain of reasoning which harps on the immortality of the soul. There is, thus, every ground to prefer the exposition of Ramanujacharya and Sri Madhwa to the effect that the pivot of the teaching turns on this central lesson.

Ramanujacharya however is too rigid in confining the lessons only to this central point. In doing so, he encounters difficulties of redundancy not easily overcome. Sri Madhwa improves on this central idea by pointing out how various expressions in this context are truly applicable only to God. He adopts a double line of construction in respect to several of the verses, and the appropriateness of the reference to God has been pointed out in various connections. The present verse is a forcible example of this appropriateness. Applying it to Jeeva alone, as Ramanujacharya does, and Sri Madhwa does too as one of two alternative expositions, we see that the resulting sense is not as sweet and significant as when the verse is read with refer-

ence to God. He who knows the souls to be immortal, is not misled by a death into the fear that the soul has been killed. This, no doubt, is an attack of Charwaka and materialism. But applied to God, we derive the great lesson that He is the true doer and that man is but a little agent with only such freedom as God confers on him. Arjuna may engage in battle and kill. But if he be wise, he will not run away with the notion that, in compassing ends, apparently brought on by him, he is not the real doer but only a tool of God.

This lesson is enveloped in a truly religious spirit. It is a lesson that can console him, that he can lay to heart, and practise. It is so unlike the teaching of souls being beyond the pale of energy, activity and action, which drives sages to Sanyasa, and which, the Monists add, Arjuna was not fit to practise. If Arjuna was yet in the plane of ignorance, and was not qualified to be मुमुक्षु or ज्ञानी why, in Heaven's name, should the Lord not suit his teachings to his pupil and why should he throw pearls before swine?

To understand the verb "kill" in this context in the ordinary sense of depriving a person of life, is quite admissible. Ramanujacharya does it. But to confine it to that sense alone seems, unnecessarily, to narrow the scope of the lessons taught. Sankaracharya reads "action in general" being symbolized by the word: Sri Madhwa adopts the narrow sense as well as the comprehensive one. In the latter sense, it negatives to the Jeeva not action in general, but *independent* action of every sort and kind.

Turning to the four adjectives in the first line of this verse, commentators have construed them each in the sense appropriate to their own schools.

Monists, for instance, understand वेद to mean the realization of unity with Brahman. This is, of course, not its literal meaning.

अविनाशिनम् and नित्यम् are obviously redundant. The former word is, according to Monists, equivalent to "the absolute", "the real", "what does not disappear on the approach of knowledge, like the snake-in-the rope". This again is a technical interpretation which other schools cannot assent to. This particular couple of synonyms has occurred more than once. Ramanujacharya and Sri Madhwa understand one of them to denote absence of death by extraneous cause, and the other to denote inherent deathlessness. This furnishes the key throughout, wherever Sri Krishna uses them as coupled adjuncts. अज and अव्यय look like a technical couple used frequently as epithets of God. Literally, they, of course, apply to the Jeeva also, in the sense of "unborn and immutable." Sri Madhwa sees God's absolute independence, specially denoted and connoted by अव्यय. Now and again, in Geeta, we come across this couple of adjectives applied to God.

'मूढोयं नाभिजानाति लोको मामजमव्ययं' is an instance in point. If the words signify no more than the sense of "unborn and immutable", there would be no special merit or virtue in using them as adjuncts of God. This



confirms Sri Madhwa's view that these adjectives are primarily descriptions of God.

Commentators have spent much ingenuity to elucidate the relation, by way of causal connection, between the four epithets. One says that नित्यत्व follows from the epithet अविनाशित्व. Another says नित्यत्व is deduced from अजत्व. A third one says that it is based on अव्ययत्व. A great deal of permutation and combination has been indulged in, to get over these apparent redundancies.

22) वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय

नवानि गृह्णाति नरोपराणि ।

तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णा-

न्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही ॥

|          |     |            |
|----------|-----|------------|
| वासांसि  | ... | clothes    |
| जीर्णानि | ... | worn-out   |
| यथा      | ... | just as    |
| विहाय    | ... | abandoning |
| नवानि    | ... | new ones   |
| गृह्णाति | ... | takes up   |
| नरः      | ... | a man      |
| अपराणि   | ... | others     |

|          |     |                   |
|----------|-----|-------------------|
| तथा      | ... | so                |
| शरीराणि  | ... | bodies            |
| बिहाय    | ... | abandoning        |
| जीर्णानि | ... | worn-out          |
| अन्यानि  | ... | others            |
| संयाति   | ... | obtains; takes up |
| नवानि    | ... | new ones          |
| देही     | ... | the embodied soul |

"Just as a man, after casting off worn-out clothes, takes up others that are new, so also, the embodied soul, after abandoning worn-out bodies, obtains others that are new."

Verse No.13 introduced the subject of the transmigration of souls. It pointed out that, just as a person passes from infancy to youth and from youth to old age, so likewise, he passes after death into a new body. The present verse deals with the same subject and adduces other examples. The passage from infancy to youth and from youth to old age is gradual and imperceptible. The difference between stage and stage is not so well and sharply marked off as to appeal to ordinary minds. A more striking illustration might bring the lesson home to ordinary people. The man who could see clearly the analogy between the various stages of a man's growth; and various new births attained from time to time by the soul, was complimented in verse 13 as a very clever man (धीरः=धीमान्). Metempsychosis being one of the most important tenets of Hinduism, the lesson is being im-

pressed on us with other and clearer illustrations. We are now told that the attainment of a new life after death, takes place, just like the wearing of new garments when the old ones are worn out and cast away. The wearer continues the same. He wears clothes so long as they are serviceable and casts them off as soon as they become useless, and chooses other garments suited to him. In this proceeding he does not give way to grief. On the other hand, he feels even a glow of pleasure at the acquisition of fresh garments. These points, if remembered in connection with the deaths and births of the animal kingdom, will deprive deaths of most of their sting. Let us try and study the analogy, a bit.

Let us realize the first great lesson of the analogy that we cannot help garments becoming old and worn-out. It is a law of nature over which we have no control. Just so, we have no control over the decay of our bodies. The change occurs in spite of every medical invention and device. No amount of care or grief will alter this law of material decay. Worn-out garments and worn out bodies *must* be cast off, and there is no alternative. This renders grief a waste of energy, and wise men refrain from it.

In Santi Parva, is given another example bringing home the separateness and disconnection of the body and soul, even more forcibly.

यथा हि पुरुषश्शालां पुनस्संप्रविशेन्नवाम् ।  
 एवं जीवश्शरीराणि तानि तानि प्रपद्यते ॥  
 देहान्पुराणानुत्सृज्य नवान् संप्रतिपद्यते ॥

Which means "just as a person goes into a new house, the Jeeva enters a new body after evacuating old ones."

The verse seems gently to hint that not only is there no occasion for grief and pain, but that there is even reason for joy. The new garments give the wearer a gleam of pleasure especially if they suit well. The new body that we get into is, generally speaking, worthier than the old one, and it ought to be an occasion for joy and self-gratulation. This point has to be grasped with clearness. We should convince ourselves that every man is the architect of his own destiny. This is the fundamental position of the law of Karma. Man is what desire first makes of him, and then, what action makes of him. Desire, thought and action, shape his character and determine his destiny. The influence of these three is forcibly described in Brihadaranyaka, Chandogya, Santi Parva (vide Sanskrit passages and quotations). Chapter VIII, verse 6, the Geeta, declares that whatever object or state a man thinks of and looks to at the point of death, to that thing or state he invariably wings his way. This fundamental law of evolution, that, under the guidance of God, every man works out his destiny, teaches us that we get what we have longed for and deserved.

As we are incessantly sowing seeds for future births, there is no doubt that we shall be born again until, of course, the *distant* emancipation which may or may not occur. The 10<sup>th</sup> Skandha of Bhagavata compares the journey of man from one body to another, to the crawl of the grass-worm which first seizes the new



foot-hold before giving up the last one. Thus, every soul prepares the way, chooses the kind of life he or she shall enter on, and then casts off the old worn-out body.

In this connection, the critic may interpose an objection that it is not old and worn-out bodies alone that die, and that the statistics of infant mortality and middle age mortality disprove this. But the word जीर्ण 'worn-out' is meant to convey the sense that when the particular body has fulfilled its purpose and destiny and is no longer helpful to the Jeeva in compassing further ends, it is dropped away as an impediment, though, to on-lookers, it may seem yet young and fresh.

As a general law, it would appear that evolution takes the Jeeva through an ascending series of bodies more and more improved. From simpler to more complex life, we travel, as we gather experience in each life, and crave for progress and development, moral and spiritual, in better-equipped embodiments and environments. But retrogression is not impossible, within the limits of the God-gifted free-will. We may think, speak and act, wrongly, and pave the way to moral and spiritual fall here and hereafter. In understanding the various epithets in this apparently simple sloka, the reader may note नवानि (= *new*) and अपराणि and अन्यानि (= *others*). One would have thought new clothes or bodies are, of course, other than the old ones, without being told so. It is hardly necessary to use both expressions "new" and "other". Either of them would and could convey the desired sense. Madhusoodana thinks that the expressions, though somewhat redundant, are used for greater effect. Sankarananda explains, by point-

ing out, that *new* ones may not be necessarily similar in shape, strength, and other characteristics, and the contrast is meant to be emphasized by the word "other" in a manner not derivable from the word "new" alone. It is clear that अपर and अन्य meaning "other" or "different" emphasizes the difference between the old and the new stages, the illustration based on infancy, youth, and age being deemed not sufficiently clear to impress this point. The new body will, in addition to being new, be a better one capable of fulfilling higher purposes in the evolution. Hence, there seems to be no redundancy in using both the words "new" and "different". It has been pointed out that, just as new garments give joy, death, which means the acquisition of fresh life, ought also to be an occasion for joy.

Desikar's exposition of this point objects that newness by itself ought not to be a source of pleasure. A king who lived in a palace cannot rejoice to exchange his royal dwelling for a prison. An old silk-cloth is better than a new gunny. Yet, this verse points to the joy of acquiring a fresh body. Hence, it should be restricted in application, and should not be understood as a general proposition applicable to all souls. Thus arguing, this commentator makes out that the persons, herein spoken of, are only those good souls engaged righteously in the Mahabharata war. These are sure to acquire better bodies in future births.

Madhusoodana answers the same objection by making the statement apply to Bheeshma and others who are sure to be lifted to higher and higher births in future. They are thin and worn-out by age and penance. It is a service that Arjuna does by knocking off

the old worn-out constitutions, and enabling them to pass on to higher lives. Thus there is room for joy.

It is doubtful whether the verse is rightly restricted either to the righteous soldiers of the war, or merely to revered persons like Bheeshma. It is to be noted that the verse speaks only of new and different garments and bodies. There is nothing specifically said about the joy in relation to the new acquisitions. But joy is generally speaking, not out of place even if meant by the verse. What is new, very often, gives pleasure. A man chooses new garments, such only, as suit him better. No prince or peasant chooses the prison or the gunny in this sense. There is joy in achieving what we desire. The fresh birth is what we have desired, and what we have qualified ourselves for and what we have deserved, progressive or retrograde, as it may be, it ought to be pleasurable in so far as it means the achievement of what we wanted, and as it is suitable to us to move forward in the evolution and equip ourselves with the experiences of fresh discipline. That we get a substitute, that that substitute is new and fresh, that we wished for it and worked for it, that it ought to be better, presumably, and that, generally speaking it is so, are sufficient grounds for Sri Krishna to generalise, as He has done, that no soul ought to bemoan the loss of old bodies and every one may feel joy at the acquisition.

Hindus are, ordinarily, so familiar and saturated with notions about reincarnation, that they may not often realize the full significance of it. It is a theory opening a *vista* of evolution in the spiritual plane, more

glorious than the one unfolded by Darwin's Heredity. If ever God will let us see it, the history of our evolution in the past and of our prospects in the future will be a marvellous panorama of progress from ignorance to knowledge, from feebleness to strength, from moral lapses to virtuous impulses and from ever-imperfect to ever fuller life. It adds materially to the dignity of humanity that every Jeeva builds his own destiny and works his way onwards, amongst infinite facilities and possibilities of development, not confined to a single birth, but extended over innumerable births from beginningless times.

23) नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः ।  
न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः ॥

|                    |                                       |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| न एनं छिन्दन्ति    | ... do not cut him (Jeeva or God)     |
| शस्त्राणि          | ... weapons                           |
| न एनं दहति         | ... does not burn him (Jeeva or God)  |
| पावकः              | ... fire                              |
| न च एनं क्लेदयन्ति | ... and do not wet him (Jeeva or God) |
| आपः                | ... waters                            |
| न शोषयति           | ... does not dry                      |
| मारुतः             | ... the wind                          |

"Weapons do not cut him (Jeeva or God); fire does not burn him (Jeeva or God); and waters do not wet him (Jeeva or God); wind does not dry (him)."



Inherently, the Jeeva is unkillable. Looked at as a reflected image of God, he does not die by the disappearance (1) of the original of which he is a reflection, or (2) of the reflecting medium, or (3) of the contact between them. He is thus deathless by his inherent nature and owing to the absence of extrinsic killing causes. This should, ordinarily, suffice to exclude every notion of possible death. But extraordinary causes may still be conceived, powerful enough to annihilate anything. In the sacrifice of Daksha, narrated in Vth Skandha of Bhagavata, Siva tried every possible means and weapon to kill Daksha, and failed. He resorted then to a peculiar *yoga*, and with its aid, beheaded Daksha. Though Jeeva may be deathless and though all ordinary causes are brushed aside as inefficient, still to make assurance doubly sure, a clear pronouncement as to the inefficiency of any agency to compass his death is not out of place. Sri Krishna therefore says, weapons, fire, water and wind cannot do him damage.

Geeta Bhashya renders this verse as applicable to Jeeva, and Tatparya applies it to God. एनम् 'Him' therefore is used in a double sense. The inefficiency of the elements to affect चेतनाः (animate beings) applies to Jeeva and to God.

We may note the triple repetition of 'एनम्' in this verse, while, for grammatical requirements, a single use would have sufficed. In delivering the speech, Sri Krishna would probably have touched or pointed at Arjuna by a suitable gesticulation, and laid stress on the word एनम् as denoting the soul dwelling within

Arjuna's person. The triple pronouncement is to make the emphasis strong, and to accenuate the deathlessness out and out. When applying the verse to God, Sri Krishna would probably have pointed to Himself by a gesture, and emphasized एनम्. By doing so and uttering it three times, the sense is conveyed that God is the same perfect Being in all His myriads of forms and incarnations. The notion that some Avatars are perfect, while others are imperfect, is quite wrong, though some important schools of Indian thought have adopted it. Sri Krishna says, He is immutable, unburnable, unwettable, and undryable, whatever incarnation He might take.

Though weapons, such as the bow, sword, and mace, are referred to, the expressions used symbolize the elements of Earth, water, fire and air. The Ether is not usually spoken of as an instrument of destruction because of its pervasion and subtleness. Hence, words have been used to embrace the first four great elements of nature.

Ramanujacharya understands the verse as an elucidation of verse No.17, and especially of the word ततम्, which means "extremely subtle". The soul can't be killed, for it is subtler than the subtlest weapon, so that the latter cannot penerate and cut it. To throw further light on the point, concrete examples have been given by excluding every instrument, earthy, watery, fiery, or gaseous.

It has been already shown in the notes on verse No.17, that 'तत' if rendered into "subtle" creates difficulties, and the sense conveyed is then not satisfactory.

Adwaitic commentators pursue their own thread and read this verse as explaining, further, the position that the soul is actionless. When an image is reflected in a water-pot, the image dies when the pot is broken and the water scattered away; so the objector urges, if a body is cut down, the Atman, therein embodied, dies away. To this objection, the answer is furnished that no sword, fire, water or wind, touches the Atman. If the pot and the water disappear, the Akasa or ethereal space that the pot enclosed is not affected thereby. Such is the Atman. Neelakanta quotes a vedic passage which says :-

“The Brahman is not long, not gross, not atomic, is beyond sound, touch, colour, taste or smell, and is immutable.” He understands the Geeta verse in question as a paraphrase of the vedic ideas. What is cuttable is gross; the Atman is not gross and is therefore uncuttable. The earthy atom takes colour and shape from combustion; but the Atman is not atomic and cannot therefore catch fire. What can be touched can alone be wetted. The soul is beyond touch and therefore water cannot moisten it. What is moist can alone be dried; hence the soul cannot be dried either.

This is ingenious, the chain of reasoning, why the soul is uncuttable, incombustible, unwettable, and undryable. But the scriptural text does not bear on our present point, for it speaks of Brahman as being beyond the ken of human senses, while the Geetic context is dealing with one specific point alone that the soul (Jeeva or the Supreme) is deathless.

Whether the Geetic verse applies to God or not, it undoubtedly applies to the Jeeva; and he is atomic (see

Vedanta Sootras अणुश्च etc. Neelakanda assumes that the soul is not atomic, and bases non-combustibility on that notion.

Hence, understanding the verse as applying to Jeeva alone as Ramanujacharya thinks, or to Brahman alone as monists take it, or to both as Sri Madhwa holds, the sense meant to be conveyed is the *utter* inefficiency of any instrumentality to damage or annihilate that *Being*. The Vedic text, however, is not addressed to this point, but is meant to teach the lesson that God is beyond the cognition of human senses, and therefore unknowable.

24) अच्छेद्योऽयमदाह्योऽयमक्लेद्योऽशोष्य एव च ।  
नित्यस्सर्वगतस्थाणुरचलोऽयं सनातनः ॥

|                  |                               |
|------------------|-------------------------------|
| अच्छेद्यः        | ... uncuttable                |
| अयम्             | ... He (Jeeva)                |
| अदाह्यः          | ... unburnable                |
| अयं              | ... He                        |
| अक्लेद्यः        | ... unwettable                |
| अशोष्यः          | ... undryable                 |
| एव               | ... only, altogether          |
| च                | ... and                       |
| नित्यः, सर्वगतः, | ... He is similar to the ever |
| स्थाणुः          | "all-pervasive" God           |



|        |     |   |
|--------|-----|---|
| अचलः   | ... | He is similar to God who is unaffected by material motion |
| अयं    | ... | He  |
| सनातनः | ... | similar to Him who is known only by the word              |

“He is altogether uncuttable, unburnable, unwettable, and undryable. He is reflection of the ever all-pervasive God, of Him that is unmoved by material causes, and of Him that is known only by the Word (Vedas)”.

The second line is also construed thus:-

|               |     |  |
|---------------|-----|--|
| नित्यः        | ... | always; (qualifies the verb)                     |
| सर्वगतस्थाणुः | ... | an atom resting in the Omnipresent               |
| अचलः          | ... | never changing from that position                |
| अयं           | ... | He; the Jeeva                                    |
| सनातनः        | ... | Bound by scriptural injunctions “do and refrain” |

“He is an atom resting always in the Omnipresent, never displaced from that position, and bound by the vedic laws of ‘do and refrain’.”

Verse No. 23 said “weapons do not cut *him*, fire does not burn *him*, waters do not wet him, and wind does not dry *him*”. The antecedant of the pronoun may be either *God* or the Jeeva. If it be *God*, Sri Krishna means to say, pointing to his *physical person*, that even *that* is not affected by any instruments of destruction. If Bheeshma should think that his sharp arrow could

wound Sri Krishna, it was a delusion. If Jeeva be the antecedent, the spirit, it is said, is not cut, burnt, wetted or dried.

The present tense used in verse 23 does not exclude the possibility of future damage. Hence the verse under comment declares that the Jeeva is incapable, at all times, of suffering any harm from these causes. There is true force in construing verse 23 as applying to God and verse 24 as applying similar epithets to Jeeva. "I am not cut, burnt, wetted or dried" says the Lord, "nor are you cuttable, consumable, wettable, or dryable". The reason is given in the 2<sup>nd</sup> line of (verse 24) that man is the image of the Maker (बिंबप्रति-बिंबभावः) It may be noted that every word in the 2<sup>nd</sup> line seems to offer difficulty. If 'नित्य' is meant to say that the Jeeva is eternal, it is superfluous. The same truth has been stated previously, in the same words, or language of identical meaning. Let us note that verse 18 contains नित्यस्य, verse 20, 'नित्यः' and verse 21, नित्यम्. Of language identical in sense, we have instances in verse 12, नभविष्यामः (= we shall not cease to be), verse 16, नाभावो विद्यते सतः (=the soul never dies), as rendered by Sankaracharya and others, verse 18, अनाशिनः = (of the immortal), verse 20 नम्रियते = (does not die). भूत्वा भविता न (= Having been born, does not disappear i.e. undying), verse 21, अविनाशिनम् (= the immortal). Thus having said the same thing in verses 12, 16, 18, 20 and 21, in the same words, or similar language, why repeat the word नित्य again now in verse 24?

Sankaracharya has a short paragraph on this point. He says, in effect, that Vasudeva takes occasion to repeat Himself, as the subject is one difficult to grasp. This means that the redundancy is true and has been resorted to advisedly by the Teacher. He says, in effect, that Sri Krishna follows the methods of the ordinary school-master, and teaches, in a dozen verses or more, what could be compressed in a single verse, and has in fact been in verse 20. This explanation does not commend itself to Sri Madhwa, for, we see on a closer reasoning, that the redundancy is more apparent than real. Verse 12 "nor shall we cease to be" is the first statement of the proposition. In verse 16, नाभावो विद्यते सतः refers to God's eternality, not Jeeva's. It also means that evil or unhappiness can never result from good. Verse 18 says, "These bodies are liable to end, still he is eternal." The occasion arose, in the context, from the statement as to the mortality of bodies. Verse 20 is only a quotation from Kathopanishad as authority for the lessons already taught. If it contains, in a condensed form, all the truths so far taught, it adds to the merit of the exposition, rather than detracts from it, because a cited authority ought to cover every point in question and serve the purpose and object in resorting to it and quoting it. In verse 21, नित्यम् is not meant to be a predication of eternality. How the seer views and acts with the knowledge of the soul's immortality it is the chief predication in that verse. The "immortality" comes in, therefore, in a very incidental manner.

Now remains the verse under comment in which नित्य occurs again as a predicate. Sri Madhwa says that this word is not a predication at all. Nor does it refer to

Jeeva being immortal. Firstly नित्य is an adjective qualifying सर्वगतत्व (*omnipresence*) and means that God is *always* all-pervasive. Secondly, this word, taken with the next, conveys another meaning too. सर्वगतस्थाणु is a compound word meaning, he is an अणु "atom" resting on the omnipresent. The word नित्य is an adverb qualifying the verb "resting", so that the meaning is that the Jeeva is *always* dependent on God.

Thus, in Sri Madhwa's view, there is no repetition of words or ideas, and Sri Krishna has proceeded from one new point to another, answering objections and impressing fresh aspects.

Let us take the next word, सर्वगतः. If it is an independent statement of the Divine immanence, it is a repetition of 'येन सर्वमिदं ततम्' in verse 17. But there is a difference, because नित्यत्व qualifies here the pervasiveness, so that, the *never-ceasing* immanence of God is what is emphasized.

Sankarananda understands सर्वगत to mean the perfection of Brahman. Having thus exalted Him, the annotator adds at once that He is actionless and motionless. सर्वगत is a happy expression which may mean, (1) He is omniscient, (2) He is the creator and maintainer of all, (3) He is the destroyer, (4) He is the Ruler and author of Jeevas, samsara, and ignorance, (5) He is the giver of knowledge and (6) He is the goal. These meanings are derivable etymologically from the parts and composition of this compound. Let us therefore stick



to the exalted sense which it conveys, and not degrade God by the epithets स्थाणु, अचल and सनातन.

Next, as to स्थाणु and अचल, Monists catch at these expressions, evidently with joy, and hang thereon their dogmas about Brahman being devoid of activity and motion. It is an illusion, they say, that God is a doer or creator. He is a fixture in space, a veritable pillar that does not nod at all.

Madhusoodana and Neelakanta read the five epithets of the 2<sup>nd</sup> line to be an emphatic repudiation of every kind of vibration, motion, action, activity or change. Brahman is सनातन because He is *ever* the same, unlimited in space and time, and unlimited as the 'absolute', being undifferentiated in Himself (judged as having parts) and from all else similar or dissimilar. How is this "absoluteness," clear? —because, the verse says, He is नित्य, सर्वगत, स्थाणु and अचल. The first of these shows Brahman is not born; the second, that he is not portable; the third, that he is not mutable; and the fourth, that he cannot be acted on (not cleansable). What is transient is born; what is limited in space may be carried; what is not a fixture may change like milk turning into curd; and what is liable to affection may catch attributes, like a mirror catching dust, and has to be cleansed of the adhesion. All these are negated of Brahman.

The reader may turn to some of the old verses especially to verses 19 and 21 and glance through the Monist's notes. The inactivity of God was there dis-

cussed threadbare and the commentators read into the language of those verses every conceivable notion of activity and change as denied to Brahman. It is hopeless to differentiate the negations in the present verse from those that have gone before. In verse 17, अव्ययस्य = immutable, verse 20 शाश्वत = constant, were also construed similarly.

The explanation of Sankaracharya is that the subject is a difficult one to grasp and hence the need for repetition. Sri Madhwa thinks that अचल is a negative attribute similar to अप्रहर्ष, अनानन्द etc., and scores of other negative attributes met with in the scriptures. Monists agree that the latter expressions negative *material* qualities to Brahman. अचल means likewise "devoid of *material* affection". He does not move as matter does. The physical laws of nature do not bind Him. In this view, God is saved from the position of being an inert pillar, an unconscious, actionless, something, as bad as, if not worse than, a block of stone or wood.

Monists make out that Brahman is स्थाणु in fact, and that whatever activity, such as creatorship, is attributed to Him, is an illusion. That He is स्थाणु is real: That He is a कर्ता in unreal, due to माया.

Sri Madhwa has a long note on this point and quotes numerous *Pramanas* (for which the reader is referred to Geeta Bhashya). The theory that God is not the creator, maintainer, and destroyer, and that He is incapable of knowledge, will and action, is subversive

of His greatness. Whether it be philosophy or no philosophy, let us prefer to think of Him as the cause of all causes, the real doer and enjoyer – the only independent actor. He is, though an actor and doer, a स्थाणु, an unchangeable Being withal. Should there be any contradiction, Bhagavata comes to the rescue, and says that His greatness is inscrutable. He is great as well as small. He is fixed as well as moving. Let us not carry our puny notions of logic to test His attributes. Let us never endeavour to measure Him with our short and imperfect rods and tapes.

If the divisions of the words be, as shown on page 209, meaning that Jeeva is an अणु 'atom' resting in Sarvagata the omnipresent, there is no need at all to dwell on the analogy of the pillar. The word अचल has also been construed, in an alternative sense, to denote the Jeeva never getting dislodged from dependence. In this meaning too, there arises no need to refer to the theory of Brahman's inertness. There is a remarkable passage in Vishnu Purana which throws light on the verse under comment. It runs as follows:—

नित्यं सर्वगते विष्णावणुर्जीवो व्यवस्थितः

न चास्य तदधीनत्वं हेतुतोपि विचाल्यते ॥

निषेधविधिपात्रत्वात्सनातन इति स्मृतः ॥

"The atomic Jeeva is ever fixed in the omnipresent Vishnu. His dependence is never shaken by any cause. He is "Sanatana" because he is subject to the laws of 'refrain and do'. This passage is a virtual inter-

pretation of सर्वगतस्थाणु, अचल, and सनातन. It is conclusive confirmation of Sri Madhwa's commentary as set out in Geeta Tatparya.

A word more about सनातन. Vedanta Desikar says, it means "beginningless". So says Sankaracharya and Sankarananda. But verse 12, Geeta, began with this lesson that Jeeva is unborn न त्वेवाहं जातु नासम्. Verse 20 uses the words अजः 'पुराणः'; verse 21 uses अजम्; these redundancies have to be explained. According to Sri Madhwa, verse 12 is the first statement on the subject. Verse 20 is a citation of Veda, and the word पुराण denotes the Jeeva's transmigration from birth to birth and not his beginninglessness. Verse 21 does not *predicate* अजत्व, but is incidentally used in telling us how and what the seer thinks and does after assimilating the lesson of the soul's beginningless existence. Lastly, in the present verse, सनातन does not convey the same idea as was done before. It means, as already explained, "known by Vedas" or "subject to Vedas", according as the allusion is to God or to Jeeva. The passage from Vishnu Purana, 3<sup>rd</sup> line, establishes the soundness of Sri Madhwa's interpretation.

The reader will find that all the Monist annotators uniformly explain the relation of the five epithets in the second line of the verse saying, that each succeeding word is based on the reason furnished by the next preceding one. Brahman is omnipresent, because He is eternal. He is fixed, because he is all-pervasive. He is motionless, or because of all the four preceding attributes. As to this logical sequence, it has to be ob-



served that the invariable co-existence of eternality and omnipresence is disputed by many a school of Indian philosophy including that of Sri Madhwa. Jeeva is atomic. still he is eternal. The Nyaya school regards परमाणु as eternal. Ramanujacharya holds Jeevas to be अणु atomic. There is no special reason for the dogma that that alone is eternal which pervades the Universe.

An Adwaitic commentator, Venkatanatha by name, has severly criticised Sri Madhwa's annotation. He thinks it absurd that (सर्वगतस्थाणु) should be regarded as a single compound word which, if split, conveys the meaning that the Jeeva is an atomic unit resting on the omnipresent. It is a dogma of Monists that what is atomic cannot be eternal. They do not believe in Jeeva being atomic. This author says that in a work called Vajrapanjara he has demolished the theory of the Jeevatma being atomic.

The Brahma Sutras have devoted a special section (Adhikarana) to this subject. Sri Madhwa and Ramanujacharya think that the point established therein is the atomicity in question. Sankaracharya has brushed aside a large number of the aphorisms on the subject as presenting only the objector's view (पूर्वपक्ष). Dr. Thibaut the well-known translator of Sankara Bhashya, has pointed out in a lucid preface how Sankaracharya's view is not justified by the language of the aphorisms rightly construed under well-established canons. This is testimony of a European savant whose unbiassed and dispassionate opinion ought to be of weight.

Critic Venkatanatha assumes that the only way of understanding the 2<sup>nd</sup> line of verse 24 and the first line of verse 25 is to regard every epithet found therein as furnishing a syllogistic reason for the affirmations in the first line of verse 24, *viz.*, immutability, and the rest. Proceeding on this assumption, he argues that, as Sri Madhwa's annotation does not lend support to this view, the first and second lines of verse 24, turn out to be a disconnected and illogical blabber (असंबद्धप्रलापः). To this criticism the reply is very easy. In the first place, it is a pure assumption that the 2<sup>nd</sup> line is illogical unless it is related to the first as furnishing the middle term of the syllogism. Verse 23 taught us that God is uncuttable, unburnable, unwettable and undryable, even as to His body. Verse 24, first line, extends these attributes to the Jeeva also. The doubt arises from this similarity between God and man whether they are equal in all respects. The second line hastens to dispel this doubt by pointing out that the Jeeva is an atom ever dependent on the omnipresent and fettered by laws. The second line is thus perfectly intelligible. The critic says that the second line of verse 24 comes into conflict with the second line of verse 25 where the conclusion of the whole teaching is set out. Arjuna is told there not to grieve, What has the dependence of the Jeeva to do with this conclusion, the critic asks. Here, again the answer is obvious. What cannot be helped should be endured. As all Jeevas are helpless atoms dependent on God. Arjuna is asked not to grieve. because he is no free agent in fighting or desisting from it. Emancipation being at the disposal of a merciful God, Arjuna is asked to trust in Him and thereby rise, not alone above the agonies of the im-

pending battle, but above the agonies of birth and death altogether.

Our critic presses yet another point. He charges Sri Madhwa with inconsistency in saying that verse 17 speaking of Universal Pervasion applies to God, whereas the second line of the verse under notice (verse 24) refers to the atomic Jeeva. The inconsistency noticed is purely imaginary. From verse 12 onwards up to verse 25, reference has been made now to the Jeeva, now to Iswara, and now to both, according as the exigencies of the teaching required. Ramanujacharya harps on a mistaken consistency and twists some of the verses so as to make every one apply to Jeeva alone. With Monists, who recognise no distinction between God and man, the question does not arise as to which verse applies to whom. Sri Madhwa points out that God is frequently referred to, and very appropriately too, in various contexts. Hence the circumstance that verse 17 was rendered in a particular way does not force a similar construction for No.24.

Last, not least, is the critic's final shot. He asks, why torture texts into far-fetched twistings, and why refuse to understand plain words in a plain sense? We do not concede for a moment that the words सर्वगतस्थाणु, अचल and सनातन have been construed in a far-fetched manner. Secondly, this critic has, purposely or inadvertently, overlooked the Vishnu Purana passage quoted by Sri Madhwa which forms the basis of his rendering. That passage annotates these identical words in the same sense. Thirdly, the so-called plain words in a plain sense led us into senseless tautology,

as has been pointed out already. Hence, the apparent meaning had to be set aside, and a search made into the depths, to discover the hidden sense, and this is what has been done.

25) अव्यक्तोऽयमचिन्त्योयमविकार्योयमुच्यते ।  
तस्मादेवं विदित्वैनं नानुशोचितुमर्हसि ॥

|              |                                     |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| अव्यक्तः     | ... unmanifest                      |
| अयम्         | ... is He                           |
| अचिन्त्यः    | ... inconceivable                   |
| अयम्         | ... is He                           |
| अविकार्यः    | ... immutable                       |
| अयम्         | ... is He                           |
| उच्यते       | ... said to be                      |
| तस्मात्      | ... therefore                       |
| एवम्         | ... thus                            |
| विदित्वा     | ... having known                    |
| एनं          | ... God and the Jeeva               |
| न अनुशोचितुं | ... you should not grieve or suffer |
| अर्हसि       |                                     |

"Unmanifest is He; Inconceivable is He, immutable is He; such He is called. Therefore, having known Him thus, you should not grieve or suffer."

The verse points to some one as "He," and commentators disagree about the antecedent. Sri Madhwa



takes it to refer to the omnipresent (सर्वगत) in the preceding verse. If the Jeeva rest ever on the omnipresent, the query arises why he is not known and realized as the upholding shelter and refuge. The reply is that He is unmanifest. Does He then never manifest Himself? Is He not visioned by the devout? Yes, He is still unmanifest. Human efforts unveil Him, but He may discover Himself out of grace, for His power is inconceivable (अचिन्त्य). and immutable अविकार्य.

The reader may note अयं (=“He”) repeated three times. The repetition conveys emphasis, and impresses the lesson that whatever incarnation or form God may take, He is still the same unmanifest, inscrutable, and immutable Being.

The second line concludes the line of thought so far pursued. Jeeva is eternal; God is great and is the true dispenser. The Jeeva rests in Him, and is His image, and simply does His bidding. Desire and attachment account for sensuous joys and woes and, by renouncing them, the conquest of the senses is reached. Therefore, says Sri Krishna, “Know the position and eternality of the Jeeva and also the greatness of God. This knowledge saves you from the cares of the immediate future and the throes of Samsara too, in the end”.

In trying to make a comparative study, we may refer to the view of Ramanujacharya, first before entering on the intricate tangle of Advaitic expositions. The verse speaks of the Unmanifest, the Unthinkable, and the Unchangeable. Ramanujacharya says that Jeevatma is thus described. The soul is so different

from the non-soul. By whatever instruments of knowledge, matter is proved or cognised, by them the soul is not proved or cognised. The senses, inference and speech, disclose matter to us. But the soul is cognised only by Self-consciousness, the principle of 'I-ness'. Hence it is said, the soul is described as unmanifest, unthinkable and unchangeable. The argument may be sound enough so far as logic goes. It lays stress on the fact that the soul is soul and matter is matter and the twain is not interchangeable. It also points to the proof of each being absolutely different, in kind and quality, from that of the other. Granting all this, the claim of the soul to be described as unmanifest, unthinkable and unchangeable, is far from being established. The term unmanifest is a well-understood word applied to Root matter. (मूलप्रकृति) that endures even through the Pralaya night. If the soul is not manifest through material proofs, neither is matter disclosed by spiritual cognitions. If the soul is partly manifest and conceivable, so too is matter knowable only within very narrow and circumscribed limits. Ultimate matter is as indestructible as the Spirit. Its fitful shapes pass before our eye within certain limits and under specific conditions, the range of perception being infinitesimally small compared with the ultra-sensual states and possibilities of material forms. Relatively to matter and material proofs, the soul may be unknown and unknowable. It may be that the soul may be unknown and unknowable. It may be that the soul never gets changed into non-soul. But relatively to the Spirit, matter is equally entitled to these attributes.

Absolutely speaking, it is conceded that the soul is manifest and thinkable, through the Self-luminous principle of consciousness. Nor is it absolutely immutable. Though it cannot be cut, burnt, wetted or dried, still it is capable of joy and suffering, of waxing and waning in mental viscissitudes, and of rise and fall in many a respect. To call such a limited Being full of imperfections, unmanifest, inconceivable and immutable, involves a great straining of language. Hence Sri Madhwa prefers to apply these epithets of God.

Turning to the views of Monists. we find an absence of unanimity. We have, at least, three different shades brought out and accentuated. One school maintains that the Soul (God and man being identical) is beyond all proofs. A second school says that the present verse asserts of the Soul that it is not known or thought of as cuttable, burnable, wettable, and drayable, by any proofs. They restrict the non-cognisability to these four predications alone (contained in verse 24). A third school says that the lesson taught here is that the soul is different in essence, (1) from the gross body, (2) the subtle body known as Lingasarira, and (3) the inmost sheath or the Karanasarira composed of the stuff of primordial avidya. Let us devote a word to each of these positions.

No. 1. Sankaracharya's commentary lends weight to the first view that the soul is beyond any proof or instrument of knowledge. Such a comprehensive assertion, it may be seen, is superfluous, having regard to the description अप्रमेयस्य ("unknowable") already occurring in verse No. 18. But the commentator forbids

criticism of this sort by saying that the subject being one difficult to grasp, some repetition of ideas should be endured.

No.2. Madhusoodana and some others say, as if to avoid the charge of redundancy which their master however does not seem to mind, that the verse is confined to the four attributes aforesaid, and that, in respect to them, no proof to the contrary is possible or available. Madhusoodana says that *Avyakta* denotes absence of sense-experience or proof known as प्रत्यक्ष. अचिन्त्य denotes the powerlessness of inference to prove the soul, and अविकार्य negatives other possible aspects of reasoning. No doubt, the charge of redundancy has thus been got over. But the difficulty remains that, having declared the soul as absolutely unknowable (अप्रमेय), there was no need to repeat the dictum in respect to four attributes only, out of a host that could be conceived. The greater included the less, and no special reason existed to choose four epithets at random, and deny the existence of proofs in respect to them alone.

No.3. Sankarananda and Neelakanta proceed on a somewhat different track. The Soul is other than the gross body as well as the two inner sheaths. Neelakanta understands अव्यक्त to differentiate the Spirit from the gross body, अचिन्त्य to contrast it with Lingasarira, and अविकार्य to mark it off from Karanasarira. Sankarananda thinks, अव्यक्त differentiates the Lingasarira, and अचिन्त्य the Karanasarira, while अविकार्य means simply that the



spirit is void of limbs or parts. Etymological ingenuity has been abundantly brought into play to force the particular meanings required into the respective words. Into this discussion, we need not enter here. The gist seems to be this, that the soul is other than the sheaths it is encased in, each sheath being governed by characteristics of its own.

It may be remembered that we were taught this particular lesson of the Soul being wholly other than its sheaths, almost at the threshold of the teaching, viz., in verse No.13 देहिनोस्मिन्, and the same was confirmed with emphasis by verse No. 22 वासांसि. Why then labour again to point out that the soul is not the outer body, is not the inner body, nor the inmost coil?

Thus, it is not easy to see the object in stating that the Soul is absolutely beyond cognition or that it cannot be proved to be cuttable, burnable, wettable and dryable, or that it is something distinct from its material encasements.

The theory of the soul being absolutely unknowable is rather difficult to follow. This verse says that अयम् (= He or it) is described (उच्यते). If *He* or *It* be beyond words, a description in any form, by way of denotation or connotation, is out of the question. If no description be possible, the exhortation to know Him or It, as contained in विदित्वा in the second line, is equally out of the question. This raises the hotly contested point whether Brahman is beyond thought and speech in the most comprehensive sense. If so, the Vedas and Shastras have no purpose to fulfil. Monists say that words do not

describe Brahman but only help to exclude and eschew what is not Brahman. Every conceivable definition whether couched in the positive garb or the negative, is only a negative description according to them. This is a large question to discuss fully. The fact is clear that Sri Krishna uses two words विदित्वा and उच्यते side by side with अव्यक्त and अचिन्त्य. This language is obviously puzzling at the first blush.

Sri Madhwa holds that God is knowable and describable, but not fully. Mount Meru can be seen and described in part only. What we see of it is only a small part. But still, it is not beyond the purview of vision and speech. Infinitesimally tiny is what even Lakshmi can see or say of God, but still, He is not beyond thought and speech altogether. Vedas do teach Him, but very imperfectly indeed. Hence उच्यते and विदित्वा in the Geeta verse under comment are to be literally understood. They convey the same meaning as ईक्षतेर्नाशब्दं, the fourth aphorism of the Brahma Sutras, rightly understood.

It has been already pointed out that Sri Madhwa understands the three attributes अव्यक्त, अचिन्त्य and अविकार्य as exclusively referring to God. If matter be, in a sense, unmanifest, if the Jeeva is such, in a way, God is unmanifest, most fully and truly. The III Adhyaya, second pada of the Brahma Sutras devotes several aphorisms (23, 24, 25, 26, 27) to this subject, and establishes the position that God is pre-eminently unmanifest. Hence it is that though our prop and support is always God, we do not realize Him as such because He does not reveal Himself. Aphorism 24 says that no pomp or fuss in worship can reveal Him. No.

25 says, He cannot be evolved like fire in the churning wood. Is He then never visioned at all ? He is, when implored by sincere and warm Bhakti. He, the unmanifest, manifests Himself, becomes व्यक्त (aphorism 26). How about the inconsistency? No.27 reconciles it by pointing out that no amount of human effort can unveil Him, but that He discovers Himself in an inscrutable manner, at the call of devotion. Like the Brahma Sutras, the Geeta says He is अव्यक्त though He is सर्वगत omnipresent, and does become व्यक्त, at times, to His devotees because His power is inconceivable (अचिन्त्य) and constant (अविकार्य).

26) अथ चैनं नित्यजातं नित्यं वा मन्यसे मृतम् ।  
तथापि त्वं महाबाहो नैनं शोचितुमर्हसि ॥

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| अथ च             | ... even on the footing that,                  |
| एनम्             | ... him  |
| नित्यजातं        | ... as necessarily born                        |
| वा               | ... or   |
| नित्यं मृतं      | ... as necessarily dying                       |
| मन्यसे           | ... you think                                  |
| तथापि            | ... still                                      |
| त्वम्            | ... you  |
| महाबाहो          | ... O ! mighty-armed                           |
| एनं              | ... of him                                     |
| न शोचितुं अर्हसि | ... it is not proper that you should<br>grieve |

"Even on the footing that you regard him as inevitably born or inevitably dying, still, O! mighty-armed, you are not right in grieving about him."

Granting that souls are immortal, Arjuna might urge that there is still cause for grief, because they are not exempt from birth and death. For every soul has to associate with a body and part with it, in due time, until the final emancipation. By killing kith and kin. Arjuna might not kill their souls, but the destruction of bodies, which their death implies, is surely matter for grief. In answer to this new position, the Lord urges that there is no use in rebelling against the inevitable and worrying oneself over an inexorable law of nature.

Arjuna emphasizes the inevitableness of birth and death, and laments over that circumstance. The Lord turns the tables on him, and uses the very same "inevitableness" or "inexorability" of the law, as an argument against grief.

The opening words of the verse अथ च have given rise to controversy. Among other significations, they mark the commencement of a new theme or line of thought. Sankaracharya and Ramanujacharya consider that these words indicate, that, the Lord is making a concession for argument's sake and is assuming a position just the opposite of what He had taught so far. He had taught the immortality of the soul. Granting, for argument's sake, that the soul is mortal, transient or ephemeral, still, the Lord proceeds to urge, there is not occasion for grief.



In order to strengthen and elucidate the view of Sankaracharya, his disciples Madhusoodana and Sankarananda amplify the point by their glosses. Madhusoodana thinks that Sri Krishna found the pupil incompetent to assimilate the truths he had been taught, and that in spite of reiterations, the problem of the soul had been too much for Arjuna's intellect. Sankarananda says that after the Lord found, at the end of the teachings, that none could assimilate the lessons, who was not blessed with Divine Grace, and seeing that Arjuna had not had this blessing and was incompetent, he felt the need to pitch his lessons at a lower key so as to suit the pupil.

Hence, giving up the standpoint of the soul's immortality, the Lord takes up hypothetical positions to the contrary.

- (1) The Buddhist says, for instance, that the soul is momentary knowledge, born and dead, born and dead, in a twinkling.
- (2) Charwaka identifies the body with the soul and recognizes no distinction at all between the two.
- (3) Others hold that the soul is born with the body and dies with it, though the two are essentially distinct.
- (4) Some maintain that the soul endures from Kalpa to Kalpa and vanishes outright at the great deluge.

- (5) Tarkikas opine that the soul, though eternal, takes birth and dies, by association with and dissociation from bodies. Out of these heretic positions, Sankarananda and Sreedhara think that Sri Krishna's concession for argument's sake relates to No.3, *viz.*, the theory of the soul being born with the body and dying when it is dead. Ramanujacharya votes for the creed of Charwaka. Neelakanta picks up Nos. 1, 2 and 5, *viz.*, the tenet of Buddha, Charwaka and Tarkika. Madhusoodhana thinks that Sri Krishna concedes every one of the five schools and proceeds to answer Arjuna's grief.

In their zeal to uphold this rendering of अथ च, being eager to make out that Arjuna had really inclined to heretic positions, some of these commentators seek aid and confirmation in other parts of the verse. In Brahmanadagiri, (Venkatanatha), a query of interjection (काकु) is sounded after the particle वा so as to convey an under-current of thought that Arjuna would not be so foolish as really to embrace unbecoming beliefs. Madhusoodhana reads, in the vocative expression महाबाहो, a vein of ridicule and irony so as to convey a rebuke for Arjuna's folly.

All this is highly strained reasoning. It is impossible to follow the learned commentators who condemn Arjuna as deficient in intellect or Divine Grace. It is a supposition utterly without warrant. It is curious that Sankarnanda brings in *Grace* into this argument. *Brahman* which is void of attributes (निर्गुण) and is incapable of knowing, willing or acting, can

hardly bless any one with grace. If, however, it is the lower Brahman, the Saguna, that is meant, Sri Krishna is this particular Being, and why He would not extend grace to His own pupil passes comprehension.

Then again, it is difficult to understand why these commentators feel compelled to say that Sri Krishna made a concession for argument's sake and assumed an *Unvedantic* position. If the basis for such an interpretation is no other than the words अथ च, this is hardly enough, for these words admit of other meanings. If it be thought that the new line of reasoning in verses 27 and 28 necessarily implies and involves this particular assumption and is unintelligible otherwise, then the interpretation may be justifiable. But, far from implying and involving the assumption in question, verses 27 and 28 are absolutely inconsistent with and antagonistic to the mortality of the soul. If souls are transient and momentary as Vignana-vadins say, if the soul is no other than body, as Charwaka-materialists hold, or if, though distinct, they are born and die together, the teaching in the next verse that "he who is dead is bound to be born" is utterly meaningless. So also, is verse No. 28 which says that every soul is unmanifest in the beginning, manifest in the middle, and unmanifest at the end. These lessons are based on the footing that the soul is an enduring entity, born and dead, born and dead, *ad infinitum* in respect to material frames.

Of the two courses, *viz.*, that Arjuna failed to grasp what he was taught, or that having assimilated it, he formulated a new objection, all canons of right construction compel us to choose the latter course, if pos-

sible. This is just what Sri Madhwa has done. Sankaracharya's note begins with the observation that Arjuna disputes the immortality of the soul, and on this footing, the Lord deals with the question of his sorrow. In the course of a few lines however, Sankaracharya, as if forgetting himself, winds up saying, 'you should not grieve because whoever is born must die and *whoever dies, must be born*'. Goodness gracious! if the deal soul is dead and gone, how can it take birth ! A similar inconsistency is found even in the exposition of Professor Rangacharya. According to him, Arjuna adopted the opposite position and maintained the transient, unreal, and unenduring, character of the soul. He observes in the very next sentence, "If the Soul is ever and anon, born, and ever and anon, dies, then, since the Soul that is born has inevitably to die *and the Soul that dies has inevitably to be born*, neither *birth* nor *death* can be avoided by any one." The italics are mine. The italics are important and the inconsistency is obvious.

The query of interjection noted in Brahmanadagiri and the vein of irony detected by Madhusoodana, are but fumes of heated imagination and do not deserve serious criticism.

In the commentary of the next verse (No.27), however, we see that both Madhusoodana and Venkatanatha climb down very much and virtually give away their master. The statement, "the dead are bound to be re-born" stares them in the face. To a Buddhist, a Charwaka, or to atheists and materialists, such a proposition is unacceptable. Hence they reconsider their own interpretation and modify it by saying that



Arjuna's objection rested on two view, *viz.*, (1) that of Charwaka, (2) and that of the school holding Jeeva to be eternal but still, to be subject to births and deaths, in respect to bodies. Even this modification is evidently found unsatisfactory by Madhusoodana, for he winds up finally adopting what exactly corresponds with Sri Madhwa's rendering.

To sum up a little, Sankaracharya and Ramanujacharya interpret the verses on the footing that the Atman was assumed to be uneternal. Sri Madhwa interprets them on the footing that the *Atman* is eternal but that the association with the disassociation from bodies is the occasion for grief. Jayateertha points attention to verse 27 and 28, especially the portion beginning with “*ध्रुवं जन्म मृतस्य* (=the dead must be re-born)” and exposes the untenableness of the former commentary. Sankaracharya's disciples have realized the force of this criticism, and finally adopted his view. Unwilling, however, to throw their own master overboard, they have adopted an alternative course, and said, both the views formed the basis of Arjuna's objection. This compromise, intended to save face, hardly does so. There was no meaning, no force and no appropriateness, in Arjuna adopting even, for argument's sake, the position of the materialist.

It is to be observed that several of these commentators adopt a slight change of reading in the 2<sup>nd</sup> line. They read नैनं into नैवं and this word एवं 'thus' forms the pivot of lengthened and varied expositions. Vivritikara (Sri Raghavendra Swami) adopts नैनं. It is to be noted that Sreedhara's manuscript adopts the same reading.

Those who have adopted the word एवं think that Sri Krishna censured only excess of grief and not grief in any measure. एवं means "thus". The Lord says "Don't grieve *thus*". He found that Arjuna had thrown away bow and arrow, had thrown him self-down into the interior of the chariot on the seat, had wept tears of sorrow, mercy and pity, and had lashed himself into an outburst. The Lord says, "my dear Arjuna, if you realize Adwaita (or Visishtadwaita) you would conquer grief out and out. But I see you can't do it. If you adopt some one of the heresies, still, though some grief in a moderate measure may be allowed to you, you have no right to abandon yourself to excessive grief as you have done". This is general substance of the commentaries adopting एवं as the true reading, though in some details, there is difference as to the presentment.

The point is, what is the justification for saying that Sri Krishna gave permission and consent to a limited measure of grief. Verses 26, 27 and 28 form parts of a connected teaching. They press but one point in various aspects. Verse 27 does not contain any words of limitation. Nor does verse 28. These two verses 27 and 28, are even more important than No.26, because they set out the reasoning for the proposition contained in 26 and re-affirm the conclusion. Arjuna grieved, and the Lord undertook to dispel his grief. It was necessary and appropriate that the Lord should make good his word and show the way to conquer grief wholly. Why should He, instead of doing so, put impossible and inadmissible heresies into Arjuna's mouth and driving him into this false position, permit some amount of grief to him?

The reading एनं in the place of एवं steers clear of every difficulty. That Sreedhara's manuscript contains this reading saves Vivriti from malignant critics.

Even if एवं be the true reading, it is not necessary to lay too much stress on it and evolve a theory of excessive grief and moderate grief out of it. एवं does not refer to the measure, but to the gist of the whole speech of Arjuna and the false reasoning on which his grief was based.

27) जातस्य हि ध्रुवो मृत्युर्ध्रुवं जन्म मृतस्य च ।  
तस्मादपरिहार्येन न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि ॥

|                       |                            |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| जातस्य                | ... To one that is born    |
| हि                    | ... is it not?             |
| ध्रुवः                | ... certain                |
| जन्म                  | ... birth                  |
| मृतस्य च              | ... and to the dead        |
| तस्मात्               | ... Therefore              |
| अपरिहार्येन           | ... is what is unavoidable |
| न त्वं शोचितुं अर्हसि | ... you should not grieve  |

"Surely, death is certain to one who is born, and birth, to one who dies. Therefore, as to what is unavoidable, you should not grieve."

This verse explains why Arjuna was asked not to grieve even on the footing that death means at least

the loss of a body. "You can't help bodies being born and bodies dying away. Birth and death are inevitable incidents in nature. You can, try what you will, never prevent the course of nature. The wise man may grieve over avoidable mishaps, but, when anything is beyond his powers of control, sorrow is out of place. No one laments over the laws of nature, for example, that gravitation keeps us chained to the earth or that physical and chemical phenomena occur as they do. Hence, do not bemoan the inevitable law that every one is bound to die and bound to be born until the final redemption.

Although Sankaracharya began by saying that the new line of argument started by verse 26 was based on the assumption of an opposite position to the effect that souls were really uneternal, he himself was not apparently serious in saying so, for, in the course of a few lines, he speaks advisedly or unwittingly of every "dead soul being bound to be re-born". His chief lieutenant Madhusoodana has virtually given him away, because his final commentary sets out the true view as adopted by Sri Madhwa. Venkatanatha, it has been already observed, follows the identical course, more or less. Hence it is pretty clear that Jayateertha's criticism has had a telling effect, though none of them has the grace to admit it.

Ramanujacharya, however, does not budge from the position that the new line of argument under notice is based on the assumption of gross materialism. According to him, the objector takes his stand firmly on the materialist's dogma that no soul exists apart from and other than the body. Sticking fast to this, the objector hastens to make another assumption based



on the theory that things take birth which did *not* exist before, and those alone die which *have existed* before. Applying this view, Arjuna is sorry to send Bheeshma & Co. out of existence. According to Ramanujacharya, the Lord replies to the second of the two assumptions, leaving the first alone. He says to Arjuna that nothing can come out of nothing, that what is born has existed before, and the matter is eternal and indestructible, although changes of state appear and disappear. When earth is converted into a pot, the former dies *as such* and the latter is born *as such*, but the substance has endured and will endure for ever, whatever be the mutations and changes of name and form undergone. There is in fact, no such thing as birth and death truly speaking. Before a thing is born, it is said to be non-existing. After its destruction, it is said to be non-existing too. A thing like the hare's horn is also said to be non-existent, having existence at no time and place. Theorists like the men of the Nyaya School speak of non-existence (अभाव) among fundamental categories, and sub-divide the same into three or more classes. Ramanujacharya and the Mimamsakas say that this view is unsound, because, in their opinion, the death of the pot is, in no sense, distinguishable from the birth of the broken pieces to which the pot is reduced. Sri Madhwa and many others hold that the notion of negation (अभाव) is logically and psychologically different from the notion of the positive, and that Ramanujacharya is wrong in repudiating the negative outright, and that he fell into a confusion of ideas in mixing up the positive and negative as but aspects of the same positive fact.

Verbal and intellectual subtlety has largely complicated this controversy and is likely to take us beyond our depths. It is therefore needless to pursue this phantom of a speculation any further.

One point however stands out pretty clear: What is the point and drift of the reasoning? If matter is ultimately indestructible, if non-existence (= अभाव) is not a fact, and if negation is but a confusion of thought, what is the drift, and why is it urged by Sri Krishna? Surely, it does not tend to remove or lessen Arjuna's grief. Though matter may endure, Bheeshma's body vanishes with his death. Changes and mutations being conceded, it is no consolation to Arjuna that Bheeshma's body (there being no soul other than that, *ex hypothesi*) exists after his death as ashes or dust, for, that is the very gist of his argument for grief. It may be noted that, in commenting on verse no. 16, Ramanujacharya himself observes that the theory as to the indestructibility of matter was out of place and irrelevant as an answer to Arjuna's distress. What was out of place in that verse is no better at present. There, he had to be taught the existence of an eternal soul apart from the body as an answer to grief; here too, on the assumption of body and soul being identical, he is told not to grieve, because birth and death were inevitable incidents of life. The point in the reply rests entirely on the inexorableness of the law. For pressing this point home, the indestructibility of matter need not be asserted or proved.

It may next be urged that, though this truth is not directly germane to the purpose and object in view, advantage is taken of this opportunity, and the lesson, being a big truth, is drawn attention to.

The question then arises, whereabouts is the *truth* in this controversy, and whether the verse under comment can fairly be deemed to be the vehicle of this particular teaching, as Ramanujacharya contends it does.

One school maintains that destruction means loss *in toto*, an out-and-out annihilation. What is born emanates, only and wholly, out of nothing. This is one extreme view. On the other hand, Sankhyas say that when an effect is born of a cause, there is nothing new born at all. The cause is the effect and nothing else. Matter is eternal, including all changes of shape, form or condition. This is another extreme view. Ramanujacharya takes up a position only less extreme than that of the Sankhyas. He repudiates, as delusion, all notions of the negative. Sri Madhwa takes a more moderate view still, and dissents from both the said extreme schools of thought. Nothing is born of nothing is true in the sense that every physical effect requires a cause and that what has existed as the cause becomes manifest as the effect. This however does not mean the total identity between cause and effect, in name, form and attributes. The effect may possess attributes and qualities that did not exist in the cause. Hence, in a sense, something new is capable of being born. He differs from Ramanujacharya, as already observed, in respect to his peculiar theory of negative notions.

Now for the other doubt, whether the Geeta verse under comment can, having regard to its language, fairly embrace this controversy; Let us note again the words, "The dead is bound to be-born". *Ex hypothesi*,

the soul is not other than the body. When the body dies, surely it is not re-born. Bheeshma's body dies and gives birth to ashes. But Bheeshma's body, *as such*, is gone for ever, and is never re-born. Ramanujacharya's commentator Vedanta Desikar sees this clearly, and adds a gloss that what is meant is, not the re-birth in the same form of what is dead, but the existence or birth of some other form (viz., ashes). But this is too much strain on the words of the verse. It certainly speaks of 'the dead being re-born'. What is dead is the body, and that alone is said to re-appear.

In the face of this absurdity, one is driven to think that the initial misinterpretation and fallacy lay in thinking that Arjuna was allowed to assume the position of the materialist. The verse is meaningless, except on the footing that a soul apart from the body exists as a distinct entity, capable of being born with a mortal body, and capable of taking repeated births after the death of successive bodies.

Sri Krishna points out to Arjuna, in the second line, that what cannot be helped must be endured, without grief or hysterics. It is a general proposition applicable to any situation in which one might find oneself, the helpless tool of the Divine will.

अपरिहार्य (=unavoidable) conveys the following ideas:—

1. Birth and death are inevitable to all.
2. Even if you retire from the war, Bheeshma and others must die in due course.
3. Nor are you immune from death. You cannot say 'As I live for ever, how can I endure bereavement?'. You will die, too, sooner or later.



4. No doubt, death is a sure incident in war. But war is unavoidable to a soldier. It is his duty and there is not escape from it. Non-performance of one's duty entails ruin and sin, here and hereafter.
5. Nor can you help the misfortune that you are to be the instrument of their death. God forces your hands. You are not a free agent in this or anything else. Do what you will, you cannot avoid being the agent for dealing death unto them.
6. In अपरिहार्य, 'अ' denotes Vishnu (as the Lexicon admits). These things, birth and death, and all difficult situations conceivable, are in the hands of Vishnu alone. Don't you grieve by trying to usurp His jurisdiction.

Before finishing, one cannot but note an observation of Sankarananda. While explaining this expression अपरिहार्य, he says what cannot be changed *even by Brahman*, mark the words in Italics. It is a fling at the omnipotence of God. Sankaras, it will be seen, indulge in this kind of contumacy, occasionally (*vide* other instances, Sankaracharya's comment, verse No.17 and note on verse 21). Why assume or concede an omnipotent Being, and needlessly, revile or discount His power withal. The laws of nature are His laws. Not that His is incompetent to change them. He *can do* so if He will. But why should He? He does not choose to make provisional or changeable laws like man, and hence is their permanent and enduring character. They are permanent and unchangeable by His will and choice.

## 28) अव्यक्तादीनि भूतानि व्यक्तमध्यानि भारत । अव्यक्तनिधनान्येव तत्र का परिवेदना ॥

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| अव्यक्तादीनि      | ... Born of causal matter                               |
| भूतानि            | ... the bodies of creatures                             |
| व्यक्तमध्यानि     | ... Existing as manifested effect, in the midmost state |
| भारत              | ... O ! Arjuna  |
| अव्यक्तनिधनानि एव | ... They surely have their end in causal matter again   |
| तत्र              | ... such being the nature of birth and death            |
| का परिवेदना       | ... Why sorrow  |

“Sprung out of causal matter are the bodies of creatures. They are manifest between birth and death as effects, O ! Arjuna, and end surely in causal matter. Such being the nature of birth and death, why lament?”.

Some read परिवेदना into परिदेवना. The sense is more or less the same, the latter being a stronger expression conveying the notion of weeping and bemoaning as demonstrations of grief.

‘भूतानि’ Some take this word to refer to the elements *Akasa* and the rest. Madhusoodana and Nilakanta explain the word thus and proceed to make out that the cosmic world is an emanation from *Maya*

and is a myth. Others understand the word to be limited to the *bodies* of people and animals. Ramanujacharya, Sankarananda and others prefer the latter meaning. Vivritikara (Raghavendra Swamin) also adopts it. The context fits in with this meaning very well. The preceding verse deprecated lament on the ground that birth and death were inevitable. The present verse sets out how and why it is so by going to the root of the matter and explaining what birth and death consist in.

‘अव्यक्त’ and ‘व्यक्त’. These two expressions have given rise to controversy.

1. Sankarananda says that Avyakta is the Supreme Brahman, as it is He that is absolutely beyond the pale of any knowledge. No proof is possible of Him, Perception, Inference and Revelation being inefficient to reveal Him. He is Avyakta in the truest sense. The cosmic world is born out of Him, because of Nescience. So long as He is unrealized, संसार is inevitable. Ignorance of Him is responsible for birth and death. Hence, He is said to be the origin and end of the Universe. What intervenes between birth and death, the span of animal life, when the animal moves about within the pale of gross vision, is a manifested condition brought about by व्यक्त, the Mind. Thus Brahman, responsible, though remotely for the origin and the end, and the mind, responsible for the span of life and its manifest movements, account for all. When Brahman is realized as the true background of the delusion like the mother-of-pearl, everything vanishes with the mind too and its emanations. To the seer of Advaita, what is the lament?

It is to be observed that parallel verses, couched in the same strain and similar language, are found in other parts of Mahabharata. One such for instance, is found in Stree Parva, II verse 3. It runs thus:—

अभावादीनि भूतानि भावमध्यानि भारत ।

अभावनिधनान्येव तत्र का परिदेवना ॥

"The world springs out of Abhava; its middle is Bhava. Its end is verily Abhava. Why lament thereon?" The ordinary sense of Abhava is non-existence or negation. Neelakanta gives to this verse an Advaitic support and construes Abhava into Brahman. Alas! the elasticity of Sanskrit words. They are so pliable that they may be forced to convey any desired sense. If Abava too is Brahman, one is tempted to exclaim that Monism has much in common with Nihilism or शून्यवाद.

In reply to the interpretation that Avyakta is Brahman, and Vyakta is *mind*, the following points may be noted:

1. The theory of the cosmos being unreal, of the Brahman alone being real and of Nescience reflecting a cosmos like the mirage, has been according to Sankarananda, taught over and over again in many preceding verses and especially so in verse 16. If any use is to be found at all for the repetition, that use is hard to find in the present context.

2. Verse No.26 was introduced by Sankaracharya and others as based on the assumed footing that Body and Soul are identical, as the materialists view it. There being no soul *ex hypothesi*, how is Monism taught and addressed to a materialist ?



3. It is to be remembered that all the factors in the situation under comment (Bheeshma, Arjuna, war, sin and grief) were items of Vyavaharic reality. Arjuna takes his stand on the plane of subordinate reality and wants an answer to his grief from the same plane and standpoint. It is hardly proper to soar to a higher plane and argue the unreality of the world from the standpoint of the absolute. This cannot dispel grief.

4. If Brahman is absolutely unknowable, the less said of Him, the better. No amount of Scripture can bring Him to light, and the only alternative is to leave Him severely alone.

5. The verse in Stree Parva shows that to construe Avyakta into Brahman in this context involves a great strain.

6. In every context where the Vedas and sacred writings speak of Brahman as the author and destroyer of the Universe, they invariably attribute to Him the function of स्थिति (maintaining it), also. It is difficult, if not impossible, to light on any passage where the origin and the end of the Universe are alone attributed to Brahman, and the sustenance of the Universe is ear-marked for the Mind as Sankarananda does. Moreover, according to Monists, the truly Nirguna Brahman denoted by the term Avyakta, is in fact and truth, not the author or destroyer of anything. He is such only by the courtesy of figurative language while Maya does it all. Hence, Neelakanta prefers to render Avyakta into Maya.

II. Coming to Neelakanta, he says that the world arises out of Nescience and ends in it, just as the snake-

in-the-rope is born in the rope and dies in it. The middle alone is manifest like the snake of the illustration. व्यक्तमध्य (manifest middle) means that the world endures only for him who has not realized Adwaitic Unity.

The theory that any snake is born in the rope and dies in it, is a far-fetched, unsatisfactory piece of philosophy. Far better is it to hold that whatever object appears in a delusion is wholly unreal, and that the senses cognize the unreal by reason of their defects and failings. Then again, Maya or Avidya is not the author of the beginning and end, alone, of the cosmos. It is the author of the cosmos in the manifested condition as well. If Avyakta is the origin and the end, it is the middle also. The terms Avyakta and Vyakta are evidently used in antithesis. If so, the sense derived is, that Maya accounts, not for the world as it exists and moves and runs its course, but only for its inception and end, whereas व्यक्त (what it means as opposed to माया not clear) takes in hand the actual operations of nature.

III. Sankaracharya and Ramanujacharya have not adopted the meaning of "Brahman" or "Nescience" for Avyakta.

They understand the word in the primary sense of "unmanifest". The position that results is this:— Man comes from the unknown past, lives and in manifest for a time, and vanishes into the unknown future. The beginning and the end are shrouded in mystery. "As Shakespeare observes", "it is a little life rounded off with a sleep".

This interpretation lands us into difficulties of its own. It is agnosticism, pure and simple, to hold that, before and beyond the span of mortal life, everything is unknowable mystery. Does Sri Krishna pose here as an agnostic, and plead ignorance of the mysterious past and future? Let us not forget that He is a Divine Teacher and undertook to unveil mysteries for Arjuna. To urge 'mystery' as a reply to grief, hardly answers the purpose.

According to Ramanujacharya and Sankaracharya, the new line of argument started from verse 26 and ending with 28, is based on an assumption of Materialism. This means that no soul apart from the body exists. The body is born. Its previous condition may not be apparent. It dies. Its subsequent condition is, however, quite obvious and apparent. Ramanujacharya observes that, when a pot is broken, its subsequent state, being manifest, gives rise to some grief. He says that, when, however, a man dies, his subsequent state being unknown, there is no occasion even for the little grief that a broken pot might cause. This logic is not intelligible. If man is no other and no more or less than his body, his death clearly discloses to us the future which consists of ashes. He came from dust and has gone back to it. Where is the mystery? The mystery comes in only if we hold to inconvenient notions about the soul being a distinct entity enduring before and after manifested life.

Thus, it is not easy to accept any of these interpretations. His Holiness Raghavendra Swami, the Vivritikara, explains the verse for Sri Madhwa. According to him, the verse is meant to set out the nature of

birth and death. It is not preceded, as Sankaracharya and Ramanujacharya, think by any concession to, or assumption of, materialism for argument's sake. Jeeva is eternal and this position is accepted. Arjuna laments over birth and death which haunts the eternal Jeeva by thrusting on him unwelcome coats of matter and removing them. The Lord says, "don't grieve over what cannot be helped", and proceeds to set out the characteristics of these coats which we are forced by inexorable law, to put on and put off. These bodies have their origin, says Sri Krishna, in causal matter, and merge there, after the person's death. The midmost condition we call *life*, what falls within the range of the gross senses (the living man or animal), does not cover the entire length or duration of our material encasement; for, it has its tails spread out at both ends in the shape of 'the unmanifest cause'. By Avyakta, Sri Krishna does not admit any ignorance on His part, but refers only to causal matter as the beginning and the end.

29) आश्चर्यवत्पश्यति कश्चिदेन-

माश्चर्यवद्ब्रूदति तथैव चान्यः ।

आश्चर्यवच्चेनमन्यः शृणोति

श्रुत्वाप्येनं वेद न चैव कश्चित् ॥

|            |     |          |
|------------|-----|----------|
| आश्चर्यवत् | ... | a marvel |
| पश्यति     | ... | sees     |
| कश्चित्    | ... | some one |



|              |                                  |
|--------------|----------------------------------|
| एनं          | ... him                          |
| आश्चर्यवत्   | ... a marvel                     |
| वदति         | ... talks of him                 |
| तथैव च       | ... and even so                  |
| अन्यः        | ... another                      |
| आश्चर्यवत् च | ... a marvel also                |
| एनम्         | ... him                          |
| अन्यः        | ... another                      |
| शृणोति       | ... hears of                     |
| श्रुत्वा अपि | ... though having heard of       |
| एनं          | ... him                          |
| वेद न चैव    | ... has not known at all         |
| कश्चित्      | ... some one or any one whatever |

“Some one sees him a marvel. Even so, another talks of him as a marvel. Yet another hears of him as a marvel. Having heard, yet none knows him, (or some one knows him not.”

The verse uses the pronoun एनं (Him), and the reader should ascertain the antecedent. Sri Madhwa holds that Jeeva, the individual soul, as well as God, the supreme soul, are both intended by the context. This point has been touched on, several times before.

The Jeeva is experienced by self-consciousness. There is no one who does not know himself as "I" as Though thus known universally, few realize how absolutely dependent Jeevas are on God. No man can

move to the breadth of a hair without His will. We are but shadows and images of God. He alone is perfect and we are imperfect. He is infinite in space and we are atomic in size. Those who realize this position of the Jeeva are marvellously rare. For, on this realization, rests the entire fabric of true religion. The religious spirit is impossible except on the faith and footing that God is everything, and we,— nothing and something, if He so wills.

To one who sees the Jeeva in his true nature, stripped of all the airs the Jeeva assumes of greatness, power, wealth, capacity, wisdom and what not, the verse under comment applies the epithet 'marvel' 'आश्चर्यवत्', which conveys the lesson that such a truly religious person is wonderfully rare. One in a million may realize this and look upon Jeeva as he is, in reality, the tiny imperfect atom that he is compared with the infinity of God. The verse asks us to regard the seer who realizes his own littleness as a marvel, being a rarity like the few wonders of the world.

Living amidst the temptations of a busy world, and yielding readily to the attractions of material pleasure, few care for introspection of any kind. Fewer still care to talk of the soul, and undertake to explain to their brethren, the truths of spiritual philosophy and religion. The task of the spiritual teacher and guide is a profitless vocation. He who is sincerely and devotedly engaged in it is a marvel. Then again, the pupil who cares to hear of the soul is a marvel too. Of Course, it does not pay in the world, to learn ultra-physical and ultra-psychical truths. Where is the man or woman who yearns to hear of human littleness and

his or her own relative position with reference to the absolute greatness of God? Such a pupil is rare.

The last quarter of the verse makes a sweeping remark that though one may hear ever so much, one may not realize the truth at all. This is discouraging, but a divine law takes no account of our nerves. It is not all that are qualified for spiritual progress. Innate aptitude determines the nature and extent of the culture of which one is capable. Nobody can help this.

To sum up the gist of the verse, he who realizes the true character of the Jeeva and speaks of it to his brethren, and even he who cares to hear of it, are rare. After all, one may remain as unwise at the end of a course of instruction as at the beginning, for obvious reasons.

Now taking the antecedent of एनं (Him) to be God, the verse teaches us similarly that the seer who visions God, the Marvel of Marvels, is one among an innumerable number very very rare indeed. So is the Teacher and the pupil.

Duryodhana was seeing Sri Krishna every day, and so did hosts of Asuras. Sri Krishna was a wonder of wonders. Though these people saw Him, talked of Him and heard of Him, they did not feel or realize His greatness. They dealt with Him as a common man or cowherd, and perceived nothing great in Him. When the Lord disclosed His immanence in a Huge Form in the court of Dhritarashtra after the unsuccessful embassy for peace, Duryodhana and his brethren shut their eyes and refused to look at it. A select few gazed

on it in wonder, and Dhritarashtra the blind by birth, opened his eyes, and gazed, among the few who did so. If God should now appear in our midst, the same story will repeat itself, and most of us will close our eyes to the vision. Very few can look on Him, the greatness of marvels, and realize Him as such.

The term आश्चर्यवत् is so set in the verse that it flashes light in three ways under three distinct grammatical or etymological constructions.

1. It is regarded as an adverb qualifying the verbs पश्यति (sees), वदति (teaches), and शृणोति (hears or learns). To vision Him is a wonder, for, He is ever unmanifest. How He, who is unlimited, limits Himself to fall within the ken of man, passes comprehension. To teach Him is an equal wonder. Language is necessarily and naturally imperfect to describe Him.

It is intrinsically a vehicle of limited ideas. The process of teaching, which handles the unspeakable theme, is therefore a wonder by itself. Similarly, is the process of learning the truths of the Infinite. This is as great a marvel as the process of teaching Him, because the two are complements of each other and represent the same point in converse aspects. Thus the processes denoted by the verbs are all marvels. This is the chief sense.

2. Secondly, आश्चर्यवत् is a noun in the accusative case, denoting Him, the object of the predicates, God is a marvel, because he possesses inconveivable attributes. He is infinitely expanded in space, and, at the same time, infinitesimally smaller than the smallest



atom. He pervades everything, and, at the same time, is unmanifest. His knowledge, power and work, are eternal, yet He is spoken of as willing, wishing and working, as if for ends. When Arjuna saw Him as described in Chapter XI of the Bhagavad Geeta, he found Him a glorious Form beyond the power of mind to comprehend, and of speech to describe. Ordinarily and generally speaking, an unknown theme is conceived, discoursed about, and learnt through illustrations. But God is like unto Himself and admits of no comparison. The sky is shaped like the sky, the ocean is vast like itself. Such was the battle between Rama and Ravana like unto itself, says the poet. Hence God being peerless, is a marvel. He who realizes such a marvel is only one in a legion कश्चित्.

3. Thirdly, आश्चर्यवत् qualifies the nominative of the verbs, and makes out the Seer, the Teacher and the Pupil, as a wonder by himself. This point was explained above in connection with Jeeva understood as the antecedent of एनं. The observations, there made, with a view to making the seer, teacher and learner, rare specimens of men, apply with infinitely greater force to the Seer, Teacher and Pupil visioning God and teaching and learning of Him.

I need not dilate further to make the point clear. If we try to know God, and if God graces us with true spiritual insight, the experience must be something superbly transcendental. If anything merits the expression "marvellous", this subject, judged in the triple aspects of (1) the realization, (2) the realized and (3) the realizer, does.

Ramanujacharya excludes any allusion to God in the whole context (from verse 11 up to the present), as out of place. He construes the present verse to be an exclamation of the soul's (Jeeva's) wonderful character. It is wonderful, because, it is so unlike matter and material products. What makes the Jeeva wonderful is its distinctive characteristics. Sri Krishna has been, throughout, emphasizing the dissimilarity, disparity and distinctions, between spirit and matter. Whatever is unlike anything that is known is marvel. Hence the soul is a marvel. and very few vision the soul, or teach and learn of the soul. Vedanta Desikar adds a gloss that, in this interpretation, Ramanujacharya reads आश्चर्यवत् in the accusative sense only, and disapproves of the adverbial sense and the other one, too, (as qualifying the nominative).

We have no objection to take the antecedent of एनं to be Jeeva. But we disagree from the view that that is the *only* right sense.

In explaining why and how the Jeeva is a marvel, Ramanujacharya insists on the distinctiveness of the spirit. This is not convincing. If the spirit is distinct from matter, so is the latter from the former. If the soul is imperfectly known, so is matter, for, our scientific notions of matter and its potentialities are ever bound to be imperfect. Then again, it is impossible to say that we know nothing of the soul. For, all the Vedantins hold that the notion of "I-ness", common to every member of the animal kingdom, reveals the soul of every one. Self-consciousness reveals A's soul to A, and A's soul is revealed in a subordinate sense to B, if

not through perception, at any rare, through Inference. Hence, we clearly make out the living from the dead. Mere distinctness and individuality does not therefore seem to be a convincing ground for regarding the soul as a marvel. Sri Madhva therefore adopts a different line of reasoning to make out the Jeeva a wonder. According to him, it is the relation between him and God that constitutes the marvel. Leaving God out of the argument, there is no wonder, nothing marvellous at all. No doubt, every one experiences his own soul through self-consciousness. But few see their own souls or others souls in the true light of their relation to God. Hence the seer is a rare specimen of humanity.

It is difficult to see why Desikar is hard on the two others' grammatical meanings aforesaid. Sankaracharya upholds one of them, *viz.*, the *nominative* signification. Sri Madhwa virtually upholds all the three, and leans especially to the *adverbial*. There seems no good ground in sense or grammar to reject them.

With Monists, the question does not arise whether एनं refers to Jeevatma or Paramatma, for, all Atmans are but one.

Neelakanta however startles every one by saying that एनं does not mean Him but points to the cosmos. Adopting the triple sense of आश्चर्यवत्, he makes out, (1) that the universe is a marvel, (2) that the knower, speaker and listener are marvels, and lastly, (3) that the act of knowing, speaking and hearing in respect to it are marvels too.

Poets and philosophers often claim that Nature is marvellous. They mean what Shakespeare in Hamlet says, "There are more things in Heaven and Earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy, Horatio". Nature opens to the wondering gaze of the scientist a vista of marvels, Neelakanta does not, however, base his interpretation on this aspect or footing. He says that the cosmos is wonderful, consisting, as it does, of quasireal things similar to the products of black magic. Everything is unreal but *seems* real. This is the wonder.

The knower of the world is also a wonder. He is a rare person who takes what seems real to be unreal. Wonderful too is this knowledge of unreality. Being contrary to all experience, the perceived, the perceiver and the perception are perplexingly strange. No less wonderful is the speaker and the teacher. For, he argues that the world is neither truly real nor truly unreal, but is something other than real and unreal. What is truly real cannot disappear. But the world disappears on unity being realized. If truly unreal, it cannot be an object of perception, for the hare's horn cannot produce a visual experience. Thus the world is a strange something wedged between, and other than, the true and the false. Such a teacher and discourser makes out the mythical nature of the very world in which he lives, moves, and has his being, including himself and his words. The speech is thus a marvel.

So Neelakanta proceeds in the same strain in respect to the other verbs of the verse. To make a long story short, he argues that the explanation of the world that Monism presents, is a marvellous tissue of apparent inconsistencies and absurdities that elude logic and experience, but is truthful withal.



It will be seen that the wonder is said to lie in the falsity or quasi-reality of the world. What is false is not necessarily a marvel. Even the products of magic are not marvellous simply because of their falsity.

If the monistic teacher or preacher argues himself into unreality or quasi-reality, and attacks the existence of everything in a manner opposed to experience, "marvel" is not the word for him. He is illogical and irrational, to say the least, if not also temerical.

Whether Monism is a sound cult or not, the question is, what is the connection of the material universe with the topic under discussion. Sri Krishna said that Atman was immortal, and exhorted Arjuna not to be distressed. He said further, that, adopting even materialism as true, still, there was no ground for grief, for what is inevitable is never fit matter for, lament. The present verse follows this teaching close upon its heels. In this connection, there was no sufficient occasion or justification to drag in the material universe as possessed of dubious reality.

• All the other commentators of this school understand एतन् to point to Brahman and proceed to expound the triple marvel with eloquence. Brahman, the so-called object of the seer's realization, is a marvel, for He, or more properly 'It', is beyond the province of thought and speech. Hence the knowledge of Brahman is likewise a marvel and a mystery. So is the knower too. As the knower, so is the Teacher and the speaker, a wonder. How, forsooth, could he describe Brahman when no lingual description can reach Him. Thus, all along the line, is the mystery and the marvel.

While Neelakanta tries to establish Nature to be inscrutable by reason of inherent inconsistencies, these annotators seek to produce a marvel out of an inconceivable and unknowable Monism. To know the unknowable is, they say, a veritable marvel; to describe the indescribable is likewise such. They thus go on piling up, one dogma of Monism upon another and exclaim, "look at this pile of incomprehensible logic and see how wonderful !"

By repute, no doubt, Monism is credited with being a hard nut to crack. But few were possibly prepared for the extent to which the theory of its inscrutableness has been carried. They go on holding up tenet after tenet and expose its untenability, and wind up saying, "how untenable, yet how true! That it is untenable may be conceded. Its truth is, however, not admitted.

The reader may turn to the Kathopanishad in which parallel passages occur in respect to several of the teachings in this chapter of the Geeta. In language of identical meaning, the Upanishad compliments the knower and the discourser of Brahman 'as wonder'. It says too, that, though there be abundant study and cogitation, none knows God unless blessed by His grace. It then describes God as possessed of inconceivable epithets.

Throughout this exposition in the Upanishad, one can hardly see Adwaita set out. If the 'wonder' consists in the fact that Brahman is Nirguna, but seems otherwise, that Brahman is the world, and *seems* distinct, that Brahman is the Jeeva but appears separate, —

and so on, the Upanishad might well have said so in this very connection. The Sanskrit notes quote the verses of the Upanishad.

Dwaitins, Adwaitins and all religionists admit God to be something inscrutable. But there is a difference in their conceptions. Sri Madhwa says that God is unknowable only in the sense that He is not fully knowable. Mount Meru is not fully visible, yet it is not said to be beyond vision. Vedas describe God, but cannot do so fully. From the lowest Bhakta to the Highest (Lakshmi), every one may know God in a way, but not fully. The Adwaitin's conception, in this respect, is a radical extreme, putting *Brahman* wholly beyond the pale of word or thought.

It is one thing to speak of God as inscrutably great and another to speak of Vedantic Monism as being thoroughly ununderstandable, and yet, as true. The soundness of any philosophy is not to be divorced from the logic and reasoning on which it rests.

Before leaving the verse, let us recall its chief ideas. We are introduced to the greatness of God. Whether एनं refer to God or to Jeeva, the object is to focus attention on God's glory. We are taught to appreciate how marvellously great is God, His knowledge and His knower. Sri Krishna impresses on Arjuna that the topic is simply a marvel, and repeatedly uses the term आश्चर्यवत्. He denounces impostures and pretensions to spiritual knowledge, by saying that unqualified people may seem to study ever so much, but do not see God. He also conveys the truth that, from Lakshmi downwards, there are infinite degrees of knowing, but

none knows God fully. Not only is there general ignorance of God, but there is similar ignorance of the Jeeva also, for, a true knowledge of the latter implies a truly religious attitude and devotion to God, and leads to self-surrender and absolute trust in Him.

Sages that have spoken of God and God-vision in Bhagavata, Bharata and the Puranas, have invariably indulged in words of rapture. What that experience is like, is not to be conceived by any one who has not had the vision. But transcendental, it is bound to be.

Thus, the present verse occurs somewhat abruptly as an exclamatory digression about God and the sage. More of this occurs from verses 55 onwards to the end of the chapter. Verse 29 prepares the mind to a due sense of awe and wonder, in approaching the theme.

30) देही नित्यमवध्योऽयं देहे सर्वस्य भारत ।  
तस्मात् सर्वाणि भूतानि न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि ॥

|         |     |  |
|---------|-----|--|
| देही    | ... | The Jeeva the embodied                       |
| नित्यम् | ... | constantly                                   |
| अवध्यः  | ... | is invulnerable                              |
| अयं     | ... | This   |
| देहे    | ... | In the gross, subtle and<br>spiritual bodies |
| सर्वस्य | ... | of all Beings                                |
| भारत    | ... | O ! Arjuna                                   |



|                     |     |                          |
|---------------------|-----|--------------------------|
| तस्मात्             | ... | Therefore                |
| सर्वाणि, भूतानि ... |     | In respect of any Being  |
| न, त्वं शोचितुं ... |     | You should not grieve or |
| अर्हसि              |     | be concerned             |

“This Jeeva is constantly invulnerable in every body (gross, subtle, or spiritual) of all Beings, O! Arjuna. Therefore, you should not be concerned in respect of any Being”.

Or the verse may also be rendered thus:

|               |     |  |
|---------------|-----|--|
| अयं           | ... | This person, Hari  |
| सर्वस्य, देहे | ... | is present in every body (gross, subtle or spiritual) as its protector. Therefore, |
| देही          | ... | the Jeeva, lord of bodies  |
| नित्यं अवध्यः | ... | is ever immortal   |

As in the case of several verses that have gone before, this verse conveys a twofold reference, namely, to the Jeeva as well as to God. As laying down the simple eternality of the Jeeva, the verse may be construed clearly enough, as has been done by all the other commentators. Sri Madhwa does not disapprove of this construction. But he adds another, so as to draw attention to the supremacy of God as a very relevant lesson of the topic. It is needless to take अयं as necessarily adjectival in sense, so as to qualify देही. It may be taken also as a pronoun meaning ‘He’, the antecedent being God. The context denotes that the verb

is understood. The meaning is that "He (God) remains in every body, of course, as its sustainer". Being immanent even in our spiritual body, for ever, He brings about its eternality. Thus, an explanation is furnished for the proposition that souls are eternal, by pointing out God as the cause of the soul's immortality.

Sri Madhwa is no half-hearted theist. He is a theist of theists. If souls be eternal, superficial thinkers may argue that they are independent of God. Sri Madhwa cannot tolerate such a position. He says that the Absolute alone is supreme, and all else depend on the Absolute for their very existence, — including every eternal reality. Primal matter, Time, Space, Nature as well as natures, be they eternal verities or ephemeral phenomena, all, all derive their existence and attributes from Him. The present verse gives point to this important lesson, if अयं "He" be taken as a pronoun and not a mere demonstrative adjective.

Of course, the controversy remains, as Ramanujacharya will have it, that the whole of the Geetic context deals only with Jeeva and contains no allusion at all to God. This point has been discussed already.

With this verse, Sri Krishna concludes an important topic of the chapter. The burden of the song is "grieve not." For, said the Lord before, (1) Souls are immortal, (2) Bodies must necessarily die, (3) the Jeeva is ever a dependent Being, and God alone is supreme, (4) Pleasure and pain are the results of attachment and may be conquered by renunciation thereof.

The present verse summarises these points briefly. It says that the soul is not vulnerable; it says by clear implication, that bodies are mortal; it points

out that God is the Supreme Being who maintains spirit and matter in their respective attributes and functions. Lastly, it says that the Jeeva is inherently अवध्य, which word means also that he is by nature unbound. As the Jeeva binds himself by the tie of likes and dislikes, he is by nature, a free Being, and may regain his freedom by overcoming attachments.

Remembering that this verse is the conclusion of the theme, one may be excused if one is tempted to refer to Sankarananda's exposition of verse No.11 of this chapter, which commences the topic. In commenting on that verse, he said, "The ignorant grieve for the dead, the wise for the living; but the seer grieves for neither, because all are but Brahman."— The gist is "Don't grieve as all are but Brahman". In concluding the theme, one would expect this universal unity to have been pointed out in some manner, as the true ground for banishing grief, if Sri Krishna meant really to lay stress on that particular theory as the rationale of his teaching. In verses 26, 27, 28 and 30, the chorus occurs 'don't grieve'. The Lord does not seize the opportunity to emphasize, expressly or by implication, this central point of Monism. The reader might judge from this, how strained and how far-fetched, is the evolution of the Monistic cult from verses 11 up to 30. The word 'Dehin' used for the soul is significant. It occurs in verses 13, 22 and also in the verse under notice. Its synonym (शरीरिणः) occurs in verse No.18. Why should the Atman be thus described, if, in fact, it has nothing to do with embodiments, as Monists contend? Literally, the word means "owner or lord of bodies". Monists say that the ownership

denoted by the word is a delusion. If so, why should the Lord persistently refer to the Atman by a misleading term based on a delusion?

Monists further contend that the term 'Dehin' in the singular signifies that the Atman is but one, that it is all-pervasive and that it vivifies all bodies of the past, present and future, everywhere. In short, they hold that the singular excludes all theories about the plurality of souls. This point may be found discussed under verse No. 12 where the Lord speaks of "*Himself, you (Arjuna) and these princes of men*". No clearer statement of plurality could have been made.

Without straining, thus, to evolve the unity of the soul, the word 'Dehin' lends itself to a perfectly intelligible sense, namely, that the individual soul (or Jeeva) is a unit which takes and casts off a succession of bodies in the course of its own evolution. There is no delusion in this. The Jeeva is a real sufferer imprisoned in material bodies one after another. He is, in a very real sense, the owner of the houses he is connected with, from time to time.

Ramanujacharya notes under this verse that all the Beings, from the gods downwards, are quite equal in nature and essence, although they differ in shape, form and characteristics, by reason of the varying embodiments in which they dwell. This theory is an important plank of the Visishtadwaita platform. Sri Madhwa disagrees and pleads for an endless variety of differentiation in the entire hierarchy of gods, men and animals. According to him, the quality and capacity of every soul differs from that of every other soul. Be the merits of this controversy what they



may, let us see what word or clause in the Geeta verse under comment lends support to this creed of universal equality. I can find none to uphold either the creed of universal unity or universal equality.

31) स्वधर्ममपि चावेक्ष्य न विकंपितुमर्हसि ।  
धर्म्याद्धि युद्धाच्छ्रेयोऽन्यत्क्षत्रियस्य न विद्यते ॥

|                     |     |                       |
|---------------------|-----|-----------------------|
| स्वधर्म             | ... | one's own duty        |
| अपि, च              | ... | and also; further     |
| अवेक्ष्य            | ... | looking to            |
| न विकंपितुं; अर्हसि | ... | you should not falter |
| धर्म्यात्           | ... | righteous             |
| हि                  | ... | indeed                |
| युद्धात्            | ... | than war              |
| श्रेयः              | ... | greater good          |
| अन्यत्              | ... | other                 |
| क्षत्रियस्य         | ... | to a Kshatriya        |
| न विद्यते           | ... | there is not          |

"Further, even looking to your own duty, you ought not to falter. For, there is no greater good to a Kshatriya than righteous war".

In verse 29 of the first chapter, Arjuna said that his limbs failed, mouth was parched, body quivered and hair stood on end. In answer to these manifestations of weakness, the Lord now says, "remember your duty and do not quiver."

In verse No. 31 of chapter I, Arjuna said that he saw no advantage or good from slaying kinsmen. The reply is now given, that there is no greater good, nothing more welcome or honourable to a soldier, than a righteous war.

The teaching began with No. 11 of chapter II. The Lord said, "you grieved for those you should not grieve for, and spoke words of random thought". Up to verse 30, the impropriety of the grief was discussed and reasons adduced therefor. The Lord proceeds from the present verse, in 8 verses, to answer Arjuna's plausible words of wisdom.

As has been remarked before, the Sanskrit word 'Dharma' is virtually untranslatable. It conveys many a subtle sense and shade of thought. Pre-eminently, it emphasizes the idea of duty. A Kshatriya is bound to fight. Such is his duty. As to Arjuna, he is bound to do so by reason of his caste. He is also bound by the duty of kingship. He ought to fight, for, he is naturally a brave warrior. Courage is his nature, not weakness or cowardice. He is asked, by being pointed out his *Dharma*, to do what his caste, royal birth and natural predisposition, oblige him to do. Descending from philosophy to morals, Sri Krishna appeals to Arjuna as an honourable soldier not to shrink from duty, however irksome the performance of it, and the consequence. True heroism ever lies in a scrupulous discharge of one's own duty without fear. Whether the soul be mortal or otherwise, and whatever is destiny. Arjuna was told to fight, irrespective of all extraneous considerations.

Under any circumstances, the soldier is bound to fight, whatever the ethics of its cause. As a mere soldier, he does his duty and pays no thought to the casuistries about the origin of the war. If, however the war happens also to be just and righteous, the obligatoriness of the duty is enhanced and multiplied. The ethical character of the war primarily concerns the statesmen and the politicians at the helm of affairs. It concerns the king and his chief ministers. If Arjuna should deem himself responsible, in any sense, for the initiation of the proceedings, Sri Krishna reminds him once more that this war is धर्म्य (just and righteous) and that there is no occasion at all for compunctions of conscience.

Our conception of '*Dharma*' as the upholder of order and promoter of progress, rests on scriptural injunctions and commands. What the Veda has laid down is *Dharma*. Manu and other writers are only its expounders.

The reader has to observe the subtle difference of idea conveyed by the two lines of this verse. The first line lays down the rigid compulsion of duty. The second line says, if the war be also just, all the greater honour is the result. Sri Krishna does not avoid the vexed question of casuistry whether a soldier is or is not to shut his eyes to the origin of the war. He says, he might fight in any case, and adds, that he derives special glory if his side happens to be the righteous one.

An important point in connection with this war regarded as धर्मयुद्ध may be noticed. The Pandus were

right and the Kurus, were wrong. Hence, Arjuna was ranged on the right side. Apart from this sense, this is धर्मयुद्ध in another point of view also. When the preliminaries were under preparation, the Kurus, Pandavas and Somakas had met through plenipotentiaries, and settled important details of procedure. Among others, it was understood that all dishonourable tactics, generally condemned in civilized warfare, should be eschewed. For instance, children, women, weaklings, invalids, ambassadors, heralds and musicians were not to be attacked. An armed warrior should not assail an unarmed or disarmed opponent. As infantryman was not to be assailed by a cavalier or a charioteer. Rules of fair play had been rigidly agreed on. A battle thus arranged and carried out is a धर्मयुद्ध and the soldier therein engaged covers himself with honour.

धर्म means also, in Sanskrit "the bow". Sri Krishna found the famous Gandeeva of Arjuna lying down rejected and neglected below the chariot. Gandeeva had been acquired through herculean efforts. It possessed eight supernatural adjuncts in the shape of arrows whose power was both moral and physical. (*Vide* Notes on verse 30, chapter I). Sri Krishna asks Arjuna to look at his Gandeeva and decide whether it was right he should lay it aside. He was not doing justice to his great and supernatural weapon, the Lord gently points out.

धर्म here may also be a correct reference to his elder brother of that name. The Lord requests Arjuna to take Yudhishtira into consideration. Bheema and



Arjuna were relied on by him as towers of strength. He had launched on this war from an unlimited trust in their strength and support. Was Arjuna to give up his brother and king, at this critical juncture, although, as appears from a speech of Arjuna addressed to Yudhishtira in Udyoga Parva, Arjuna had pledged his word that he would kill the Kaurava host with the help of Vasudeva. (*Vide Sanskrit quotation*).

धर्म means God, the universal upholder and sustainer, Vishnu. The war is धर्म्य, because, carried out in a truly religious spirit, as a sacrifice for duty – regardless of consequences, self or power, simply as a piece of Divine worship, it lifts the soldier to Heaven. Arjuna was worrying himself over the motives of this war, whether conquest and wealth were worth acquiring at the demanded price. The Lord replies that he was not to fight for lucre, but for the sake of Dharma (God) and simply to please Him. This is an aspect of the question that Monists do not seem to approve of. To my mind, this is the one lesson which the Bhagavad Geeta is not tired of inculcating over and over again, throughout the 18 chapters of the work.

With this verse, no doubt, a new point of view is commenced in the teaching. This is conceded by all. But Sankarananda takes occasion to have a fling at Arjuna here. He says that the new topic, hereby commenced, is based on the circumstance that Arjuna had failed to grasp the Monism taught in the preceding 20 verses. Had he done so, the Lord would have desisted from further teaching and allowed that

Arjuna might renounce all work. But Arjuna continued in ignorance, and to one in his position, the Lord decided that work was the proper prescription. Hence, the new topic is begun and Arjuna was called on to mind his duty and engage in work.

There are several fallacies in this note of Sankarananda: (1) that work and duty are the lot of only the so-called ignorant, while the seer is irresponsibly free, (2) that Arjuna was an ignoramus and failed to grasp the Lord's foregoing lesson, and (3) that war is incapable of being fought by any warrior in a selfless spirit, so as, by itself, to lead to wisdom and Heaven.

Ramanujacharya raises a subtle point in regarding war as a kind of *yaga* or sacrifice. It is said that, in sacrifices, an animal (sheep) is slaughtered. He rejects the creed that recommends *flour-substitutes* as victims; for Desikar says that this practice is confined to *Krita* age only. Taking it then that an animal is bound to be slaughtered, the point is discussed whether such an act means not injury at least to the victim (पशुहिंसा). The conclusion is arrived at that the act is no harm, for, the sheep ascends to heaven after the process, just as a surgical operation, though painful for the moment, is no harm. So, it is said, that the victim in a sacrifice or in battle, is not harmed by the death it or he suffers, because, it or he gets to heaven, and attains fresh and more glorious bodies. This position is somewhat elaborately sought to be demonstrated by Sruti and Smriti texts in Tatparya Chandrika.

I fail to follow the reasoning. In the first place, the view of Sri Madhwa, that *flour-substitues* alone should be resorted to even in the present age, is rejected by Desikar with scant courtesy and consideration. An episode occurs at the end of Shanti Parva, where it is related that Devas and Rishis debated this very point, the former upholding live-victims and the later, vegetable substitutes. The issue was referred to king Uparichara, a Vasu, and we are told that he gave a wrong judgement from partiality to Devas. The result was that the Rishis cursed him, and he fell from his heavenly region, into a hole of the earth. The Devas however showed him their gratitude by prescribing the sacrificial streaks of ghee, known as *Vasudhara*, to be dedicated to him. In this episode, it is found that the Rishis pointed out, by way of argument, that the Yuga they lived in was Krita (particularly advanced in righteousness).

I do not see how this episode proves the point of Desikar that, in other ages, animal slaughter is enjoined, and that, in Krita alone, it is forbidden. If it is forbidden, even in Krita, it is much more so in the other ages, when people are less able and competent to conquer the sin of animal slaughter.

Assuming, however, that animal slaughter is lawful, the next question is whether it is not harm to the victim. Undoubtedly it is, though it may not be a forbidden act. The judge whips or hangs a criminal. It is certainly a harm, but is not a *crime*, as it is sanctioned by the law. So, in sacrifices, the animal is harmed, but the harm is authorized and sanctioned by the sacerdotal law. Similarly in war, soldiers are

maimed or killed. They are harmed. But the killer is exempt from punishment, for, it is an authorized duty of his to do so. In scores of places in Mahabharata and elsewhere, we find passages saying, "harm to animals is forbidden except in sacrifices." There is no meaning in excepting sacrifices, if what is done therein constitutes no harm at all, as is vehemently contended. Then again, there is no authority for the position that a dishonourable soldier (like Duryodhana) is bound to reach Heaven or obtain glorious births, simply because he is killed in a war.

Lastly, if Sri Krishna meant to say that Arjuna ought to fight, because his victims would thereby reach Heaven and obtain glorious bodies, He would have said so in clearer words. Among the arguments to prevail on Arjuna to fight, it is nowhere stated that he should do so because it would be a service to the victims. The analogy of the surgical operation is not of much value. For the moment it is harm, but it has to be endured for the greater good in prospect. Hence, the argument that neither in sacrifice nor in battle is any harm done to the victim, seems to be a far-fetched position based on fallacious logic.

32) यदृच्छयाचोपपन्नं स्वर्गद्वारमपावृतम् ।  
सुखिनः क्षत्रियाः पार्थ लभन्ते युद्धमीदृशम् ॥

|          |     |                |
|----------|-----|----------------|
| यदृच्छया | ... | By chance      |
| च        | ... | alone          |
| उपपन्नं  | ... | has come about |



|              |     |                       |
|--------------|-----|-----------------------|
| स्वर्गद्वारं | ... | as the gate of heaven |
| अपावृतं      | ... | of open door          |
| सुखिनः       | ... | blessed               |
| क्षत्रियाः   | ... | the Kshatriyas        |
| पार्थ        | ... | Arjuna                |
| लभन्ते       | ... | who come by           |
| युद्धं       | ... | a fight               |
| ईदृशं        | ..  | like this             |

"O ! Partha, blessed are the Kshatriyas who come by a war like this, which has turned up, unsought, as an open door to heaven."

In verse 37 of chapter I, Arjuna protests against the idea of killing his kinsmen and deriving happiness therefrom. The Lord replies now, saying, "Blessed indeed are the Kshatriyas who obtain such a chance."

The reader has to note the force of ईदृश ("like this") at the end of the verse. The antecedent is to be found in the previous verse, and in the first line of the present verse. It was a righteous war in which justice and right were on the side of the Pandavas. Very often, soldiers go through their military career without getting the chance of a single stroke of fight. Even if they get the chance, it may happen that their side is the wrong side, ranged against right and justice. It falls to the lot of very few to fight in a just cause. Such a chance has befallen to Arjuna.

A war like this! Truly, its further merits are that it has come about as an open door to heaven. For, every human endeavour had been made to avert the impending carnage. Sri Krishna Himself had been sent as an ambassador. The Pandus had relinquished their claim to the greater part of their birthright and limited it to five villages. But all the efforts had proved abortive. The reply had come from the enemy declining even a pin-prick of ground. Hence the war was one quite unsought and unprovoked by the Pandus. It had been forced on them. Though unsought, it was not a causeless result. The enemy's greed was one of the causes. But behind it all, was the Divine will which casts and shapes the destinies of History. Sri Krishna could have brought about peace, had it been His will and wish. For Divine purposes, He had willed the gaming match and the chain of blood-curdling wrongs that followed in its wake. It was His will that the belligerents should fight and the overburdened Earth lightened of its weight by the riddance of her unworthy hosts. So He acted the part of a mere human ambassador, bore the message faithfully, and returned as if discomfited by the result. The expression यदृच्छया points to this aspect and conveys the hint that a Divine agency had brought it about and furnished to Arjuna the chance of reaping a rich reward of glory here and hereafter. To His Holiness Raghavendra Swamin, we are indebted for this interpretation of यदृच्छया. No other commentator has drawn attention to it. No true theist can reconcile himself to any result brought on by mere chance or accident. He recognises no chance whatever in the

economy of nature. God is ever at work in every movement of nature. Not a blade of grass can shake its head, but is goaded by Him to do so.

A commentator (Venkatanatha) raises a doubt whether the war in question that is said to have come about unsought, is the entire war with the Kaurava host, or only the impending battle with Drona and Bheeshma, and inclines to the latter position as the true view. In verse 4 of chapter II, Arjuna refers pointedly to the battle with Bheeshma and Drona as particularly unbecoming. The annotator seizes hold of this and argues that, though the war as a whole had been deliberately planned and arranged as against Duryodhana and others, yet so far as the two worthies, Bheeshma and Drona, were concerned, the Pandavas had not sought a battle with *them*. They offered battle to Duryodhana, and the two revered men had, of their own accord, interposed in the fight, regardless of justice and propriety. Thus, the encounter with the two eminent warriors had presented itself unsought, and this was the *open-sesame* of Heaven's gateway.

In thus limiting the unsolicited war in question to the duel with the two leaders, Venkatanatha is torturing the text undoubtedly, a feat in which he is supposed not to be an adept and from which, it is claimed for him, he scrupulously abstains. Though verse No.4 of chapter II speaks pointedly of the two leaders, the whole speech of Arjuna has to be considered, in various parts of which he bemoans the situation of fighting Duryodhana and other kinsmen. That the carnage was unsought is the merit that the Lord insists on to save the conscience of Arujuna,

and the force of the argument is irresistibly great, if the reference be understood as applying to the war as a whole, and not limited to the section relating to the encounter of Bheeshma and Drona.

‘स्वर्गद्वारं’ ॥ The term ‘Swarga’ primarily denotes heavenly happiness or pleasures. In a secondary sense, it denotes the Heavenly abode of Devas (the shining ones). Smriti writers warmly eulogize the fighting soldier and lay down *Swarga* as his reward. Sruti texts also support this proposition.

‘अपावृतं’ refers to the ‘door being open’. The idea is that no barrier obstructs the passage to Heaven. This epithet may be understood as qualifying the door of Heaven स्वर्गद्वारं which, it describes, as *open*; or it may be an independent epithet directly qualifying युद्धं (war). In the latter sense, it means, without any reference to the notion of any door being open, that the war is free from any obstructive compunctions of sinfulness, and that no conscientious scruples need deter the soldier from engagement therein.

Laying stress on this word (अपावृतं, =open) Madhusoodana thinks that the verse under comment speaks of death in battle in the first line and of success in battle in the second line. Assuming that the soldier fails and dies, there is Heaven for him next door. As death releases him from the human prison, it amounts to the door being thrown open and he steps forward at once and unfettered. If he succeed, he may have to live out the life of victory, and, to this extent, the door of heaven is yet unopen.



With all respect, it seems to me that अपावृत्तं is not used to lay emphasis on the quickness of the time within which death makes it possible for a person to enter Heaven, nor does it point to the facilities afforded by an immediate death. It simply points to the absence of any bar. Whether he dies, or wins and lives, so far as heaven is concerned, it remains open for him whenever he chooses to step in. In this view, it is needless to distinguish the first line as applying to the contingency of death and defeat, and the second line to that to victory.

Many a commentator discusses in this connection, in commenting on अपावृत्तं, whether the carnage of war is beset with sin or not. A Smṛiti text of general application deprecates injury, in every sense, in battle or out of it. Another text forbids injury to Brahmins like Drona, and elders like Bheeshma. A third text absolves the killer in battle or in self-defence, from guilt. The question arises as to how the conflict can be harmonized. As between such texts, it is an accepted rule of interpretation that the one based on invisible reasons, such as heavenly merit, weighs against those that have visible fruits as their basis. Judged by the canon, the law of self-defence is weaker than the law of universal harmlessness, because the former rests on selfishness and the latter does not. Thus arguing, Arjuna may show that to injure Duryodhana, Bheeshma and Drona, is sinful, because it is sanctioned by an inferior text of ethics. To this, Sri Krishna replies that the war in question is free from every taint of sin, because the texts sanctioning it are as valid and weighty as the other texts. The true stand-

point of the fighting soldier should be, as the Lord proceeds to point out in verse 38, chapter II, that he is called on to fight, not in self-defence nor for pelf, power or glory, but because duty demands it and Divine pleasure is the only true reward of it. A fight for the sake of fruits is sordid, and is deprecated. Freed from the sordid basis, it is permissible to fight and kill whomsoever the exigencies of the war present as opponents.

अपावृत्तं (=free from compunctions of sin) is thus an expressive term disposing of the vexed ethics which Arjuna formulated his objections. The text that no animal shall be injured becomes, therefore, limited in application to the region outside the battle-field and outside whatever is sanctioned by special texts.

As to the true meaning of the second line of the verse, there is some difference between Ramanujacharya and other commentators. To come by a war of this kind which affords special opportunities, can be the result of pre-obtained merit alone. If the warrior is possessed of this special पुण्य (merit) he obtains the chance. This notion is expressed by the second line which says, "blessed are the Kshatriyas who come by such a war". The blessing or the merit denoted by सुखिनः, is the preceding *Punya* that brings about the opportunity. Vedanta Desikar has a long note as to how the word सुख means 'merit'. I refer the reader to the Sanskrit exposition if he is interested in the etymological subtlety.

Another construction that seems equally admissible and is approved of by Vivriti, Sankaracharya

and others, is that whoever obtains the opportunity of fighting is a blessed man in the sense that he derives *in future* the pleasures conquest and the heavenly reward too. Vedanta Desikar repudiates this meaning saying that the *precedent* merit alone is meant by the term, and not the succeeding fruits. He thinks that if the consequential blessings were also meant, the term स्वर्गद्वार (=door to Heaven) would be superfluous. It seems to me with all deference, that the tautology feared is rather imaginary. The future blessing conveyed by सुखिनः is expressed, in a very general manner, embracing temporal enjoyments as well as those of after-life. Even the latter enjoyments are not confined to *swarga* but to happiness of every grade and kind up to *Moksha*. But the word स्वर्गद्वार points only to the blessings of a technical heaven known as *Swarga*.

33) अथ चेत्त्वमिमं धर्म्यं संग्रामं न करिष्यसि ।  
ततस्त्वधर्मं कीर्तिं च हित्वा पापमवाप्स्यसि ॥

|            |     |                             |
|------------|-----|-----------------------------|
| अथ         | ... | But then; on the other hand |
| चेत्       | ... | if                          |
| त्वं       | ... | you                         |
| इमं        | ... | this                        |
| धर्म्यं    | ... | just, dutiful               |
| संग्रामं   | ... | war                         |
| न करिष्यसि | ... | you will not carry out      |

|            |     |                 |
|------------|-----|-----------------|
| ततः        | ... | thereby         |
| स्वधर्मं   | ... | your own duty   |
| कीर्तिं च  | ... | and honour      |
| हित्वा     | ... | abandoning      |
| पापं       | ... | sin             |
| अवाप्स्यसि | ... | you will incur. |

“But then, if you will not fight this just war, you will thereby incur sin by abandoning your own duty and honour”.

Sri Krishna depicts the consequences of retreating from the fight. He devotes four verses to draw this picture. The first of them, the present one, tells Arjuna of the sin resulting from a neglect of duty and of the loss of honour. The Lord does not omit to point out that the war is righteous. He takes care to keep this point well in prominence.

The pronoun इमं (=“this”) is significant. It draws attention to the meritorious nature of the struggle, as already pointed out. It conveys the same meaning as ईदृशं in the *preceeding* verse.

Ramanjacharya and his commentator read इमं in another light. If abstention from fight be always sinful, one must be sinning constantly even in times of peace. As this cannot be, it is sinful only when a battle has begun and the soldier will not fight. To denote this, the pronoun इमं (=this) is used to indicate that the fight had well-nigh begun. No doubt, this



emphasis on the pronoun is ingenious. But it seems based on the notion that Arjuna would not have incurred sin if the preparations had not gone too far to retreat, but that, at the present juncture, however, it was sinful. I venture to think that Arjuna would have acted sinfully even if he had not started the war at all. The fight in question was meant to be a vindication of justice. It was as much his duty to have initiated and started it as it was to carry it out after its commencement. Hence, no force is readable in this pronoun in this particular direction that, the war having already begun, Arjuna ought not to retire.

Ramanujacharya emphasizes त्वं the second person pronoun also, and thinks that, as Arjuna was a Kshatriya, he ought not to desist from the fight. It is wrong for 'you' to desist, implying that, for a Brahmin, Vysia or Sudra, the ethics was otherwise.

In verse 36 Chapter I, Arjuna urged vehemently that to fight with kinsmen was sinful. The Lord uses the same word पापं and turns the tables on him by pointing out that sin would surely be incurred if he retired and not if he fought.

Let us examine how sin is said to be incurred. To abandon Dharma is sinful. Dharma conveys many a sense, as pointed out under verse No.31. It means the soldier's duty, the duty of the prince, the vedic command, the bow Gandevea, the brother Yudhishtira, and God Himself. Abandonment of Dharma is to forsake all these, and it was a great delinquency, from the social, moral and religious points of view.

It is interesting to see what extreme importance was attached to an honest performance of one's own duty. Dharma Sastras codified the functions of nations, castes, communities and individuals. The occupation of every one was fixed, and the most scrupulous adherence to one's duty was enjoined on every one in the name of penalties here and hereafter. Some thinkers say that caste itself had an occupational origin. From the Mahabharata, it is abundantly clear that no man who did his duty honourably was looked down upon because his occupation implied offence to so-called good taste and refinement. Professor Rangachariar instances *Dharma Vyadha*, the holy hunter, who was held in great honour. They carried this notion so far that a robber chieftain *Kayavya* is mentioned in chapter 135, Santi Parva, who attained honour, glory and heaven, because he respected the wise, the aged, infirm and the fair sex, in practising brigandage.

Modern civilization, not infrequently, indulges in a fling against antiquity. We are apt to think, in the elation of modern education, that ancient India was torn by barbarous wars carried on, for the sole ends of greed, in brutal and cruel ways. As an eye-opener, many a passage could be quoted from Mahabharata, Manu and other works, which speak of elaborate rules regulating conditions and terms of धर्मयुद्ध (=honourable warfare). One such passage is quoted under verse 31. Another from Manu will be found in the Sanskrit exposition of the present verse. It enjoins on every honourable soldier not to practice fraudulent tactics, not to take a mean advantage of the enemies' slips, – and not to injure the eunuch,

the supplicant, the sleeper, the undressed, the unarmed, the unready, the spectator, the wounded, the coward and the fleeing. This compels us to concede that high thoughts and civilized deeds are no monopolies of modern times.

The ideal held out in the present verse is that an act is good or bad, not according to intrinsic tests but in relation to the position in society of the individual and the rules, unwritten or written, regulating his conduct. When an act is ascertained to be the Dharma of any one, the performance thereof is an obligation productive of merit, and the violation or neglect thereof is an offence against God and religion. True religion as well as true morality takes greater note of motives than of deeds and respects duty done for duty's sake.

In India, the enforcement of individual and communal duties – occupational or otherwise – is associated with religious sanctions and penalties. Manu says that the deserter of the army, and the coward who flees from the field and gets killed, incurs serious sin. He draws unto himself all the demerits of the victor and passes unto the latter, his own merits in exchange. In this connection, I may note an observation of Brahmananda Giri. This annotator thinks that as religious rites are divisible into three groups, (1) the constant, (2) the occasional, and (3) the selfish, Sandhyavandana of Dwijas coming under the first head, Sraddhas under the second, and purposeful sacrifices under the third, war comes only under the last heading, waged, as it is and can be, only

for victory and dominion. In respect to this class of Karma, known as *Kamya*, there can be no obligation on the part of anybody to conceive a desire and engage in any ritual or work for that end. It follows that non-performance of a *Kamya* cannot be sinful. Venkatanatha formulates this objection and proceeds to answer the same. He quotes authority to show that even *Kamya* sacrifices, *once begun*, must be gone through and completed, in due course, and if this is not done, sin follows to the master. War, once begun, must similarly be carried through, and any failure or neglect results in sin.

Looking at the objection and the reply, I venture to think that the reply is neither sound nor satisfactory. The objector labours under a delusion in thinking that wars are capable of being waged only for selfish ends. Over and over again, the Bhagavad Geeta repeats that Arjuna should fight, not for his own glory, not for wealth and dominion, but because it was his duty to fight evil and uphold Dharma. Venkatanatha seems to have lost sight of this fundamental doctrine of Geetic philosophy. Instead of silencing the objection by saying that war is not necessarily a *Kamya karma*, he frames a reply in a weak apologetic strain and says that Arjuna had gone too far to recede and must get through the entire task to avoid sin attaching to incomplete performances.

In adverting to loss of name or honour (कीर्ति हित्वा), Sri Krishna touches on another important key. Good name is dear to every one and is most precious to a soldier. It is a valuable asset to be guarded with jealousy.



To despise it means a defiance of society and public opinion, for which, again, the penalty is sin.

From the juxtaposition of duty and honour the implication is that the greatest honour and glory that any person can earn lies in a just reputation that he did his duty and never swerved from it. Worldly men may rejoice to hear their wealth, rank, learning or ability, extolled, but true honour lies in this satisfaction that the public appreciate him as a scrupulous fulfiller of duty.

Vedanta teaches us to disregard praise and blame as equally contemptible. An oft-quoted verse of Bhagavata (see Sanskrit portion) says that no man ought to heed praise or blame because neither could affect the soul. This teaching is not to be understood as encouraging a defiance of the social, moral and religious regulations. What it means is that no person engaged in a true worship of God, or a performance of righteous work, should be deterred therefrom by the censure or praise of ignorant people.

Thinking a little over the exhortation impliedly conveyed by the verse that कीर्ति was not to be despised, the reader may see that it is susceptible of a higher and a lower interpretation. 'Fame is the last infirmity of noble minds' says Milton, in Lycidas. Vanity is a weak spot of human nature, which, if tickled, delights the most self-denying soul. The Lord touches this key and expects a response in Arjuna's heart. The prospect was pictured to him of winning a great name among the heroes of the world. A great victory was within his reach and, if he secured it, a world-wide

renown would be his. If he fought, Mahadeva and the Gods would go down to admire his might and skill. If, however, he turned a recluse, all this fame so loveable and desirable, would be lost. He should therefore elect to fight for the sake of renown.

This interpretation is one that I regard as pitched on a lower key than another that suggests itself. In this, there is a view of sordid allurements, somewhat inconsistent with the high tone of the Lord's teaching. Though honesty is the best policy, he who acts on that ground is not an honest man. If Arjuna was to engage in action for the sake of renown, he would be as mercenary as if he did for the sake of the throne. That every man should do his appointed task only for the sake of God is the right attitude inculcated throughout in the Geeta.

It therefore seems appropriate not to render क्रीर्ति into renown or reputation, but to take it as denoting *honour* rather than fame. The appeal is addressed not to Arjuna's latent or patent vanity but to a delicate sense of honour. There is no greater honour to a great man than that he never swerved from his proper task and rectitude. It would matter little to such a man whether the world applauded his archery, his strength, his skill and his glory, or not. But it would matter everything to him that he commanded the respect of the world for honour. As Dharma and Keerti went together, Arjuna would lose both at one stroke, if he fled from the field. But if he stuck to Dharma in the right spirit, regardless of fruits or fame, he acquired पुण्य, and along with it, honour to boot, as its inseparable and indispensable accompaniment and symbol.

34) अकीर्तिं चापि भूतानि कथयिष्यन्ति तेऽव्ययाम् ।  
संभावितस्य चाकीर्तिर्मरणादतिरिच्यते ॥

|             |     |                        |
|-------------|-----|------------------------|
| अकीर्तिम्   | ... | dishonour, disgrace    |
| च अपि       | ... | and also               |
| भूतानि      | ... | beings                 |
| कथयिष्यन्ति | ... | will speak of          |
| ते          | ... | your                   |
| अव्ययां     | ... | undying                |
| संभावितस्य  | ... | of one who is honoured |
| च           | ... | but                    |
| अकीर्तिः    | ... | disgrace               |
| मरणात्      | ... | than death             |
| अतिरिच्यते  | ... | is greater             |

"And moreover, all beings will speak of your undying disgrace. As to one who is honoured, disgrace is more serious than death."

अकीर्तिं here denotes not a mere negation or absence of renown, but positive dishonour, disgrace and shame.

The previous verse spoke of sin. The word sin points to the terrors of a future life, and the sufferings that may come, it may be, after a long interval of time. More immediate and proximate is the agony of widespread shame that increases in volume and intensity as it passes from mouth to mouth and

generation to generation. Arjuna is not an insignificant nobody who has no name to lose. A contemptible coward may pass away unwept and unhonoured, but one of Arjuna's greatness, who always commanded universal respect, must feel excruciating torture at the loss of that precious possession known as honour. "Who steals my purse steals trash", says Shakespeare. Purse is nothing, every other possession is nothing, compared to honour.

Ramanujacharya says that generic term "Beings" भूतानि is used here to denote the fact that every one, be he a competent and respectable person himself or not, will join in censuring such a non-dutiful coward.

Madhusoodana thinks that the object of the generic term is to include even gods in the reference. In Heaven, gods will censure him as despicable. On Earth, men will censure his descendants as the family of disreputable ancestors.

The undying shame, here spoken of, is said to be (by Ramanujacharya) one extending over every region and for all time. It is difficult to make out from the term अव्ययां, the idea of prevalence in every region of space. Desikar explains that the concomitance between eternal prevalence and universal prevalence is indispensable.

It is to be noted that there are heaps of texts in Manu and elsewhere, advising men about the prudence and wisdom of health, strength and long life. These texts condemn reckless engagement in strife



and lay down the value of life as the first basis of Dharma. Then again, in Raja Dharma, kings are strongly advised to resort to peaceful expedients to gain their ends. They are asked to try negotiation, gifts and internal dissension, to succeed over an enemy, and not to think of war, because success is always uncertain therein (*Vide* passage in the Sanskrit portion.)

As between texts that inculcate an avoidance of strife and those that enjoin fight, the conflict is however only apparent. The former advise but prudence and expediency. The law of self preservation is but a rule of practical wisdom and does not set at nought the Dharma Sastras that lay down man's duty in serious situations. No considerations of self-preservation or prudence ought to hinder the warrior from placing his life at the disposal of his country and his sovereign if duty demand the sacrifice.

"Death is preferable to dishonour". In these words, Sri Krishna touches a chord bound to vibrate. It is the key-note of the national sentiment among Kshatriyas, in the epic age at any rate. Every Kshatriya, then and for centuries since, held his life as nought, compared with honour. Fierce and unbending valour was the very breath of his nostril. Even in recent times, the heroism of Rajputs was fashioned on this basis and model. Historic scenes of Rajput courage, and tragedies, in which princesses and ladies were consigned to fire before their fathers and husbands rushed to death in the field, tell a tale of high-pitched honour and courage, incomprehensible at present. Todd's Rajasthan describes a Boondi queen

whose long-dry maternal breast poured forth a jet of milk at the news that her prince had died in battle covered with wounds as well as glory. Hence, the reference to shame being more serious than death must have been exceedingly telling to Arjuna.

35) भयाद्रणादुपरतं मंस्यन्ते त्वां महारथाः ।  
येषां च त्वं बहुमतो भूत्वा यास्यसि लाघवस् ॥

|           |     |                        |
|-----------|-----|------------------------|
| भयात्     | ... | out of fear, cowardice |
| रणात्     | ... | from the battle        |
| उपरतं     | ... | as having retired      |
| मंस्यन्ते | ... | regard                 |
| त्वां     | ... | you                    |
| महारथाः   | ... | the great car-warriors |
| येषां     | ... | by whom                |
| च         | ... | however, indeed        |
| त्वं      | ... | you                    |
| बहुमतः    | ... | esteemed high          |
| भूत्वा    | ... | having been            |
| यास्यसि   | ... | will meet with         |
| लाघवं     | ... | disregard, contempt    |

“The great car-warriors will regard you as having retreated from battle out of cowardice. Having been indeed, esteemed high by them, you will meet with contempt in their very eyes”.

Virtually the Lord says, ‘You will not be understood to have fled from the field from altruistic con-

siderations. Whatever be your true motives, the world will not understand them nor appreciate them. Men are, generally speaking, prone to be uncharitable. You have to face obloquy, in spite of your being a warrior of tried heroism'.

It is not the common folk alone that will attribute your action to cowardice. Even the great car-warriors will do the same. For, the duty of a heroic soldier is well known to car-warriors, that there ought to be no place in his heart for philanthropy of this kind. There are only two inferences open to them, either that you forsook duty, or fled from cowardice. They would elect the latter inference, because they could not reconcile themselves to the other alternative that you knew not the well-known and well-established Dharma".

The 'car-warriors' who would think ill of Arjuna may mean all the leaders on both sides, or it may be a reference to men like Duryodhana and Karna who bore a special grudge to Arjuna and watched eagerly for opportunities of maligning him. Even on a former occasion, when the Pandavas limited their claim to five villages and used for peace, Duryodhana at once inferred from it that the Pandavas were afraid of war, that they felt unequal to him and hence were willing to accept humiliating terms. Sri Krishna has in mind the calumny sure to be started and proclaimed by evil-minded leaders ever bent on Arjuna's disgrace.

"It is further pointed out that the calumny ought to be gall and wormwood to Arjuna, because it meant degradation in the esteem of his peers. Every man

is keen about retaining his level among his equals. His emulations, aspirations and ambitions, are shaped in relation to the section of society in which he is born or in which his lot is cast. No one worries himself about the rank, wealth, capacity and talents, of grades far above him and far below him. The Brahmin aspires to be great in spiritual lore. The Kshatriya wishes to be great in his own sphere; and even among Kshatriyas, the ambitions of the common soldier are pitched in a different key from those of the Prince.

Hence, Arjuna might not care for the disdain of a miscellaneous public. But he would feel it most poignantly, if Duryodhana and Karna, for instance, indulged in merriments of disdain at his expense. But yesterday, Arjuna was dreaded, because he was deemed invulnerably mighty. Car-warriors on both sides esteemed him high among them. Friends among them were proud of him and the enemies devised, in fear, ways and means to overcome him. Today, if he fled, none would fall so low as he, because the degradation was in the eyes of the very people who had recently dreaded and esteemed his prowess.

There are four points in this verse which are well brought out and which may bear repetition.

1) The Lord says, 'Lay not the flattering unction to your soul that the world can always understand and appreciate your motives under circumstances of equivocal inference.

2) Think not that common folk alone would think and speak ill of you. Even distinguished men will do so.



3) There would be two grounds at least for attributing your conduct to cowardice rather than to any other cause.

a) You are presumed to know, what every soldier ought to know, that duty enjoins fight and that you should not give way to tenderness. Presuming this knowledge, men will take it that you fled from fear rather than that you acted in ignorance and violation of duty.

b) They would argue that if you were really soft-hearted, you would not have launched on the war at all, and that, as your retreat came off only at the awful moment of blows, it was cowardice rather than philanthropy that actuated you. (उपरतं denotes this).

4) Do not think that you could bear this calumny complacently. It is bitter enough anyhow, in all conscience, but proceeding from the very people who dreaded you and esteemed you, its bitterness is magnified a million-fold thereby.

36) अवाच्यवादांश्च बहून्वदिष्यन्ति तवाहिताः ।  
निन्दन्तस्तव सामर्थ्यं ततो दुःखतरं नु किम् ॥

|              |     |                     |
|--------------|-----|---------------------|
| अवाच्यवादान् | ... | unspeakable slander |
| च            | ... | and                 |
| बहून्        | ... | all sorts of        |
| वदिष्यन्ति   | ... | will speak out      |
| तव           | ... | your                |

|           |     |               |
|-----------|-----|---------------|
| अहिताः    | ... | enemies       |
| निन्दन्तः | ... | detractors of |
| तव        | ... | your          |
| सामर्थ्यं | ... | prowess       |
| ततः       | ... | than that     |
| दुःखतरं   | ... | more painful  |
| नु        | ... | verily        |
| किम्      | ... | what is       |

“Your enemies will publish all sorts of unspeakable slander, being detractors of your prowess. What, indeed, is more painful than that?”

Arjuna was told of the sin resulting from breach of duty and loss of honour. The penalties of hell were thus drawn attention to.

Decending from this, Sri Krishna devotes three verses 34, 35, 36 to temporal disasters. Shame and disgrace, more painful than death, stared him in the face if he swerved from the right path (verse 34). More serious than this, would be the disdain of car-warriors, who, having recently feared and respected him, would now scorn him as a coward (verse 35). Still more serious, again, than this, would be the slander of enemies and detractors indulging in all sorts of scandal (verse 36). Step by step, appeal is made in verse after verse to the shame, distain and slander, that would make life an insufferable burden to him.

The present verse is the reply to a possible view that, though Car-warriors might think ill of him, his

enemies would rather feel grateful for his retirement from the scene. They might feel an immense relief that a powerful opponent was out of the way. The Lord replies, 'not so; your enemies, ever eager to pull down your merits, would be the first to spread scandal of you, and their slander would be all sorts of unutterable lies so piercing and painful to endure'.

There were four points Arjuna had to remember: (1) the scandal-mongers were enemies. Bearing no love or good-will, they would not fail to make capital out of this excellent opportunity to cavil at him.

(2) They were already eager to belittle his merits (निन्दन्तः)

(3) Actuated by enmity and engaged in cavilling, they would not hesitate to indulge in false and wicked scandal. They would freely give vent to unutterable slander (अवाच्यवादान्).

(4) Friendly criticism or censure may be endurable, but carping criticism actuated by bitter animus, as wicked as it was false, would be simply unendurable (दुःखतरं).

In explanation of the agonizing situation, one circumstance may be mentioned as an illustration. His vilifiers would call him a coward and attack his honour and manliness. In doing so, they would talk ill of his pet Gandeewa and use language of scorn about it. By reason of plighted troth, Arjuna would then feel bound to fight with and chastise the calumniator. But, by reason of renunciation, he could not get back into the scenes of strife. The alternatives

would be to give battle or bear with compacency what no chivalrous or honourable person could bear. We are told, in fact, that Arjuna set so much value on plighted troth, that he once started a duel with his own elder brother Dharmaputra when the latter unguardedly and inadvertently chanced to condemn Gandeeva in a fit of smarting vexation.

37) हतो वा प्राप्स्यसि स्वर्गं जित्वा वा भोक्ष्यसे महीम् ।  
तस्मादुत्तिष्ठ कौन्तेय युद्धाय कृतनिश्चयः ॥

|             |     |                           |
|-------------|-----|---------------------------|
| हतः वा      | ... | if killed                 |
| प्राप्स्यसि | ... | you get to                |
| स्वर्गं     | ... | Swarga, Heaven            |
| जित्वा, वा  | ... | or by conquering          |
| भोक्ष्यसे   | ... | you will enjoy            |
| महीम्       | ... | the earth                 |
| तस्मात्     | ... | therefore                 |
| उत्तिष्ठ    | ... | stand up                  |
| कौन्तेय     | ... | O! son of Kunttee         |
| युद्धाय     | ... | for the fight             |
| कृतनिश्चयः  | ... | after making up your mind |

"If killed, you get to Swarga; or, by conquering, you will enjoy the Earth. Therefore, stand up, O! son of Kunttee, for the fight, making up your mind."

This verse presents two alternatives, Swarga attained by the killed and earthly dominion secured



by the victor. Either way, the reward held out would appear to be of a mercenary nature. Thus the verse apparently deals only with काम्य (or purposeful work). So say some commentators. Ramanujacharya reads it, however, as implying not only dominion and Swarga, but even Moksha among the reward of the soldier. Desikar explains that *Swarga* means, literally, happiness, and may therefore denote not alone the bliss of the Lower Heaven, but that of the Highest Heaven likewise. The reward available depends always on the motive. The Lower Heaven is reached if work be done with that aim; but the Highest Heaven is the reward of selfless work.

A superficial reading makes us think that the verse promises Swarga (whatever this word may mean), to the killed only, and sovereignty to the victor. The question is whether the victor has any chance of getting to *Swarga*, or whether he should be content with the temporal blessing he gets at once. If the conqueror be thus confined to the earthly reward alone, it is to be observed that the vanquished derives, by his incapacity, a much higher blessing than his vanquisher. For, after all, the span of human life is not more than 100 years, and the possible period of a victor's earthly enjoyments is even shorter. But life in Swarga is longer and superior, both by reason of the longevity and the intensity of the happy life enjoyed by its dwellers. Swargic happiness is longer in duration and is vastly superior in quality, being far more unalloyed than earthly pleasures. If victory therefore shuts the door, for ever, of the heavenly gates, defeat must, in every case, be more covetable than success.

No commentator has considered this particular aspect of the question, except Raghavendraswami. He observes that the victor is bound to reach *Swarga* too, in due course, after he has enjoyed the fruits of conquest and leaves the earth in his own time, for the *Sruti* says, in addressing a dead man, "Let this deceased go to (1) where the brave soldier who has fought, or (2) the one who is killed in battle, or (3) the munificent giver of wealth, goes to". There are three persons spoken of here, (1) the fighter, (2) the killed and (3) the donor. Hence the meaning is that the victor also gets to Heaven like the killed.

The Geeta verse under notice contains no words to exclude the victor from *Swarga*. The earthly dominion is, of course, the immediate and proximate fruit. There is nothing to indicate that is only one he could ever attain.

There are three verses at the commencement of chapter II to which the present one is related. In verse No. 6, Arjuna urged the point that the issue of the war was doubtful as he could not be sure of success. The present verse says, "assuming it to be so, there is no cause for lament either way". In verse 7, Arjuna entreated Sri Krishna to point out with certainty the course he should take. The present verse replies, 'make up your mind, firmly, to fight'. In verse 8, chapter II, Arjuna said, "though I get sovereignty here or the royalty of the Gods, I care not for it, in the absence of any relief from this sorrow". The present verse uses a comprehensive "therefore" (तस्मात्) which amounts to saying, "As I have given many reasons

why you ought not to feel sorrow, in the absence of real cause for grief, you have no ground for rejecting Earthly and Heavenly bliss”.

“Make up your mind”, says the Lord. Sankaracharya explains it by the gloss, “Enter the fight, resolved to win or die”. This is the courage expected of every soldier, who is called on never to think of the third alternative, flight, retreat, or desertion. Ramanujacharya thinks that निश्चय here is the religious conviction that an honourable engagement is sure to bless the soldier with the highest fruits. It seems to me that the former presents a mundane wordly aspect and the latter presents a view coloured by and based on the religious philosophy of the Geeta.

In Brahmandagiri, the vocative term कैन्तेय = (O! Kuntée’s son) is made to unveil a deep meaning. The annotator Venkatanatha argues that, Kuntée being the paternal aunt of Sri Krishna, the reference to Arjuna as His own paternal aunt’s son, is meant to emphasize the fact that as a relation of the Lord, Arjuna was bound to win in this war. It is meant to show that though the alternative of defeat was put forth as a possibility, yet Arjuna might dismiss it from consideration, because, being a cousin of the Lord, his success was assured.

Is there not something far-fetched in forcing so much into this simple expression? Venkatanatha it would appear, has no patience however with text-torturings and far-fetched constructions. (*vide.*, p. iii of this editor’s preface.) The present instance is not very favourable for such a testimonial.

There remains one point more to notice, on which Advaitic commentators are divided among themselves. The verse points out, in prominence, kingdom and Swarga as rewards in prospect. Apparently, Arjuna was asked to keep these ends in view and, for their sake, enter on the fight. If this be the meaning, it comes to this that Sri Krishna accorded him sanction to view the task as *Kamya*. Venkatanatha of Brahmanadagiri adopts this view. To this, the difficulties are obvious. It is at variance with the trend of the whole teaching to say that *kamya-karma* was permitted by the Lord.

The non-performance of *काम्य* is never productive of sin. In this very context, verse 33 spoke of sin if Arjuna retired from the field. Venkatanatha disposes of this point by saying that even *काम्य* gives rise to sin if, after commencement, it is left unfinished. But, surely, the fight is not yet actually begun. If Arjuna could retire at this stage, why not have permitted him to do so, more especially because he cared not for kingdom or to remember Swarga. In this connection, it is useful what Arjuna says in verse 8 of Chapter II. He complains that though the throne here, and the Kingship of the Gods hereafter, was got, still he found no consolation at all. Knowing Arjuna's attitude of mind thus, that he set no store by temporal or Swargic sovereignty, it is difficult to see why the Master asks his pupil to covet these very things.

Madhusoodana and Neelakanta expound the meaning in a different way. Having regard to the trend of the verses from No.30 onwards, in which the



true duty of Arjuna is set out with emphasis laid on the appropriate point of view and mental attitude, they feel unable to tolerate the position that *Kamya* was allowed even as an alternative argument. Such a concession is out of tune with the selfless *Dharma* so largely accentuated here and elsewhere. They therefore think that the mention of rewards in the present verse should be understood consistently with the other verses. Though kingdom and *Swarga* are adverted to, yet there is no exhortation or advice addressed to Arjuna that he should convert them. The *Sruti Apastamaba* (quoted in the Sanskrit notes) says, that, if a tree be grown for its fruit, it incidentally gives also shade, and, on this analogy, there is no loss of *Dharma* or sin if duty be done in a selfless spirit and it incidentally brings in reward unsought. Thus, the throne and Heaven adverted to are but incidental rewards which, the Lord points out, are within reach. But the Master has not committed himself here or anywhere else to say that the ends themselves should be aspired for.

Some people, including Venkatanatha, are of opinion that a class of *Karma* such as the battle, is incapable of fulfillment except on the footing of being a *kamya karma*. This view is wrong. Every duty is as capable of being done in a selfless spirit as with a selfish motive. It may be seen there is great force in the view adopted by Madhusoodana on this point.

38) सुखदुःखे समे कृत्वा लाभालाभौ जयाजयौ ।  
ततो युद्धाय युज्यस्व नैवं पापमवाप्स्यसि ॥

|               |     |                    |
|---------------|-----|--------------------|
| सुखदुःखे      | ... | pleasure and pain  |
| समे           | ... | equal              |
| कृत्वा        | ... | rendering          |
| लाभालाभौ      | ... | gain and loss      |
| जयाजयौ        | ... | success and defeat |
| ततः           | ... | then or therefore  |
| युद्धाय       | ... | for battle         |
| युज्यस्व      | ... | gird up            |
| एवं           | ... | in this manner     |
| पापं          | ... | sin                |
| न, अवाप्स्यसि | ... | you will not occur |

“Rendering pleasure and pain, gain and loss, success and defeat, equal, gird up, then, for battle. In this manner, you will not incur sin”.

There are three pairs of opposites adverted to here. The logical sequence connection between them may be thus understood. Success and defeat is the first couple. Consequent on this, is gain and loss. Resulting from this, is pleasure and pain. The casual sequence is thus clear.

The force of the words ‘then’ = ततः and एवं = ‘in this manner’ has to be marked. To render the opposites equal is the great preparation after which the task is to be entered upon. It is the preliminary cleansing of the mind that qualifies the person for the work. The word ‘then’ may be understood as marking both the sequence in time and the sequence

of reasoning. It means both 'after you have done so', and 'because you have done so'. Vedanta Desikar however condemns "the sequence in time" as meaningless. The criticism is not intelligible.

The word एव (thus) has to be understood with emphasis. "Thus alone is sin averted", is the sense meant to be conveyed. Otherwise, the liability to sin continues. For the sake of wealth, power, rank, or fame, or what not, no one has a right to kill elders or shed the blood of kith and kin. Irrespective of the resulting success or defeat, gain or loss, and pleasure or pain, if duty be done, then and by that means alone, is sin averted.

The sin that is referred to is what results from the slaughter of elders and kinsmen, or it may stand for Samsara itself, the revolving births and deaths that life is heir to by reason of limitless work and sin. Desikar pleads for the latter sense, and rejects the former. He argues that the sin spoken of here cannot mean the possible sin of slaying kith and kin, because, there was no need to mention it again, as this was quite clear from the lesson already inculcated that it was his duty to do so. Being established as duty, it followed that no sin could flow from it like the sentence pronounced by a judge. If not this sin, no other sin could be thought of, as the subject of the negative clause in the verse. It cannot refer to past sins, for it is Divine Vision alone that can counteract and obstruct the onslaught. Hence, Desikar argues that the sin here stands only for *samsara*.

This remaining is strong in every point except the initial one. It had, no doubt, been said that to

fight was Arjuna's duty. But he has not yet been taught, how he should do it, in what spirit, with what mental attitude, and with what ends or no ends in view. It was most essential to impress on him the lofty ideal of selfless duty. The Yoga section of this chapter about to commence from the next verse, is going to discuss this matter, and the present verses forms a fitting prelude thereto. Not that there is any etymological or logical objection to take  $\pi\pi$  in a comprehensive sense to denote Samsara: but it is only pointed out that in its natural and literal sense it is equally intelligible in the present context.

"Render the pairs of opposites equal". How to do this is a point worthy of attention. *Ex hypothesi*, they are opposites; always and invariably producing totally divergent effects. Some say, "not to feel joy over a pleasure, or sorrow over a pain, is to equalize them". We had to deal with a similar expression, in verse 14; 'समदुःखसुख' (=one to whom pleasure and pain are equal), was there construed to be a seer. Ramanjacharya explained the process of equalization, saying that pain was to be regarded as pleasure just as invalid ought to regard the bitter pill, or the hoarding merchant, the perils of the sea. To render them equal is to elevate the unwelcome member of the pair, *viz.*, pain, to the level of the welcome member, *viz.*, pleasure. Sri Madhwa adopts a different principle of equalization. Pain is unwelcome without doubt, and is eschewed always, and by everybody. But sensual pleasure is equally to be shunned by the aspirant of heaven मुमुक्षु because, it is also a great obstruction. The wise man need not shun such पुण्य as will help



him forward in the true path. But he must shun like poison all sins and sensual pleasure, as he does pain. To regard them both as equally unwelcome, is, according to Sri Madhwa, the right attitude. Ramanjacharya's interpretation implies that pleasure might be welcomed, but that pain, ordinarily disregarded, should also be welcomed as pleasure. Sri Madhwa says, "don't welcome either sensual pleasure or pain, for, both are your enemies. Treat them with equal aversion, or indifference".

Studying the present verse with the next preceding one, and comparing the points taught, there is difference of opinion in the camp of Advaitic annotators. Venkatanatha thinks that the previous verse (37) was meant for the *kamya* worker and taught him how he should set about his task, while the present verse is addressed to the selfless worker and points out how he should fulfill his work. As already explained, under verse 37, Madhusoodana, and Neelakanta lead the opposite view and maintain that both the verses are addressed to one and the same individual, *viz.*, the निष्काम doer (the selfless worker). Venkatanatha relies on a dubious sentence in Sankarabhashya for his construction. Be that as it may, it is far more in keeping with the spirit of the entire teaching, that both the verses lay down the true Dharma and that the rewards held out in verse 37, *viz.*, kingship and *swarga*, are but incidental fruits coming unsought to the unselfish doer.

The reader may not have forgotten what has already been pointed out that, whenever exhortation to fight is met with, there is a great flutter in the

Monist's camp, for he holds firmly to the position that the sage's duty is not to work but to renounce. Hence, in the present verse, seeing the exhortation, "gird up for battle", Sankarabhashya observes that this is not seriously meant, but is only a casual lesson from a subordinate stand-point. The gloss is hardly warranted.

With this verse, a line of argument commenced at verse 30 comes to a close. After an illumination exposition of the soul and God, Sri Krishna takes a pause, and deals with the random objections urged by Arjuna as a wiseacre (verses 31 to 38). The Lord appeals to the instincts of Arjuna as a man, that if he succeeds he gets the throne of the empire, and if he fails he reaches Swarga (verse 37). He appeals to the impulse and instincts of a famous and chirvalrous warrior by urging how good name is a precious possession, and scandal is more agonizing than death (verses 34,35,36). He appeals to Arjuna as a religious Hindu and tells him of the पुण्य resulting from duty faithfully done (verse 31). Finally, he appeals to Arjuna as a true मुमुक्षु and devotee (verse 38). He assures him that selfishness has no place in the true philosophy of religious life, and that, irrespective of pleasure and pain, gain or loss, success or defeat, he should fight for the sake of Duty and God. The reader may mark how the three keys have been pitched, (1) the lowest one of temporal advantage, &c., (2) the next higher one of religious merit and demerit पुण्य and पाप with their fruits Swarga and hell, and (3) the highest key of selfless work performed with a pure mind in the conviction that it is a behest of Providence that every one shall fulfill Dharma.

39) एषा तेऽभिहिता सांख्ये बुद्धिर्योगे त्विमां शृणु ।  
बुद्ध्या युक्तो यया पार्थ कर्मबन्धं प्रहास्यसि ॥

|            |     |   |
|------------|-----|---|
| ऐषा        | ... | This  |
| ते         | ... | to you  |
| अभिहिता    | ... | has been taught   |
| सांख्ये    | ... | in respect to the doctorinal<br>knowledge of God and the Soul |
| बुद्धिः    | ... | lesson  |
| योगे, तु   | ... | in respect to the philosophy of<br>conduct also               |
| इमां       | ... | this  |
| शृणु       | ... | hear  |
| बुद्ध्या   | ... | with the knowledge  |
| युक्तः     | ... | equipped  |
| यया        | ... | whereof   |
| पार्थ      | ... | O! Arjuna   |
| कर्मबन्धं  | ... | the bondage of Karma, Samsara                                 |
| प्रहास्यसि | ... | you throw away  |

"This, which you have been taught, is the lesson relating to the doctrinal knowledge of Soul and God. Hear now the lesson of the Philosophy of Conduct, equipped with the knowledge whereof, O! Arjuna, you throw away the bondage of Karma".

A new subject is commenced with this verse. In opening it, reference is naturally made to the previous

theme by way of parting from it and marking it off from the new theme. From verse No. 12 up to verse No. 30, both inclusive, the discussion related to the attributes of God and Soul, and their relation. The immortality of the Soul, the mortality of the material objects., the transmigration of Jeevas, and kindred topics were discussed. Now and again, God was referred to, wherever relevant, to lay stress on the Jeeva's eternal dependence on Him. It was a lesson dealing with the doctrines as to the psychology, as it were, of the spirit. After alluding broadly to the subject-matter of verses 12 to 30, the Lord draws attention to the divergence of the new theme. He calls the old one *Sankhya* and the new one *Yoga*. He calls on Arjuna to listen. It means that he was not only to listen but to carry out the lesson in actual life and practice.

"Hear this lesson as to the philosophy of conduct": A little query may occur. Whether the lesson as to *Yoga* had not really commenced with verse No. 31, and whether, in the eight verses (31 to 38) immediately preceding, Arjuna had not been told of *Karma Yoga* in outline and essence. No doubt, by the pronoun इमां the reference is chiefly to what follows: to "*Karma Yoga*" taught up to the end of chapter VI. As Neelakanta points out, there is no objection, however, in understanding इमां to be an allusion to what has immediately preceded as well as to what is going to follow. Sankaracharya dismisses the eight verses (31 to 38) as an alternative argument based on worldly wisdom. He would not take it seriously, as having a true place in the Geetic teachings but would treat it more or less as a digression. I have



already pointed out that, even in the eight verses, Arjuna was never asked to fight for the sake of dominion, wealth, fame, or *Swarga*, though these were held out as incidental prizes or fruits. Whereas Neelakanta's view justifies their existence and inclusion in the teaching, Sankaracharya discards it as somewhat irrelevant. There seems no reason to dismiss the substance of the eight verses as only a piece of worldly wisdom. I need hardly point out again, that, wherever the exhortation to undertake and engage in work occurs, Sankaracharya thinks fit to sound a note of partial disapprobation and introduce an apology for the Lord doing so.

"Buddhi" is knowledge, in the literal sense. In the first line, there is difficulty in understanding the word in this literal sense. For, it speaks of "Buddhi" being taught, and calls on Arjuna to hear the same. Sri Madhwa alone points out the difficulty, and construes the word, as meaning a *lesson* rather than abstract knowledge.

*Sankhya* and *Yoga* are the appellations of two well known systems of Indian Philosophy. Mrs. Besant's little book of translation has a footnote that, in this verse, the words refer to the said systems. But the commentators are unanimous in thinking that no such reference is meant, for obvious reasons. In the first place, the *Sankhya* of Kapila and the *Yoga* of Patanjali are not accepted by Vedantic. They are treated as heretical and beyond the pale of Vedic religion and Philosophy. In Mahabharata, Moksha Dharma, Sankhya and Yoga are classed with Pasupata and other heretic systems, and set down to be anti-vedic

in character. In Narada Purana, they are set on the same footing and level as Vaiseshika, Nyaya, Buddhism and Pasupata. Secondly, Sankhyas are mostly atheistic. It is impossible that their creed should find an acceptance in such a theistic book as the Geeta. Nor is it possible to read in verses 12 to 30 of this chapter, the tenets of this school by any stretch of imagination. Moreover, if Yoga adverted to, be Patanjali's system, the expressions Karma Yoga and Bhakti Yoga would convey no sense. Though, in the verse under comment, the generic term Yoga is used, it is referred to, times without number, in the course of the whole work coupled with the words Karma, Gnana or Bhakti.

It is incomprehensible who told Mrs. Besant that the schools of Kapila and Patanjali are denoted by the words of the Geeta verse. The point is too clear to need further argument.

Leaving this notion of the schools alone, the reader has to see what is the true meaning of the two expressions. Ramanujacharya thinks that it denotes Jeevatma. Sankaracharya and his followers make out that it points to Para Brahman. The difference between them is due to the fact that Ramanujacharya takes the verses 12 to 30 to deal wholly and solely with Jeeva, whereas Monists take them as an exposition of Brahman alone. According to Sri Madhwa, as has been repeatedly pointed out, both God and Jeeva have been treated of. Hence, he takes Sankhya to mean *knowledge of God and the Jeeva*. He thinks that is neither God nor Jeeva that is directly denoted by the word, but *a knowledge of them both*.

Yoga does not, as has been noticed, mean the system of Patanjali. Literally, it denotes the means or instrument of knowledge. On this, all are mainly agreed. For authorities and subtle shades of difference, see the Sanskrit exposition.

Monists are never tired of pointing out the ज्ञान and कर्म (Knowledge and action) are vitally antagonistic to each other, that Gnana Yoga and Karma Yoga are likewise in hostility, that no ज्ञानी (knower) has any need to work or duties to discharge, that the Geeta chapters dealing with *Karma Yoga* are addressed to a different body of pupils from the chapters dealing with Gnana Yoga, and that the former is a course of lessons meant only for spiritual infants. This doctrine is common ground for all Monists. In this verse, Madhusoodana goes further and indulges in a violent fling at Arjuna. He begins by emphasising the particle "but" (तु) and says that Yoga is something quite different from Sankhya. Then he proceeds to explain why, in his opinion, the teaching of *Karma Yoga* was started at all by Sri Krishna. Spiritual aptitude being of various grades, people of somewhat advanced spirituality are qualified to be students of Vedantic learning. Others, less advanced and qualified, who are still no farther than the threshold, with minds uncleansed like Arjuna's deserve not Vedantic study at all, much less are they qualified for true knowledge. This class of uncleansed minds deserve no better than *Karma yoga* and must pass through work and action for obtaining mental purity. This secured, they become qualified for the second stage, viz., pupilage for studying Vedanta.

Madhusoodana, having thus set forth his notion of competent pupils, applies it to Arjuna, and puts him in the lowest class. Realising Arjuna's inefficiency, the Lord started Karma Yoga, according to this commentator, and deemed him unfit for anything more.

I am simply surprised at this exposition. This has caused a flutter in the Monist's camp itself. In Brahmanadagiri, Venkatanatha has severely criticised him thus: "If Arjuna was unfit and unqualified, why should *Gnana Yoga* have found any mention in the Geeta, at all? It is pointed out that Sri Krishna has deprecated, at the end of the Geeta, the practice of addressing any teaching to one who is not qualified for it, as this would be throwing pearls before swine. Why should the Lord stultify Himself by doing what he forbids any teacher from doing?"

Arjuna is, in fact, a great *gnanin*. In Bhagavata, 2<sup>nd</sup> Skandha, he is so enumerated, and is classed with Prahlada, Dhruva and others. In the course of the Geeta, the Lord assures Arjuna that he is quite fully equipped with mental purity.

Thus, Madhusoodana's censure of Arjuna has been demonstrated as unwarranted by a brother of the same school. This is not the only error in Madhusoodana's commentary of this verse. The second line of this verse speaks of *Karma Yoga* as destroying the bondage of Karma. All the commentators but he agree that the *Karmic* bondage under reference is *Samsara*, the prison-house of flesh, to which we remain fettered. Even Sankaracharya agrees on this point.



Madhusoodana criticises Sankaracharya and construes *Karma-bandha* to mean, not samsara, but the mental impurity which, according to him, should be got rid of by means of *Karma Yoga* or *Dharma*, before the higher qualification for Vedantic pupilage is obtained. It is to be observed that nobody expects of *Karma* that it will be a direct path to Moksha and none had said so. Karma leads to salvation only through Gnana. According to Sri Madhwa, good *karma* leads to Gnana and the grace of God, whereby Moksha comes to be within reach. Even Sankaracharya says in the commentary of this verse, that it means, in purport, to lay down only this proposition that *Karma* leads to emancipation through Divine grace obtained by Divine knowledge. Madhusoodana thinks that it is a forced construction, being based, as he fancies, on supposed filling up of ellipses. But is the purport that is given to make the verse consistent with the true position of the subject, and there is no occasion for supplying any ellipses. This learned commentator advances another feeble argument in support of his view. He says that the word *Bandha* ("bondage") being quite sufficient to denote *samsara*, the prefix *karma* added to it is superfluous. Surely, it is quite permissible to explain 'bondage' as the result of and dependent on *karma*. Similar expressions such as *Janmabandha* occur in the Geeta, and no exception can be taken to them. Then again, whence is this notion derived that the *punya* (पुण्य) resulting from vedantic study is incapable of destroying sins, and incapable, too, of producing mental purity, and that Dharma understood as something other than study can alone cleanse the mind? For this extraordinary position, there is no

warrant at all. An Adwaitic work called Sankara Bhashyotkarsha Deepika has severely condemned Madhusoodana's position by adducing the arguments indicated above. Venkatanatha too has taken up the cudgel of criticism in this respect and defended their common master Sankaracharya valiantly.

No further argument seems required for holding that *Karmabandha* is here *samsara*, and that the elaborate psychology as to how mental purity is derived and all the rest of it, is but baseless jargon. On the point insisted on by most of the Monists that *karma* can only be killed by *gnana* and by no other means, Neelakanta has a valuable note. He quotes the passage in *Isavasya Upanishad* that every man should engage in work in the right spirit and still remain unsullied thereby, because of reliance in God. Thus *Karma yoga* paves the way to salvation by destroying sins, by cleansing the mind, and by securing Divine grace leading to knowledge, and thereby, ultimately to emancipation.

Before leaving this brief review of conflicting commentaries, I may be pardoned for saying a word about Brahmanandagiri's incidental observation about the work known as Pancharatra. Sri Madhwa has quoted Moksha Dharma in proof of the view that Sankhya had Yoga are heretic schools. The same verse is quoted by Venkatanatha with the reading slightly altered, and to this, has been added a gloss that Pancharatra is equally anti-vedic and heretic. This work Pancharatra is the stronghold of the Vaishnavas, and seems therefore disliked by the Saivite Monists. But Pancharatra is highly extolled in Moksha Dharma

itself by a clear passage (see Sanskrit exposition). Other reasons also exist for treating this work as identical in view with the Vedas. This work is the parent from which *Chitra Sikhandi Sastra*, is derived, and this latter is extolled in Moksha Dharma as eminently Vedic in sense, tenets and doctrines. The fling indulged in at Pancharatra is evidently meant as a side-thrust at Vaishnavism in general, and at Sri Madhwa in particular, for his eulogy and acceptance thereof.

Reverting from this short digression as to Pancharatra, and clearing our mind a bit of Madhusoodana's original notions, let us try to sum up what the verse in question tells us. The Lord says that *Sankhya* has already been taught. Remembering what the teaching has been, we see that *Sankhya* denotes the doctrinal philosophy of the Divine Spirit and the Jeevic Spirit. As contrasted with it and distinguished from it, is *yoga*, by which term we may understand the philosophy of conduct that is going to be taught.

Theory and practice are two well-known aspects of philosophy. Their divorce is of little value, but their union is fraught with valuable results. There is, and ought to be, no hostility between the two as Monists so nervously apprehend. For, the Lord says in so many words later on, that *Sankhya* and *Yoga* are but one and that it is only boys who think to the contrary and not the wise. As essential parts of a whole, *Sankhya* and *Yoga* have their use and value. Having spoken of the theory, the Lord proceeds to touch on practise and praises the latter saying that conduct

founded on the right spirit leads to Mukti. And, why not? The highest morality and the highest religion join together in holding up unselfish action as the crown of character. With this, there is no reason for true philosophy to be essentially at variance.

40) नेहाभिक्रमनाशोऽस्ति प्रत्यवायो न विद्यते ।  
स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात् ॥

|              |     |                                     |
|--------------|-----|-------------------------------------|
| इह           | ... | in this Karma Yoga                  |
| अभिक्रमनाशः  | ... | loss of initiation                  |
| न, अस्ति     | ... | there is not                        |
| प्रत्यवायः   | ... | sin or disaster                     |
| न विद्यते    | ... | there is not                        |
| स्वल्पं      | ... | a little                            |
| अपि          | ... | even                                |
| अस्य धर्मस्य | ... | of this (selfless, worshipful) duty |
| त्रायते      | ... | saves                               |
| महतः         | ... | great                               |
| भयात्        | ... | from fear (of samsara)              |

"Herein is no loss of initiated effort, nor sin, nor disaster, (from wrong performance, or neglect, or inferior worship). Even a little of this unselfish worshipful duty saves one from the great fear of *Samsara*."

Having called upon Arjuna to listen to Yoga, the Lord proceeds to point out how *Karma Yoga* is superior to every other engagement. *Karma Yoga* rests on a thorough self-surrender, in an implicit trust in



God, on a full realization of His Absolute Supremacy and on the Jeeva's utter dependence on Him. A true Vaishnava believes in Vishnu, out and out, shapes and bases his conduct on the Divine Pleasure, and undertakes nothing and parts with nothing (not even a grain of paddy or a drop of water, it is pointed out in Tatparya) except as a part and parcel of religious life to please Hari. Such a life is not hampered by elaborate rituals and restrictions as to time, place and conditions; one might sing out Hari, at any time or place, in bed or out of it, walking and resting, by day or night, free or engaged, or whatever his condition, mood or engagement.

If a husbandman sows the seeds and neglects the field, he will have no harvest at all. For a crop, he must not only start in proper time, but must do sustained work throughout until the harvest. Otherwise, the initial out-put of capital and labour will be lost and wasted. Similarly, in respect of certain rites and observances, such, for example, as sacrifices for temporal gains, if the ceremonies are not duly done, not formally completed, and presents not given at the right time to proper persons, in the right order and measure, not only will there be no good results, but there may be disaster.

Before embarking on a course of action, the success of which depends on a minute study of intricate rules and exceptions, and on a scrupulous adherence to regulations, one must think not only twice, as the proverb has it, but many times, because inability or unexpected impediments might prove disastrous. In respect to *Karma Yoga*, however, no such apprehension is called for, because the philosophy of it is simple

and lies in a nutshell. For, little depends on the extent or the degree to which the duty is performed; it is the motive underlying and prompting it, that is important. Given purity of motive, the *quantum* of Dharma is of little moment. The motive is assuredly pure, if no selfishness enters into it, and if God alone be relied on as the true Doer and Dispenser. The pre-eminence of *Karma Yoga* is derived from the circumstance that Sri Hari is Great and whatever is associated with His worship is bound to be fruitful.

"Na Abhi-Krama-Nasa" (न अभिक्रमनाश) has been construed by several of the commentators as meaning "there is no loss of initiation." "No loss" means "no loss of fruit". Emphasis lies on the word "*initiation*." Even a mere initiation carries a reward. Sri Madhwa has quoted valuable passages from *Agneya Purana* and *Brahma Tarka* in support of the view herein set out. The cited authority shows that even a desire to do duty in the spirit of *Karma Yoga* is not fruitless.

अभिक्रम (*Abhikrama*) means "initiation." This is the plain sense of the word. But Neelakandta understands it to denote *work or action* itself. He says that, whereas selfish work dies, selfless work does not, because the fruit (salvation) is not yet attained. He proceeds to explain the meaning by pointing out how every thought, word and deed, of *Karma Yoga*, is a great education in the discipline of the mind, adds to the fund of, and improves, moral experience, promotes tendencies, instincts and impulses towards good and destroys sin by securing mental purity. What is herein said by Neelakanta as to the lasting value of discipline expresses no doubt a great truth. But

the tendency and power of habit is as true of good, moral and religious activity, as of other work however selfish it may be. Good habit grows on us as much as wicked habit. In what sense the work of *Karma Yoga* is undying, while work in the lower plane is transient, it is thus not easy to see. The Geeta verse aims at showing how *Karma yoga* is unlike ordinary *Karma* and infinitely superior to it. The psychology of developed experience cannot make out the distinguishing factor, for, it relates to mental habits in general and not to *Karma Yoga* in particular.

Madhusoodana takes अभिक्रम to mean the fruit of action. He formulates Arjuna's objection and the Lord's reply thus:-

Question – "The Sruti declares that sacrifice, gifts and penance destroy sin and lead to the desire and attainment of knowledge. This desire for knowledge is as much a selfish end as anything else. The Sruti also says, temporal ends and ends of the other world are perishable. What is then the good of engaging in *Karma* which is thus invariably associated with perishable results? Secondly, all action being thus selfish, and selfish action being as a rule fruitless or disastrous, if incompletely or irregularly done, *Karma Yoga* must entail a waste of effort or sin, because, humanly speaking, the span of life is never long enough to carry out all prescribed *Karmas* to completion, and details are so numerous as to be incapable of faithful fulfilment. "

Answer:- To this the Lord replies, the fruit of *Karma Yoga* is not perishable, because that fruit is

unlike other fruits ordinarily enjoyed and which we ordinarily seek and get. By *Karma Yoga* mental purity is the aim, and thereby destruction of sin. Sin destroyed vanishes for ever. The exit of sin can, in no sense, be an impermanent result, for, once gone, it is gone for ever. Another end sought by *Karma Yoga* is ज्ञान (knowledge) and, through it, the annihilation of ignorance. Knowledge once attained instantly kills अज्ञान (ignorance). It is inconceivable that knowledge should die without doing its work of destroying ignorance. Hence this end viz., destruction of ignorance, once secured, is secured for ever. Therefore, the objection as to the fruit being perishable is unsound. As to sin arising from imperfect or irregular performance, it is said, that sacrifice, gifts and penances are not to be treated as काम्यकर्म (purposeful actions) absolutely. The Sruti deals with them in a two-fold aspect. Done with a purpose, they are selfish. Done with purity, they are निष्काम and form *Karma Yoga*. The rule is, that *Kamya Karma* is fruitless or disastrous, if not fully done or if wrongly done. But *Nitya Karmas* (such as the daily indispensable duties of Sandhyavandanam) are not fettered by this rigid rule. Sacrifices, gifts and penances, undertaken in selfless spirit apart from gains, are on a level with नित्यकर्म. Hence, the apprehended sin from non completion and irregularities is out of place.

This is a long discussion from Madhusoodana. His points are (1) that the fruits of *Karma Yoga* do not die because of the character of the fruits, consisting as they do in the destruction of sin or igno-



rance, and (2) that sacrifices, etc., are on a par with नित्यकर्म, and are not governed by the rigid rules of Karma in regard to completion and the observance of details.

I fear that Madhusoodana has drifted very far from the Geeta verse in this exposition. The expression 'loss of initiated effort' points rather to the non-production of fruit than the disappearance thereof after it is secured. Either the objector knew the result of *Karma Yoga* to be destruction of sin and ignorance, or he knew it not. If he knew, he could not possibly be so ignorant as to fancy the destruction to be impermanent, because loss or death (ध्वंस) is eternal. If an object dies, it dies for ever, in the sense that the same thing is not born, but similar things may be. If, on the other hand, the objector knew not the fruits of *Karma Yoga*, he had to be told what the fruits were, and in this event, the clause "no loss of initiated effort" must read an enigma to him. All the other commentators understand the word "loss" to denote an absence or barrenness of result rather than the result being born and mortal. The query whether *Karma Yoga* falls under the category of नित्यकर्म or काम्य, and the reply that it is on a par with the former, appears to be a needless discussion of a Vedic text.

What is said in the Geeta Verse is, that, to a man engaged in *Karma Yoga*, there is no प्रत्यवाय (or sin). The sin that is contemplated as possible is one not necessarily arising from non-completion of initiated undertakings. Sin is possible from such a man neglecting other duties mundane or otherwise. It is

a narrow view of *Karma Yoga* that its importance and value should rest on its being similar to नित्यकर्म. Its true value rests, however on the following considerations. In the first place, *Karma Yoga* is not *Kamya*, though the end in view be mental purity, Divine knowledge and the expulsion of ignorance. These ends are perfectly legitimate and do not detract from the merit of *Karma Yoga*. Secondly, *Karma Yoga* stripped of any allusion to God deserves not that name. To call it नित्य or नित्यतुल्य is nothing. To account for sinlessness by calling it '*Akamya*' is nothing too. It is great because God is great. *Karma Yoga* is a worship of God through Karma, and, because it is associated with God, it carries with it the virtue and merit conveyed by the predication, "no waste of initiated effort and no sin or disaster." Sri Madhwa has thus rested the value of *Karma yoga* on the simple fact that it is *Vaishanava Dharma* and not on other considerations such as those discussed in Advaitic annotations.

It has to be observed that the word अभिक्रम does not ordinarily denote either action (कर्म) or its fruit (फल). These meanings are deduced by etymological analyses. The grammar is unexceptionable. But what is the object in conveying the notion of *Karma* or *Karmic* fruit by an obscure word not used in that sense. Neelakanta and Madhusoodana who adopt these meanings, respectively, do not say that the idea of initiation or commencement is denoted or connoted by the word. Hence, if we understand it simply as denoting work or result, we miss the valuable lesson

that *Karma Yoga* is great because, unlike other *Karma*, even the most partial performance, consisting, as it may, of a mere commencement, is not fruitless because of the simple circumstance that it is Vishnu Dharma.

A word of recapitulation; अभिक्रम has been construed in three ways: (1) commencement, (2) work and (3) the fruit of work; and some explanation has also been offered on the merits of these interpretations. Every verse in Mahabharata is said to convey not less than ten meanings, but only Devas are competent to find them out.

The phrase नेहाभिक्रमनाशः lends itself to a few more ideas. ईहा is desire or wish. by taking ईहाभिक्रमनाश as a single word, we make out that even a mere desire or commencement is not lost. So says the Agneya passage quoted by Sri Madhwa, (आरंभमात्रामिच्छा वा विष्णुधर्मे न निष्फला) 'A mere commencement or even a desire is not fruitless in Vishnu Dharma'.

अभिक्रम means 'ascent,' and this is not lost. The pilgrim on the path of Vishnu Dharma is ever on the ascent, going steadily higher and higher, and does not fall from the height.

अभिक्रम means also 'stepping forward'. Like a brave soldier who paces ever onward and turns not his back, the *Karma Yogin* is steady in pacing forward, and his progress is so assured that no retrogression occurs.

अभिक्रम means war, battle, assault, onslaught (*vide* Apte). The meaning is that *Karma Yoga* does not entail an abandonment of the war. Some people fancy that to fight is possible only as a *Kamyā Karma* with sordid ends, such as kingdom, in view. This is a wrong notion. It is open to a warrior, as to any one else, to engage in *Karma Yoga*. He may, as Arjuna has been often told, enter on battle simply as a duty and as a piece of Vishnu Dharma.

In the second line, धर्मस्य may mean “of Yama” and be coupled with the word भयात्. The line reads, ‘even a little saves one from the fear of Yama’. In VI Skandha, Bhagavata we are told that Ajamila uttered the name of Narayana and expired, and the result was, that the messengers of *Yama* who were on the spot to hasten him to the abodes of *Yama* for his countless crimes and sins, were prevented by those of Narayana who led him to the abodes of bliss.

In this line अस्य may mean “of Vishnu or Vyasa”. The syllable अः means Vishnu or Vyasa. (*Vide* Ekakshara Kosa).

The expression अस्य धर्मस्य means “of Vishnu Dharma”. The rest is clear.

Professor Rangachariar understands धर्म to mean course of *moral discipline* and explains the whole verse as a metaphysical account of how the Yogin is bound to press forward in the course, ever in motion towards the goal.



41) व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिरेकेह कुरुनन्दन ।  
बहुशाखा ह्यनन्ताश्च बुद्धयोऽव्यवसायिनाम् ॥

|                |     |  |
|----------------|-----|--|
| व्यवसायात्मिका | ... | consisting of verified truths or beliefs |
| बुद्धिः        | ... | the teaching                             |
| एका, इह        | ... | is uniform in worldly and Vedic topics   |
| कुरुनन्दन      | ... | O! joy of the Kurus                      |
| बहुशाखाः       | ... | many-branched                            |
| हि             | ... | verily; indeed                           |
| अनन्ताः च      | ... | and endless                              |
| बुद्ध्यः       | ... | the teachings                            |
| अव्यवसायिनां   | ... | of unsettled thinkers                    |

"All teachings based on verified truths are necessarily uniform, O! joy of the Kurus, in worldly affairs and Vedic topics. Indeed, it is the teachings of unsettled thinkers that are manifold and endless".

Ethical and religious schools have, from time immemorial, put forward various and conflicting theories about the true philosophy of conduct. There has been difference and divergence as to the propriety of particular acts, conceptions of duty, texts of rectitude, the spirit of performance, methods, aims and goals. In this conflict, the query arises how to choose and rely on any one of such theories and practices. Sri Krishna had commenced to teach Yoga, and Arjuna

would naturally expect a word of advice in respect to the prevailing conflict.

This verse says that truth is ever single, based on verified and established proofs. This is as true of worldly teachings as of Vedic ones. For instance, no conflict is possible between physics, chemistry, or mathematics, provided the enunciations are based on sound experiment, observation and inference. In Vedic teachings and the tenets of Smritis based thereon, no conflict is similarly possible. Tested by right reason, they are bound to be consistent and uniform, pointing to the common truth. Sri Krishna expects Arjuna to take it on His word that Yoga, as He was about to teach, rested on the rock of verified truth, and, on this basis, Arjuna was told not to get bewildered by imagined conflicts of religion. As between sound Vedic systems, the divergence was imaginary. As to un-vedic systems promulgated by unsettled thinkers and based on incorrect experience, unsound logic, and untrue testimony, they are, of course, manifold and endless. Arjuna should dismiss these from consideration, and, as to the former, might rely on their being uniform and one-pointed.

This is the purport of the verse as understood by Sri Madhwa. Buddhi here as in verse 39 (first line) stands for "teaching" rather than intellect, knowledge, or understanding. इह shows that the generalization made as to truth being ever uniform and single, holds good in worldly affairs, – in all sciences, material, moral or spiritual.

To this effect, though conveying a slight difference in point of view, is Mrs. Besant's translation; "The determinate reason is but one-pointed, O! Joy of the Kurus; many-branched and endless are the thoughts of the irresolute". The idea emphasized by this rendering is that the irresolute person is distracted by a multiplicity of conflicting ideas and limitations, whereas the firm believer sets about his work with a steady resolve and proceeds with singleness of aim, straight to the goal. The corollary is that Arjuna should be firm in faith and never allow a conflict of views or thoughts to divert him from the path, because the man that doubts, wavers or falters, is lost among the warring hosts of tempting distractions.

Professor Rangachariar is somewhat original in pointing out the substance and object of this verse. He treats it as a simple exposition of metaphysics dealing with the value of persevering mental effort. Through increased power of attention, mental concentration and self-control, man realizes truth and duty. Human morality and human wisdom depends on man's power of sustained mental effort and concentration. There is no greater enemy to man's progress than having to live an aimless life of inaction. The verse is meant, in short, to praise devotion to work with a singleness of purpose. The lesson aimed at is against idleness of every kind, and it points out that it is far better for the mind to wear away than to rust away, and that, in being busy, the mind should pursue a steady object.

It is to be observed that these maxims against idleness may be appropriate for a treatise on ethics or metaphysics, and do not seem sufficiently high-pitched in key to be addressed to Arjuna in a religion-philosophical teaching.

Turning from these modern expositions to the Sanskrit commentators, we find important difference in the standpoints. Sri Madhwa's view has been set out already: and may be briefly stated in a few words thus:

"Query – Systems are at conflict. Why should I adopt the view of *Karma Yoga* which you advocate?

Answer – There is no true diversity among the systems based on right foundations".

The verse speaks of something settled and undoubted which is single. It contrasts this with another that is unsettled and unsteady, which is multiple and manifold. The question is what are these two things compared and contrasted.

Sankaracharya thinks that true Vedanta comprising *Sankhya* (the path of knowledge) and *Karma Yoga* (the path to knowledge) is contrasted with the myraid activities of worldly life comprising *Samsara* of cross purposes and passions. Whereas the former destroys all delusions and adverse beliefs, rests on truth, and leads to the extinction of *Samsara*; the latter multiplies wants and gratifications *ad infinitum* and draws the deluded one deeper and deeper into suffering. The superiority of religious and philosophical life. (योग and सांख्य) is set off against irre-



ligious and aimless life, and eulogized as vastly preferable and superior.

The followers of Sankaracharya add glosses, each in his own way, to bring out their master's meaning. They think that the first line of the verse answers the possible doubt that *Sankhya* and *Yoga* are naturally at conflict and that Mukti is and can be the result only of सांख्य (=gnana). and not of योग. The Lord says in reply that *Sankhya* and *Yoga* are virtually one and the same, that though Sankhya alone is the door to salvation, Yoga (Karma Yoga) is the path to reach gnana and therefore indirectly leads to salvation. The direct cause and the indirect cause are here spoken of as one (एका), because the fruit final is common. Worldly knowledge, on the other hand, is variegated, and men wanting in true conviction allow themselves to be distracted by them.

The verse, first of all, points to the virtual identity of *Sankhya* and *Yoga*, and sets off the superiority of these two taken together, against the delusions of worldly men. (Vide Madhusoodana and Venkatanatha). In the view of Sankaracharya and these commentators, इह means "in the path of salvation", comprising Sankhya and Yoga; व्यवसायात्मिका is the settled conviction of their mutual relation as effect and cause which is (एका) one; i.e., has a common goal.

Sridhara takes इह to be a reference to *Karma Yoga* alone. In *Karma Yoga* which, as he puts it, consists in the worship of God, the devotional activities are

one-pointed, whereas the energies and actions of the selfish who are outward bound, are many and endless. It is the life of devotion (to God) that is simple and lovely. In this life, the daily duties, such as Sandhyavandana, and duties occasional like Sraddha, are innocuous, even if somewhat imperfectly or irregularly done. To a devotee there is leave to do these things within the limits of his ability and means. The element of Divine worship is the curative of all defects. The contrast is between worshipful, motiveless, work and selfish action. इह (=in Yoga), व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिः the firm belief in Divine worship is एका (=one-pointed).

Neelakanta adopts a construction which is criticised by his own brethren. According to him, it is the realization of Adwaita (I am Brahman), that is contrasted with the ignorance of worldly people. व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिः is the firm realization of Monism and identity. That is एका (=but one), for the sage has no longer anything more to do. He realizes and is blessed. He has no further concern, no work, no duty. Of ignorant men, the activities are many. They have many duties to perform. The doubt answered by the verse is whether *Sankhya* and *Yoga* already approved and praised, can be deemed equal. The answer given is that they are not. *Sankhya* is great, consisting as it does, of Brahman-realization. There is no possibility of fall in it. But in *Yoga*, there does exist the possibility of a fall or relapse into improper ways and disaster. Sankara Bhasyotkarsha Deepika disapproves of Neelakanta. *Karma Yoga* has, as the critic points out, just been started by verse 39 with a eulogy that it

snaps the bondage of Karma (Samsara). Verse 40 continues the praise by applauding imperfect and irregular performance too as being beneficial. After this introduction, it is not intelligible that the Lord should suddenly censure *Karma Yoga* as the pursuit of ignorant men, and *Sankhya*, as the one-pointed engagement of the wise, the censure of *Karma Yoga* is quite out of place at this point of the context. To censure *Karma Yoga* is not the same thing as censuring *Kamya Karma*. The former is holy and pure, the latter sordid. Sri Krishna upholds *Karma Yoga* and exhorts His pupil to adopt it. Soon he contrasts it with *Kamya* and condemns the latter in scathing language. In such a context, it is certainly a violent strain that the verse under comment (41) should indulge in an attack and disapproval of *Karma Yoga*.

To sum up the position of the Monist annotators, the majority say that *Sankhya* and *Yoga* taken together is set off against *Kamya Karma*. Sridhara holds that *Yoga* alone is referred to and contrasted with *Kamya*. Neelakanta thinks that *sankhya* is compared with *Yoga*, and declared superior, coupled with a censure of *Yoga*.

The view of Ramanujacharya is that *Karma Yoga* (meaning *Karma* as performed by the Mumukshu, the aspirant of salvation,) is approved and praised as against *Kamya*. इह means among duties laid down by Sastras. व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिः is the conviction of the Mumukshu, and that is एका (one-pointed). Pilgrim of *Moksha* does *Nitya*, *Naimittika*, or *Kamya* with only

one goal in view (Moksha). All his work and activities are characterized by solidarity, being united together by a singleness of purpose. They are based on the true conviction about the nature of the soul. He knows the eternality of the soul, its essential purity its self-lumination, its virtual equality with God as competent to enjoy in Moksha an equal measure of bliss, and other characteristics. Without this conviction, he does not start on the path of the Mumukshu. This gives to his life the singleness of purpose which is its merit. But the pursuer of Kamya-ends, does not necessarily begin with the said beliefs as to the soul. If he aims at *Swarga*, it is quite enough that he believes in a soul abiding after death. He need not know all about it, nor its essential attributes. Thus is the contrast, the life of the Mumukshu as against that of the worldly, the former resting on a conviction about the soul and the latter not, the former aiming at a single goal and the latter diverted by many a minor goal.

In this exposition, the explanation of व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिः as referring to beliefs in respect to the soul, does not commend itself as very appropriate. The allusion to the teachings about the soul (verses Nos. 12 to 30). does not appear contemplated at all. That subject *Sankhya* was finished in a way and left alone. The observation about the Jeeva being virtually equal to God (especially as to Heavenly bliss) is a wrong tenet not accepted by Sri Madhwa and other theists.

Setting aside Neelakanta's rendering that *Yoga* is condemned, it may be taken that all others are agreed in opinion that *Karma Yoga* is praised in the



first line of the verse, and *Kamya* is criticized in the second line. A few of these think that *Sankhya* and *Yoga* are jointly treated as one and the same, and jointly praised.

In this connection, I may draw attention to a difference between Sankaracharya and Ramanujacharya in elucidating व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिः. They agree in thinking that *Sankhya* and *Yoga* are both referred to expressly or impliedly. According to Sankaracharya, the verse speaks of *Sankhya*, on the footing that it is the more important of the two and carries *Yoga* with it by implication. Thus *Sankhya*, by which monistic knowledge is meant, (with *Yoga* understood as included in the term) is belauded as against *Kamya*. According to Ramanujacharya, the verse gives prominence to *Yoga* and contrasts it with *Kamya*. But *Yoga* is not simple good conduct but is the *Karma Yoga* of the Mumukshu, which is fortified by *Sankhya* or knowledge of the soul. It is *Yoga* aided by *Sankhya* that is emphasized. Thus the difference between the two teachers is that the former gives prominence to *Sankhya* as denoted by the verse, and the latter to *Yoga*. The difference is, of course, characteristic, because Monists fight shy of *Karma* in any aspect.

Sri Madhwa sees in the verse not a contrast of *Karma Yoga* with or without *Sankhya* as against *Kamya*, but the enunciation of a general preposition. He thinks that Arjuna's doubt did not relate to a choice between *Sankhya* and *Yoga* or *Yoga* and *Kamya*, but to a general question of importance going to the root of the matter. Sri Krishna had praised *Karma*

*Yoga* and pressed it on Arjuna. The objector says that the world is full of conflicting systems each claiming to show the true path to knowledge, and the difficulty was to choose the right one. It is this objection that is meant to be answered, the reply being that truth is single, and that truthful sciences are never at conflict, whereas untested, unauthoritative, teachings are, of course, diverse and manifold. The contrast is not between *Karma Yoga* and *Kamya* in particular, but between truthful and untruthful systems of thought, the reply given being a proposition of universal application holding good in the field of Vedic religion and philosophy, as in worldly matters and concerns.

व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिरेकेह means, 'in Vedic and worldly matters the teaching of tested conviction is single and uniform'.

The minds of all true devotees who are guided by right reason, are bound, according to Sri Madhwa, to run in one groove the goal being salvation by the worship of Vishnu. All of them will, if properly instructed, choose Vishnu and engage in His worship with ardour. It is only the unbelievers that will take diverse courses. Sri Madhwa has quoted a verse from *Brahma Vaivarta* to support this rendering:

बुद्धिर्निर्णीततत्त्वानामेका विष्णुपरायणा ।

बहुशाखाह्यनन्ताश्च बुद्धयोऽव्यवसायिनाम् ॥

"The belief of those whose conviction is settled is one pointed sheltering in Vishnu. The beliefs of unbelievers are many-branched and endless."

- 42) यामिमां पुष्पितां वाचं प्रवदन्त्यविपश्चितः ।  
वेदवादरताः पार्थ नान्यदस्तीति वादिनः ॥
- 43) कामात्मानः स्वर्गपरा जन्मकर्मफलप्रदाम् ।  
क्रियाविशेषबहुलां भोगैश्वर्यगतिं प्रति ॥
- 44) भोगैश्वर्यप्रसक्तानां तयापहृतचेतसाम् ।  
व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिः समाधौ न विधीयते ॥

|                   |     |  |
|-------------------|-----|--|
| याम्              | ... | what   |
| इमाम्             | ... | of this kind                                       |
| पुष्पितां         | ... | flowery  |
| वाचम्             | ... | language   |
| प्रवदन्ति         | ... | utter  |
| अविपश्चितः        | ... | the ignorant                                       |
| वेदवादरताः        | ... | attached to the superficial<br>sense of the Vedas. |
| पार्थ             | ... | O! Arjuna  |
| न अन्यत् अस्ति... |     | there is nothing else                              |
| इति वादिनः        | ... | those who say that                                 |
| कामात्मानः        | ... | devoted to desires                                 |
| स्वर्गपराः        | ... | intent on Swarga                                   |
| जन्मकर्मफलप्रदां  | ... | source of births, karma and<br>fruits              |

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| क्रियाविशेषबहुलां ...     | prescribing manifold rites                       |
| भोगैश्वर्यगतिं प्रति ...  | towards the attainment<br>of pleasures and power |
| भोगैश्वर्यप्रसक्तानां ... | of those attached to<br>pleasures and power      |
| तया ...                   | by that (language)                               |
| अपहृतचेतसां ...           | whose minds are carried<br>away                  |
| व्यवसायात्मिकाबुद्धिः ... | true conviction                                  |
| समाधौ ...                 | to bring about mental<br>peace by trust in God   |
| न विधीयते ...             | is not capable                                   |

"Ignorant people, revelling in the superficial sense of the Vedas, and bent on pleasures and Swarga, say that there is nothing beyond these, and indulge in a flowery literature which is fruitful of *Samsara*, *Karma* and rewards, and which prescribes manifold observances and rites towards the attainment of joys and ambitions. To men thus addicted to joys and ambitions, whose minds have been drawn away by flowery words, truthful conviction does not avail to secure mental peace through a trust in God."

*These three verses have to be read together.*

The previous verse pointed out how truthful systems of thought are bound to be agreed and uniform, and how other systems would be many-branched and endless. It approved of Vedic systems virtually, and condemned those opposed to them. The query next arises with reference to the schism among Vedic followers themselves. Among Vedic adherents, an im-



portant section gives supremacy to sacrificial rites. They belong to the school of Jaimini. Their creed is work, work and work. endless in details and fruits. They take it that the Vedas lay down only duties of this kind and prescribe rites and observances alone, with temporal or swargic pleasures attainable by the worker.

The present verses are aimed at this school of thinkers, and censure them. These are Vedic adherents, no doubt, in letter, but not in spirit. Their thoughts are bent on sensuous joys, and their deeds are fruitful of samsara and the thousand and one evils following in its wake. They are ever busy with the infinite variety of ceremonial pursuits for attaining this, that, and the other, and realising some sort of ambition. With minds thus enchanted by the charms of selfish work, they are incapable of mental equanimity. They cannot command mental peace and concentration. They cannot become sages trusting peacefully in God. For, they do not believe truly in God, nor do they believe in such a thing as salvation (Mukti). They deny these and discuss *ad infinitum* Vedic texts of ritualism, attracted by their flowery charm and ignorant of the fact that they are no more than flowers.

The object of the verses under comment is twofold. First they cast out of the true Vedic fold those who are apparently within it and who do not rely on God and aspire for salvation. Secondly, they account for men's distractions by explaining how people wander away from truth unable to govern their thoughts and deeds by singleness of purpose. The Lord says that allurements offered by the so-called *Karma-*

*Kanda* of the Vedas are too much for them and they easily fall a prey to the temptation, with the result that the mind is diverted into myriads of pursuits and bewildered.

Once upon a time, the ritualism of Jaimini had become so popular that from one end of the country to the other, Brahmins were found deeply and profoundly absorbed by it. The evil had grown beyond limits even before Sankaracharya's time. In fact, as a matter of history, credit is given to Sankaracharya for having fearlessly denounced the evil and stormed the strong holds of this Meemamsa, by academical polemics.

The *Brahma Sootras* and the *Geeta* set their face against rituals calculated to heap desires and accumulate greedy ambitions. They uphold work and duty but not in the mercenary spirit sanctioned by Jaimini. The trend of thought in the *Geeta* is a vigorous attack on selfishness, and the present verses scathingly begin the onslaught.

At first sight, the expression वेदवादरताः might convey the idea that Vedic propounders are attacked in general, but surely, the Lord could not mean a censure of the true Vedic school. For, in other parts of this work, He claims the Vedas as the foundation of the *Geeta*.

Sankaracharya explains the phrase as a reference to those parts of the Veda which indulge in hyperboles about the efficacy of rites, the eulogy being intended to serve merely as attractions.

Ramanujacharya thinks that the Veda attacked is the *Karma-kanda*.

It is to be observed that neither of these explanations is very satisfactory. The Vedas are revered as faultless gospel; they are said to be true and eternal. No Vedantin who holds this view can, with consistency, believe that great portions thereof are mere hyperboles and exaggerations. It will be a serious concession to Vedic detractors. The division of Vedas into *Karma-Kanda*, *Upasana-Kanda* and *Brahma-Kanda* may have its use and value as affording facilities of reference in Vedic studies, but the true Vedantin must allow that every part of the entire Revelation deals with God. This is Sri Madhwa's favourite theory, which, the first Adhyaya of the Brahma Sootras has, according to him, established firmly. He holds that every letter, syllable, word, sentence and accent, of the Veda in every section, Brahma-Kanda and in other Kandas too, is a praise of God. To cut off large slices as Karma-Kanda and denounce them is *unvedantic*. It may be that, by reason of imperfect knowledge, people do not understand the meaning of the so-called *Karma* texts; but they have an inner meaning and convey uncensurable truths.

Hence Sri Madhwa renders the expression वेदवादरताः to mean those who revel in the apparent meaning of Vedic texts in utter ignorance of the hidden sense. Two other notions are also conveyed by the word. It means those who dispute the authority of the Vedas, especially of the Upanishad portion, which, according to them, are barren alkaline fields in a fertile

tract. It also means those who revel in a mere recitation of Vedic passages making a mere parrot's work of it and never paying a thought to their meaning. Sri Madhwa has quoted authority in support of the three meanings he gives to the word.

Taking वेदवादरताः to mean those who dispute the authority of the Vedas, and reading with it the clause नान्यदस्तीति वादिनः which says that they believe in nothing else, one may have ground to think that the censure aimed is at atheists and agnostics who do not accept the authority of any revelation, and disbelieve the soul, its endurance after death, hell and heaven, and even God. But this will be too comprehensive a meaning. The next word स्वर्गपराः (= bent on Swarga) restrains this, as the same persons are said to aim at Swarga. जन्मकर्मफलप्रदां (conferring birth, Karma and fruit) imposes a further restraint. Hence, the people in question are not absolute unbelievers but partial believers in Vedic authority who have faith in Swarga, in some kind of life after death, and in the recurrence of births and the effects of *Karma*.

Thus limited by the context, we have to understand the denial of Vedic authority to refer only to certain portions thereof, -- to such texts as speak of Mukti and the Supreme Brahman. Likewise, the denial of "every thing else" is a reference to the same two things, Mukti and the Supreme God, which they ignore. These do not look beyond Swarga as a possible goal under any circumstances, and do not believe that the cycle of births, karma and fruits, could be overcome at any time.



The passage under comment levels a scathing disapprobation of men whose thoughts are bent on pleasure. The world is desire-born and desire-bred. Most people are summed up in one word "greed". They are : कामात्मानः. आत्मा here means the mind. Their minds are full of desire. आत्मा means nature, and the whole word means they are of the nature of desire. This meaning is rather poignantly significant of the fact that the lives of these people, carefully analysed, resolve themselves into nothing more than greed, ambition and the rest of the grasping greed.

In the same strain and as a piece of further elucidation are the expressions भोगैश्वर्यगतिं प्रति (=“looking forward to joys and power”) and तयापहृतचेतसां (=“by which language, their minds are captured”). How true it is that men pursue pleasures and power with and ardour, it is hardly necessary to point out. Alas! we know it only too well. Such is the picture of the daily life we meet with everywhere. But Sri Krishna, while, covertly perhaps, aiming a shaft against the grasping greed of millionaires and power-seekers in general, refers in the present context to those alone who professing to be Vedic believers are plunged deep in the tangle of desires and acts. The previous verse (No.41) having condemned the whole body of aimless workers and pleasure-seekers, attention is confined now to such of them as pursue an apparently Vedic life, lay its superficial meaning to heart, and dispute the value of the Upanishads or simply repeat by rote wholesale passages from Kanda to Kanda blissfully ignorant of what they mean.

This leads us to the next pharse क्रियाविशेषबहुलां (=full of manifold observances and rituals). The idea corresponds to what was said in verse No. 41, "many-branched and infinite are the tenets of ill-founded systems". Just as the theories and practices of those who acknowledge no *Vedas* are infinitely variegated, so also are the practices and views of Vedic adherents infinitely diverted by varying goals and ambitions. Their rituals are a legion, just at the ends to be attained are. The sacrificial fire is ever alit, and the clarified butter poured in an incessant stream. It extends throughout the seasons of the year and the time, trouble and cost involved, is very great. Sri Krishna laments the lives thus wasted and deplores the energy lost in ritualistic observances undertaken without aim or ideal and ungoverned by unity of purpose.

And, what is this unity of aim the absence of which destroys the value of the ritualistic life? This leads us to the last line of verse 44. Mental peace by a trustful reliance on God is a treasure to which no riches can be compared. This is समाधिः which means समाधानं. सम is truth—is God. In it and in Him, let the mind attain equanimity. Let it be व्यवसायात्मिका (=based on firm faith).

To reach this peace of mind, is to seek Him with unswerving faith, trust and devotion. The devotee may, like the sacrificer, be busy in pursuits and activities, but the difference between them is that the latter's mind is set on a single purpose, viz., that of serving God and doing his duty. The last line of verse 44 says that they who are impelled by the

magnets of pleasure and power, are not qualified for the religious spirit which prompts the true devotee to defy and ignore every consideration but that of love and service to Him.

The verses under comment have given rise to little of controversy among the commentators. The expression पुष्पिता वाक् (="flowery words") has been somewhat variously rendered. Flowers, of course, are not so valuable and precious as fruits. The former are sweet only to sight and to smell, but seldom afford nourishment. They may even be poisonous, but their shape and scent may be charming. The commentators touch on these aspects, each according to his fancy, and make out the contrasts between the flower and the fruit. Sri Madhwa compares *Swarga* and the like to flowers and *Mukti* to the fruit. The former are of short-lived attraction, while the latter permanently satisfy the aspirant by outright salvation.

Commentator Venkatanatha justifies the comparison by pointing out that as a flower always precedes the fruit, so *Swarga* precedes *Mukti*. It is difficult to follow the logic as *Swarga* does not invariably precede *Mukti*. The concomitance of the two like flower and fruit is not a tenet of Vedanta. The aspirant to *Mukti* may or may not get to *Swarga*, which, however, is not an indispensably necessary stage for his progress.

I have already drawn attention to the somewhat substantial difference of opinion as to the meaning of वेदवादर्ताः. This difference is based on the varied views held by the three founders (Sankaracharya,

Ramanujacharya and Sri Madhwa) as to the import of the Veda and its divisions. The cardinal article of the Madhwa faith is that the Veda treats of God in every part of it, and this feature of Sri Madhwa's creed is not to be lost sight of by his disciples. At the opposite extreme, is the position of *Poorva Meemamsakas*. These contend that rituals are the most vital parts of the Veda, and that the Upanishads which deal with the soul and God do so as only incidental topics, the main topic being ritualism. On this subject, discussion has raged in the books, and hence I have repeated myself for drawing pointed attention to it.

The last line (of verse 44) speaks of समाधि in the locative case. Sankaracharya and Ramanujacharya take it to mean "the mind", the whole line reading thus, "the true conviction is not born *in such a mind*". Sri Madhwa points out on the authority of a very clear Puranic passage that समाधि means here "a peaceful reliance on God".

In comparing these two renderings one may observe that it is hardly necessary to speak of "conviction being born *in the mind*". The words "in the mind" seem to be superfluous, for, that goes without saying, as it cannot be born anywhere else. Moreover, the ordinary sense of the word समाधि is not, "the mind" and it involves some strain to deduce the sense by etymological. The word ordinarily means some kind of concentrator and there is no harm in accepting this in the present context. सम is God and समाधि is trustful reliance upon Him. This takes very forcible



sense. When men hanker after pleasures and make offerings to various gods, they are not qualified in their polytheistic pursuits to rely on the only true and supreme God and attain, by concentration, equanimity and peace. To render समाधि into the mind, conveys but an insipid sense, and is very colourless and feeble, to say the least. To render it as Sri Madhwa has done gives point to the religious feature that ought to mark the life of the Yogin (the devotee). Neelakanata adopts the meaning of concentration in preference to that of Sankaracharya. Sridhara does the same.

The relevancy of "one-pointedness" to the present context is not disputed. It is felt that by rendering समाधि into "*the mind*" an important idea is lost. So, in *Sankara Bhashyoktarsha Deepika*, it is said that the idea of "one-pointed devotion to God" may be deemed contained in the word व्यवसायात्मिका. This annotator virtually apologizes for Sankaracharya's rendering समाधि to mean "the mind", and regrets that the notion of worship or concentration admittedly important and relevant should be gathered by mere implication in some other word.

45) त्रैगुण्यविषया वेदा निस्त्रैगुण्यो भवार्जुन ।  
निर्द्वन्द्वो नित्यसत्त्वस्थो निर्योगक्षेम आत्मवान् ॥

त्रैगुण्यविषयाः ... treat apparently of what pertains  
to the three-fold gunas

|                   |     |   |
|-------------------|-----|---|
| वेदाः             | ... | the Vedas   |
| निस्त्रैगुण्यः भव | ... | be not deluded by the apparent sense relating to the three-fold gunas |
| अर्जुन            | ... | O ! Arjuna  |
| निर्द्वन्द्वः     | ... | be unaffected by the pair of opposites                                |
| नित्यसत्त्वस्थः   | ... | be steady in the Eternally High                                       |
| निर्योगक्षेमः     | ... | Do not acquire or safeguard what the Sastras forbid                   |
| आत्मवान्          | ... | Have the Lord ever with you (deeming Him as ever your master)         |

"The Vedas treat apparently of the three-fold gunas. O Arjuna! Do not be deluded by the superficial meaning. Rise above pairs of opposites and be steady in the Eternally High. Do not acquire or conserve what is forbidden. Be ever devoted".

The first line of this verse is a difficult one. If the Vedas treat of the three gunas, how can Arjuna help discarding the Vedas themselves if he is to discard the three gunas? The antithesis is emphatic and marked. The first reading produces the impression that Sri Krishna somehow disapproves of the Vedas and calls on Arjuna to rise above them.

The difficulty is, how can a Vedic believer and upholder speak of the Vedas in this strain?

Sankaracharya suggests that the Vedas herein meant are the Vedic sections known as *Karma-Kanda*. Ramanujacharya thinks that Vedas are addressed to three kinds of men, the good, the mixed and the low, and *Mumukshus* should eschew what relate to the two latter classes.

Sri Madhwa thinks that great significance lies in the word विषयः. This word means ordinarily "subject-matter". Sankaracharya takes it in this sense; Ramanujacharya does not adopt his meaning. He construes त्रैगुण्य to mean the three-fold groups of men, and renders विषय to signify that Vedas are addressed to them. Sri Madhwa quotes the lexicon and says विषय and वाद mean 'the superficial sense'. Hence वेदवाद in (41) and विषय herein, refer to the outer meaning of the Vedas as distinguished from the uniform underlying sense which is an unmixed praise of God. In this view, there is no occasion to discard the Vedas wholly or partly. No section thereof need be disregarded either because it deals with Karma or is addressed to *Rajasas* and *Tamasas*. Sri Krishna calls upon Arjuna not to hanker after the fruits apparently promised in the Vedas for rituals, but to look to the deeper meaning calculated to save one from *samsara*.

Sankarananda is one of those who read Adwaita almost in every verse whether the words and the context admit of it or not. He thinks that the present verse is an exhortation to Arjuna to reject the Vedas and the world together, and renounce *karma* wholesale. He takes त्रैगुण्यविषयावेदाः to say that 'the Vedas treat of the

cosmos born of the three Gunas'. Inasmuch as the world and the books that treat of it are मिथ्या, (=unreal), 'reject them both', is the advice given.

Sankarananda evidently forgets that in the opinion of himself and his monist brethren (see especially verse 39) Arjuna was an ignorant worldly person who was yet unqualified for renunciation and Advaitic realization. In short, he was not fit for Sankhya, and therefore 'Yoga' was commenced, to suit the teaching to his level. Having just commenced, to suit the teaching to his level. Having just commenced to speak of *yoga*, it is strange that the Lord should suddenly change His mind and talk of *Sankhya* to Arjuna. Sankarananda's interpretation is, "If, however, O! Arjuna, you are firm in *Sankhya*, your course is to rise above the world and the Vedas". But where is the occasion for this, 'If'? Sri Krishna had found Arjuna incompetent and had just commenced an alternative course of teaching.

As already observed, Sankaracharya and the other commentators of his school do not adopt this extreme rendering and are content to chop off the *Karma Kanda* alone.

I have indicated how Sri Madhwa overcomes the difficulty of the riddle by pointing out the true meaning of the word विषय. Otherwise, in accepting the word as simply meaning 'the theme', or 'the subject-matter', one cannot help the result that the Vedas are condemned at least in part. This result, no Vaidik can look on with complacency.



Coming to the word त्रैगुण्य, there is, of course, divergence of views as to what it denotes. Ramanujcharya understands it, as already pointed out, as a reference to the *men* dominated by the three-fold gunas and not the gunas themselves or their effects. Sankaracharya takes it to mean *samsara*, the effect of the gunas. Sri Madhwa construes the word in two ways: (1) It means swarga and other shortlived pleasures promised to performers of rituals. These are impediments to moksha. They relate to the three gunas. (2) The word means *samsara*. But then, what about विषयाः? Do the Vedas treat of *samsara* in general? No. विषयाः means "dispellers of the *samsara*-poison". विष is poison and याः means "banishers".

Desikar criticises the interpretation of त्रैगुण्य if it denotes the "effect of the gunas", as unintelligent and feeble. He thinks that his own master's view is the soundest, and that the only point called for by, and admissible in, the context, is the lesson as to who are the persons that the Vedas are addressed to. In justifying this position and throwing light on it, he explains that the Vedas are the eternal benefactors of every man and address suitable lessons to every one, of whatever grade, on the analogy of the physician who suits his prescription and diet to the needs and constitution of the patient, or of a parent who allows pleasures to his own son lest he should otherwise steal them or get into worse wickedness. I must confess that the analogy is, to my mind, far from convincing. All men are suffering but from one disease, that is, *samsara*, and the Vedas purport to lead every one (according to Desika's school)

to Moksha. This being so, no Veda could prescribe to any one what will simply increase the disease. Desire is the root and branch of *samsara*. The remedy should be some antidote of desire and not what will increase it. Be it Tamasas that the Veda addresses itself to, or Rajasas, it cannot advise desireful rituals even to them and throw impediments before their spiritual progress. Sri Madhwa holds that कामना (=desire) is nowhere enjoined in the Vedas, though no doubt texts are abundant to this effect that, "he who desires swarga shall do this or that". Desikar thinks that the Vedic texts permit, sanciton, and *enjoin* "desire" itself, to certain classes of men. That the Vedas should do what is diametrically opposed to the best interests of men is not satisfactory.

Next comes the injunction निस्त्रैगुण्यो भव (=discard, what pertains to the *gunas*). There is no difficulty in this clause by itself. It is a fundamental idea of Indian philosophies that the qualities of Satva, Rajas and Tamas, are primordial conditions of material stuff and are among the first-born products of creation. They govern the constitution and shape of the material world and colour the character and conduct of men. To rise above their domination is the aim of the Sage and the Seeker.

But the difficulty comes in when reading this clause along with the foregoing clause where the subject-matter of the Vedas is said to be the *gunas*. No one who respects the Vedas as of paramount authority and truth, can discard *gunas* if they are the theme of the Vedas. The antithesis between the *gunas* treated of

by the Vedas and Arjuna rising above them is the source of some difficulty. In the second line, Arjuna is told to be steady in *satva*. This, of course, raises a further difficulty. If the three gunas are to be conquered, it is inconsistent with the position that every one should cultivate and adhere to *satva*, the chief of the three gunas.

Ramanujacharya gets over the difficulty by limiting निस्त्रैगुण्य to *Rajas and Tamas* qualities alone. Neither he nor his commenatator has properly accounted for the use of this word embracing all the three qualities, when only two of them are contemplated.

Then again, the word त्रैगुण्य occurs twice in the first line, first in connection with the Vedic theme, and then in advising Arjuna to rise above the gunas. Ordinary canons of interpretation, the run of the language, and the antithesis emphasized, render it clear that the same word thus repeated is intended to bear the same meaning, whatever that may be.

According to Ramanujacharya, the first त्रैगुण्य denotes the individuals dominated by the threefold qualities and the second त्रैगुण्य speaks virtually of two qualities (*Rajas and Tamas*) as the objects of conquest. The force of the sentence is greatly marred by thus attributing different meanings to the same word deliberately set in antithesis.

Sankarananda takes निस्त्रैगुण्यो भव to be an advice for wholesale renunciation. This jars with the context, dealing, as it does, with *Karma yoga* rather than

*Sankhya*. Neelakanta thinks that Arjuna was asked to soar above *satva* guna also, though *satva* is calculated to lift him and lead him in the upward path. Sankaracharya thinks that what is meant by the conquest of the *gunas* is virtually a conquest of Desire which is, in truth, the chief source and parent of *samsara*.

Sri Madhwa understands त्रैगुण्य in the first line in the same sense, in both the places. According to him, the line means "The Vedas seem to treat of mercenary rituals, but looking deeper, they don't. Do you, O! Arjuna, disregard the apparent sense, and dive into the real one, and so doing, you avoid short lived pleasures and get over *samsara*."

Coming to the second line, we may notice the expression नित्यसत्त्वस्थ first. If the word *satva* means the *guna* of that name, the contradiction with the first line stares us in the face. Madhusoodana and Neelakanta construe this word to mean *courage*. Sankarananda refers to Brahman by the term. Sri Madhwa quotes authority, and renders the word to denote Vishnu.

The expression निर्द्वन्द्व is an oft-recurring phrase in the Bhagavad Geeta. Heat and cold, pleasure and pain, and many other pairs of opposites, rule our life. We are nothing if not a bundle of likes and dislikes, love and hate, attachment and repulsion. A calm, peaceful, spiritual life rises above these pairs. Sankarananda alone, of all the commentators, differs from the rest and takes the word to denote the couple of *name* and *form* of which the world is said to be composed. The *cosmos* be-



ing the effect of illusion and comprising *name* and *form* in the last resort, should be repudiated, according to him. Sri Madhwa takes the word to convey the same idea as the expression समदुःखसुख, the advice being that states of material pleasure should be avoided like states of pain, because they impede progress to the goal.

निर्योगक्षेमः ॥ This command is couched, no doubt, in general language. The seeker is told not to hanker after acquisitions, nor to be anxious for securing and safe-guarding acquired possessions. Comprehensively understood, it embraces the entire zone of human activity and energy. Do not strive for any acquisition and do not keep, secure or safeguard anything you possess! This literally must paralyse every kind of activity and action.

According to Sankarananda, the idea is that, as samsara consists of acquisition and conservation, and both are illusory, one should treat them as such, by taking note only of the Brahman, the basis on which the illusion is super-imposed. This is the reflection of the Monsists' pet creed. Whether the word bears this or not is another question. Sri Madhwa reads the idea to the that whatever of acquisition or conservation is opposed to the *shastras* and constitute impediments to spiritual progress, should be eschewed.

Now we come to the last word of the verse आत्मवान्. This word literally means, 'possessed of Atman'. Sankarananda who hesitates not to read Adwaita and Maya into the other words though they be unsuited vehicles, simply jumps with joy over this word

(आत्मवान्) and makes it mean the intellectual realization of Brahmic unity. Sankaracharya does not go so far. He thinks that "Atma" means the mind, and the term 'possessed of Atma' means equipped with mental control and balance. Ramanujacharya construes 'Atma' to mean the soul or self, and 'to be possessed of it' is to seek it. Sri Madhwa holds that 'Atma' here is the God Supreme, and to be possessed of Him is to be devoted to Him in the full faith that He is ever our master and Lord.

Freeing our minds, for a moment, from the tangle of controversy, we may note that the *yoga* teaching virtually begins with this verse. The seeker is told what to eschew and what to adopt. He is called upon to disregard every pleasure or reward connected with the *gunas*. True happiness is spiritual in essence and not material. Rituals enjoined by the Vedas may be or should be performed, but the canker of the heart, *desire for low reward*, should not be the motive power at the bottom.

Thus performed, the sacrifice leads to the conquest of *samsara*, to a mastery of the three *gunas*, and to a state of bliss in which the *gunas* have no art or part. What then is the life one should lead? Not a life of total idleness but one full of action, but with the sting the poison, removed and cast away. That life is miserable which oscillates between opposites temptations and wears away under the stress of conflicting magnets. Worry, apart from work, is the true bane. These pairs of opposites that mar the even tenor of life should be subdued. This is possible only if we stick fast and steady to satva that is God, or it may mean the chief

quality of that name. We must adhere to both, for, adherence to one means adherence to the other. Satvaguna steadies the life, brings about serenity, bestows clear vision, sound sense, sober judgment and illuminated mind. To be ever established in this guna is the true road to become ever established in God, the Highest of the High.

We are thus introduced gradually from a life of mental and moral balance to the life of religious piety when we come to rely more and more on God and less and less on our own egotism. This paves the way to that unbounded trust that the pious are expected to place in Him. The intense worry which is ever mindful of acquiring the good things of this world and retaining them safe, gives way to resignation and surrender. The feeling has to grow very slowly and gradually that He is the guardian of our best interest, and will acquire and conserve for us what is to our good. To do work is our duty.

To fulfill our appointed task, the duties imposed on us by our state in and position in society, is high merit. But we may err if we proceed without guiding principles. The shastras are our best guides. What we may aspire for and what we may treasure up among our possessions has to be determined by them. Whatever is forbidden by them we must avoid. This is the even life governed by a solitary principle. Acquiring and conserving what is proper, the life of the pious. Full as it may be of work and toil, has but one flame burning bright and steady unwanted by any breeze. This is the flame of devotion which recognizes that God is ever our Master and that we are His slaves, His abso-

lute property. Such a life is yoga, and the verse under comment maps out the outline in half a dozen pithy clauses that amply repay thoughtful study.

It remains however to notice one critic who has allowed his temper to outrun his judgment and indulged in a free and full volley of abusive criticism fired at Sri Madhwa. I refer to the annatator Venkatanatha. Evidently, he is enraged at Sri Madhwa's interpretation of विषयाः into "dispellers of poison". The authority quoted by the Teacher in support of this meaning seems to have simply infuriated the critic.

Finding, however, that he could not effectively criticize and demolish our view in respect to this verse, Venkatanatha adopts the argument of the wolf in the 'wolf and the lamb' story and darts off to quote a passage from Sudha dealing with the esoteric import to वसन्ते वसन्ते ज्योतिषा यजेत. This text of the Sruti has been explained by Sri Madhwa to convey an inner meaning whereby every word (including the verbs) is a eulógium of God. Venkatanatha takes this passage containing some grammatical subtleties as a sample of Sri Madhwa's commentaries in general and laments the fate of the srutis and the Geeta that doomed them into his hands for exposition.

Very possibly, Venkatanatha has heard of the remark our people sometimes make to the effect that the sruti dreads the approach of the half-learned man who she fears, will shatter her in connection with the adwaitic interpretation of Vedic passages supposed to lay down the creed of illusion, themselves being illu-



sory into the bargain. Having evidently waited long for an opportunity to revenge himself, he turns the tables by bemoaning the sad state of the srutis and the Geeta also to boot.

It is somewhat interesting, not to say dramatic, to read the varying emotions given expression to. In a fit of triumphant ridicule, he points his finger at the वसन्ते passage and tells the reader to note how supremely ridiculous it is. Then he indulges in the lament aforementioned. He is stricken with wonder at Sri Madhwa's temerity and soon controls himself by some sort of consolation. After a free vent given to these alternations of emotional outburst, he cools himself to ask two questions by way to criticism. It is to these that we need seriously reply.

First, he asks, if Sri Madhwa be a Vedic upholder, how can he with consistency and grace, deny the Vedic injunction that in every Vasanta (Spring) the sacrifice of jyotishtoma should be performed? How can he hold that the clear injunction is a myth and that the sacrifice should not be performed?

This interrogation is astonishingly misleading and is based on a delusion. Where does Sri Madhwa say that Vedic passages do not lay down injunctions? Where again does he say that the passage in question, वसन्ते does not bear the ordinary meaning conveyed plainly by the words? He had nowhere excluded that meaning. What he says is that, underneath the ordinary meaning which lies on the surface, there is also a deeper import. In arriving at this, the words have to

be studied in close and subtle grammatical analysis. The suggestion that we repudiate the plain sense as delusion, is quite baseless. If any one stands for the most absolute acceptance of the Vedas as paramount in veracity and authority, it is we. We regard Vedas as eternal and self-existing. We treat them as flawless out and out. For every dharma and Karma, we look to them as the source. In fact, under this very verse of the Geeta, Sri Madhwa quotes authority to say that the entire body of the Vedas are the authority and source of all dharmas. So holding, how can he say that no dharma or karma is laid down in the Vedas?

The critic then puts the second question, "If Sri Krishna enjoins an abandonment of dharma and Karma by asking Arjuna to avoid the apparent sense of the Vedic texts, how can he soon afterwards ask Arjuna to do karma by saying कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते (You are qualified only for karma)?" This question is also born of ignorance. It is not our position that Arjuna should renounce Karma. If anybody holds so it is Monists (see Sankarananda, for example).

By the exhortation to overlook the apparent meaning, Arjuna was only told not to aim at material rewards in doing his duty. The Vedic text may promise such rewards, but those rewards are not to be wished for. The texts enjoin the sacrifices in question, but they do not command men to fill their minds with desire for Swarga and the like. To understand Vedic passages in an esoteric sense as wholesale collection of hymns in adoration of God is not inconsistent with the Vedas being a code of injunctions too. Venkatanatha has misunderstood us willfully or inadvertently.

These are the only two points raised in the criticism. The rest is as I have already observed, a volley of abuse.

Adverting to the quotation made by Sri Madhwa in support of his rendering, Venkatanatha bursts out, "It is no wonder that thou Madhwa shouldst forge passages in support of this view, as thou art an adept in this business. Having invented Srutis like Matara, Kauravya, Mandavya and Bhallaveya and Smritis like Brahmatantra, Purushottamatantra, and Brahmatarka, works even the smell of which is unscented by well-known puranas and Itihasas of old, and which thy colleagues like Ramanuja have not quoted from at all, it is no wonder that thou shouldst invent one or two, to support thy construction of the words विषय and उद्गपान.'"

This is indeed very serious abuse. But this scandalous attack is one of recent origin. We do not see this charge levelled at Sri Madhwa by learned scholars like Vidyardanya and Vedanta Desikar. Printed works being unknown, no library in the country was full and exhaustive. Venkatanatha is, of course, not omniscient. That he has not seen these works proves nothing at all. At this rate, any quoted passage may be brushed aside by a vile attack that it is an invention. The passages that some of these modern critics are condemning as inventions are now being largely unearthed. The modern is an age of indexes and references by chapter and verse. This is not the ancient method. They were too honest themselves and relied too much on others' honesty too, to adopt this method of attack.

The occasion that gave rise to all this criticism is the rendering of the word विषयाः and another word. Leaving our rendering alone, may we hope that our learned critic has steered clear of all the difficulties in this riddle of a verse. Turning our eyes to his notes, we see, first of all, that he has not adopted Sankaracharya's meanings and heeded not his Advaitic colleagues such as Madhusoodana. Ramanujacharya's commentary of this verse seems to have appealed to him as particularly sound. He takes विषयाः to mean the men spoken to by the Vedas and not their subject-matter. He follows the same commentator in construing the other words also. I have endeavoured to show how Ramanujacharya's rendering is beset with objections and difficulties. I need not repeat them.

One remarkable feature is noteworthy. Venkatanatha quotes an entire passage of many lines wholesale from Ramanujacharya's *Bhashya*. But he does so without a word of acknowledgment. He gives not to the reader the remotest hint that the language and the ideas are not his own. He is careful not to give rise to any suspicion about his plagiarism. Is this honesty intellectual or moral?

46) यावानर्थ उदपाने सर्वतः संप्लुतोदके ।  
तावान्सर्वेषु वेदेषु ब्राह्मणस्य विजानतः ॥

|        |     |              |
|--------|-----|--------------|
| यावान् | ... | whatever     |
| अर्थः  | ... | benefit      |
| उदपाने | ... | is in a pond |



|                      |     |                                |
|----------------------|-----|--------------------------------|
| सर्वतः, संयुतोदके... |     | That is merged in the ocean of |
|                      |     | water spread out everywhere    |
| तावान्               | ... | that much                      |
| सर्वेषु              | ... | in all                         |
| वेदेषु               | ... | Vedas                          |
| ब्राह्मणस्य          | ... | to him who has visioned God    |
| विजानतः              | ... | to the knower                  |

“Just as the benefit derivable from a pond of water is merged in the vaster benefit of an ocean of water spread out everywhere, so is the short-lived fruit of all the mercenary Vedic rites merged in what is available to the Knower and the Seer”.

This verse is full of ellipses, as the translation may show. Sri Krishna spoke disparagingly of *Kamya* and its fruits. He advised a disregard of the short-lived joys resulting from mercenary rites and worship. The objector urges that there is nothing to choose between the two paths of *Kamya* and *Akamya*, for, whereas the former leads to rewards such as *Swarga*, the latter leads to *Moksha*, and the two courses are mutually exclusive. In the sense that the performer of rites does not get *Moksha* and the unselfish worshipper gets not *Swarga*, both are on a par, the benefit and the loss being equally balanced.

To the objection that, in these circumstances, the condemnation of selfish rites was not right, the Lord replies in the present verse. He says that one who owns vast sheets of water, a veritable ocean, derives there from a benefit that is so vast and abundant that he does not care for the paltry harvest of a mere pond.

Similarly, he who knows God by *Shastric* study, and visions Him, derives, therefrom an amount of bliss so infinitely great in quality and quantity as to submerge all other short-lived and finite joys reached by the selfish performance of every Vedic rite. *Udapana* (उदपान the pond) stands for something good enough so far as it goes, but short-lived and small. *Swarga* and similar goals attainable by a faithful course of every Vedic rite performed with desires and motives, are compared to the benefits of a mere pond. The spreading waters spoken of in the first line stand for something infinite and great. The bliss of *Moksha* derived by the Knower and Seer of Brahman is compared thereto. The merger referred to is to be understood in the sense that the possessor of the greater bliss does not bemoan the want of the lesser one.

Ramanujacharya thinks that this verse is meant to point out that a *Mumukshu* should not waste his time and energy in studying all the Vedas, but should choose only the useful portion and reject the rest. Every part of the Veda is not suited to every one. In a spreading expanse of water, what man requires for his wants is but little. He can take and use only a small quantity, to wash and bathe, to perform ablutions, to cook his food and quench his thirst. For these purposes. He takes what he wants and leaves the rest alone. So also, among the vast Vedas, the seeker should choose such karma alone as will aid him in the acquisition of Divine knowledge and advance his progress to mukti, and leave the rest of the Vedas and their commandments alone. The verse rendered as Ramanujacharya puts it will read thus:

“All the Vedas are only of such limited use to the enlightened Knower as a vast lake full of water is to a man whose wants are naturally limited”. In this rendering, the word “full of spreading water” is an adjective qualifying उदपान (the lake). There is no antithesis intended between the pond and the ocean. Similarly, the fruits of *kamya karma* are not set off against the bliss of Mukti. The idea is only to impress that, man’s time being precious and his wants being limited, a portion of the Vedas must satisfy his requirements, just as a small part of a big lake does. If this construction be adopted, the ellipses to be supplied into the verse are fewer than in the other meaning adopted by Sri Madhwa and Sankaracharya. Evidently attracted by this advantage, Neelakanta and Venkatanatha have followed suit and virtually preferred Ramanujacharya’s rendering to that of their own teacher (Sankaracharya).

But the notion of rejecting any part of the Vedas as useless is jarring. The entire body of the Vedas is held to be gospel. No Vedic believer can subscribe to the doctrine that vast portions thereof are not to be studied and followed. There are two propositions in Ramanujacharya’s meaning to which exception is taken:—

- 1) that the seeker need not bother himself about all the *karma* laid down in the Vedas;
- 2) that some *Karma* (acts or rites) remain earmarked as helpful to *gnana* and these alone should be chosen.

The first proposition is unsound. The seeker ought to study *all* the Vedas and obey all their commandments, whether this is accomplished in one life-time or many. This, of course, is very different from saying that he should, in performing any Vedic act or ritual, desire or aim at *swarga* and the like. The rule of convenience that economises time and energy and recommends abridged books, summaries, synopses and compendiums, has no true application to the Vedas. The second proposition is not sound, because *Mukti* is attainable only through *gnana* (knowledge and God-Vision) and not through a supposed combination of *karma* and *gnana*. No *Karma*, however efficacious, can form an integral part of the cause that produces *Mukti*. It stands on a subordinate level, and, at best, produces that purity of mind which paves the way of true knowledge.

Sankaracharya construes the word "*Brahmana*" to mean the Sanyasin, one who has renounced all *karma*. According to him, *Karma* is inferior to *gnana*, the bliss of *karma* is vastly inferior to *Brahmananda*, and hence, the latter is preferred to a life of work and action. This meaning no doubt resembles very much the view taken by Sri Madhwa, but there is one important particular on which there is divergence. Sankaracharya seems to think that the verse under comment exhorts a wholesale renunciation of *karma*, while Sri Madhwa takes it that no renunciation of *Karma* is advised at all, but only the subjugation of desire. To sum up the three views briefly, it is seen that Ramanujacharya is for selection of Vedic texts and rites, Sankaracharya is for setting them all to one side and steering clear of them towards *gnana*, and Sri Madhwa is for accepting and following them all in a



spirit of self-surrender with no thoughts or aspirations for ephemeral profit.

The last two words of the verse ब्राह्मणस्य and विजानतः mean literally, 'of the knowing Brahmin'. Thus understood, the epithet 'knowing' would distinguish a section of Brahmins, *viz.*, the knowing members from the ignorant ones, and the word 'Brahmin' would mark off the members of this caste from the other castes. Sri Krishna could hardly have addressed a teaching of this kind to a *Kshatriya* as Arjuna was, if he meant to say anything peculiarly applicable to Brahmins alone.

Nor is the proposition about the observance of Vedic rites in a non-selfish spirit, one exclusively applicable to Brahmins. Hence, the commentators are all agreed on the point, that the word 'Brahmana' does not mean a member of the Brahmin caste. While thus agreed as to what it does not mean, there is some difference of opinion, however, as to what it does actually mean. Sankaracharya renders it as a synonym for the sanyasin, the ascetic. Qualifying this by the next word (विजानतः = knowing), the result is the lesson that *Brahmananda* is the privileged possession of the ascetic who has realized unity, and that such a person has no duty, no work and no task.

Ramanujacharya takes ब्राह्मण to denote the Vedic scholar and विजानतः to mean the seeker of emancipation. According to him, ब्रह्म in the word is the Vedas. Leaving alone all who impugn the Vedas as outside the pale, the circle is first narrowed to Vedic believers

and followers. Among these Vedic scholars, a large number betake to ritualistic texts and hanker after lower heavens. But the *Mumukshu* (the seeker of the ultimate beatitude) is a *Vaidic* who has to be marked out from this hankering crowd. He is one who makes a choice selection of Vedic texts and karma, and the beatitude he gets is infinitely vast and great.

Sri Madhwa also reads ब्राह्मण in the literal sense, and explains it to mean the 'knower of Brahman'. ब्रह्म in the word means the Supreme God, not the Vedas (as Ramanujacharya takes it).

विजानतः means "one who knows". The difference between the two is that the former applies to one who has developed God-vision and holds with Him actual, visual communion, and the latter word applies to the wise man who knows God through the *shastras* and has not yet realized the visual communion. The word विजानतः ('knowing') is not a qualifying epithet meant to mark off a section of Brahmans from the rest.

It is the bliss following on God-Vision that is alone meant to be pointed out as being vast and great like the ocean. The lesser knowledge of the *shastraic* scholar not yet ripened into vision, is referred to but incidentally as a step by which God-vision is reached. What the previous verse describes as आत्मवान् (the surrendering worshipper) is alluded to again by the word विजानतः, and the reader is thus reminded of *karma yoga* as the stage next preceding the higher one and qualifying the devotee for it.

In the supplemental work (known as Geeta Tatparya) Sri Madhwa explains the verse in an alternative sense. (उदपान) *Udapana* is explained there, to stand for Vishnu as its etymology suggests. सर्वतस्संप्रुतोदक is an adjective qualifying उदपान. It means the watery *Prakriti* whereon God rests after universal dissolution. The grace of the Lord is the *summum bonum*. He who has it, has the highest reward of all the Vedas studied, followed, and observed.

He reaps the rich reward of the conviction that all *Karmas* are for glorifying Him and that God is the chief theme of the Vedas. In this alternative exposition there is no need for abundant ellipses to be filled in, there is no contrast set out between the pond and the ocean, nor between ephemeral fruits and eternal salvation. Sri Madhwa quotes an old *smriti* text which fully supports his exposition. The fact remains, however, that 'Udapana' is an unusual word to describe Vishnu. Instances, however, are far from rare, where God is described in uncommon language especially in the Vedas and *quasi-vedic* literature.

The reader may remember the violent onslaught of critic Venkatanatha noticed under the last verse. The interpretation of उदपान is one of the causes that roused the critic's ire. He criticizes it as a piece of text-torture, and condemns the *smriti* quotation as being an invention. The attack is uncharitable as it is unsound and unjust.

47) कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।  
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते संगोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

|             |     |   |
|-------------|-----|---|
| कर्मणि      | ... | In work   |
| एव          | ... | alone   |
| अधिकारः, ते | ... | is your province                                |
| मा          | ... | not   |
| फलेषु       | ... | in wishing for fruits                           |
| कदाचन       | ... | at any time                                     |
| कर्मफलहेतुः | ... | One that is actuated by the<br>motive of reward |
| मा भूः      | ... | Do not become                                   |
| ते          | ... | in you  |
| संगः        | ... | fondness  |
| अकर्मणि     | ... | for inaction                                    |
| मास्तु      | ... | let there be not                                |

“Your province lies in work alone. Do not hanker after rewards at any time. Be not acutated by the motive of reward. Do not be addicted to inaction”.

To hanker after fruits, be it *swarga* or anything else, was already condemned. The Lord administered a sharp rebuke to those who, professing to follow the letter of the Vedas, overlooked the spirit and reveled in ritualism. The objector urges that this censure of rituals is not right, for, what is enjoined by the Vedas ought to the *ipso facto* above censure.



The Lord proceeds to reply to this, by saying, that no Veda lays down the obligation to hanker after selfish and sordid ends. The well-known example of स्वर्गकामो यजेत apparently speaks of desire and sacrifices as both constituting obligations. But the true meaning of it is that whoever wishes for *swarga* shall perform the particular sacrifice. But, verily, there is no obligation that any one *shall* desire *swarga* or anything else.

The object of the present verse is to affirm the condemnation of selfishness and lay down what is our duty and what we should avoid. Of these, the chief purpose of the verse is to exhort us to abandon *kama* or desireful motive. It is pointed out that our province is in work alone, that we are qualified only to do our duty and that our right or duty, whichever it may be deemed to be, ends there. This limitation is pointed out in order to emphasize the more important lesson that motive is no part of our right or duty. Thus the most important predicate of the verse is मा फलेषु कदाचन (Do not set your heart on rewards at any time). It is injunction which every aspirant should lay to heart. The word here stands for desire of fruit.

The reasoning may thus be summed up. The *Sruti* prescribes a penalty for wrongful omission. The *Isopanishad* lays down sin for any abstention from *karma*. It does not however hurl any penalty at one who abstains from 'desire'. This is the test to determine whether '*kama*' is a duty or not. Judged by this test, no one can avoid the duty of *Vedic karma* and no one is obliged to aim at any fruit. The principal object of the Geeta verse is to attack the school of *Meemamsakas*

who present the Vedas as a schedule of rites and rewards, and to point out a higher religious ideal for the honest and dutiful worker. *Bhaskara*, for instance, will not admit that the class of rituals other *than* the daily *karma* like *sandhyavandana* and incidental *karma* like *sraddha*, can be or may be performed in an unselfish manner. This view is wrong, for according to Sri Krishna, whatever the rite or the task, it may be done as a mere act of worship.

If we are competent only to work, and if fruit be beyond our jurisdiction, one may very well exclaim, one will have nothing to do with work on such terms. Arjuna might say, 'I will not toil on these hard conditions'. To him, the exhortation is addressed, मा ते संगोस्त्वकर्मणि = Do not become addicted to inaction. The omission to do *Vedic karma* entails serious sin and penalties.

It has been already pointed out that where the *Sruti* offers ad promises short-lived joys and fruits as the reward of *Vedic karma*, it should be clearly understood that the object is to induce the good into the discipline by means of allurements. Not that the promised rewards are untrue and unattainable: they are within the performer's reach if he wishes for them. But the *Sruti* hopes that once the man has passed through the discipline of sacrifice, even though it be, at first, for attaining low profit, he will soon read the *Vedas* in the right spirit, become pure in mind and rise to the higher ideal of disinterested worship. Bhagavat, XI Skanda, chapter 21, contains a comment on this point. It compares the fruit-promising passages to the mild sweets with which the physician beguiles the patient who has to be prevailed on to be swallow a bitter pill.

Apart from the religious aspect which insists on *Vedic Karma* being faithfully done and the prospect of pleasure sedulously kept beyond view, the verse under notice contains a valuable lessons of practical ethics. The most potent factor of human life is the fever of gold and ambitions. Human society lives, moves and has its being in a furious war of ranging passions, in the white heat of grasping avarice, in deep longings and yearnings, in intense alternations of hope and fear and in a life of coveted pleasures and joys. Goaded by this white heat of feverish desires, life soon becomes a wearisome burden. This avarice, this passion, should be moderated and cooled. It is a lofty ideal of ethics that men should fulfill their appointed work utterly unmindful of fruits. Sri Krishna impresses this ideal repeatedly in this book. He has, by means of emphatic exhortations, condemning idleness and upholding disinterested activity, removed the possible reproach levelled at *Vedanta*, that it promotes selfishness, exclusiveness and laziness. मा कर्मफलहेतुः is an expressive phrase which commands every one not to give importance to fruits so as to make them the magnets ruling his movements and energies. Let not fruit be the breeze that turns and rotates this weather-cock of human activity.

Now this life of disinterested work, — whom is it meant for? Does it apply to all, or is it applicable only to some? In this connection, Sankaracharya lays a tremendous emphasis on the word ते (=to you) and argues that Arjuna and others like him, ignorant of the truth, not qualified for renunciation, and unripe in wisdom, are the persons to whom the teaching is addressed. “You Arjuna, are a very ignorant person; you

are not fit for the *Brahmananda* of the foregoing verse. I will suit my teaching to your level. You *shall* do *karma*. But if, ever, you are to rise to be a *gnanin*, you must do it irrespective of its fruit. This is your duty and qualification. Renunciation is not meant for you". This is what Sri Krishna is supposed to have said according to Sankaracharya.

This interpretation harps on the usual Monistic strain that work is the province of the unwise and that the *Adwaitic* seer has no duty to so. I have touched on this point before and do not wish to repeat myself. I have also discussed how and why Arjuna is to be deemed not an ignorant person, but a great seer. He is *Indra* incarnate. He is *Nara*, which means that he is fired by the special presence and grace of Vishnu, Vayu and Sesha. If *Indra* was taught by *Brahma* himself (as the vedic episode of *Indra and Virochana* tells us) he could not be an ignoramus. If so, who else can aspire to be a seer? Attention may also be drawn to a clear passage in Skandha II of Bhagavata, which recounts many a well-known sage like Prahlada and Dhruva. In this list, Partha is counted. It may even be that Prarabdha and human birth may have bedimmed his knowledge to some extent. But there is no question that Arjuna is a great seer.

In this light, the force of the word ते = (to you) is that, *even to you*, the obligation holds good of performing *karma* how much more therefore should it hold good in respect to lesser men. Sages who have known and visioned God and beyond the danger of lapses into *samsara*. Their position is assured. They are bound to reach redemption. They are quite safe, unlike others



who are yet groping in the dark. Sri Krishna says, though you belong to the former category, even *to you*, the obligation to do *karma* and avoid lower ends forcibly applies. For even the *gnanin* would find, if he set his heart on sordid gains, that his *Mukti* is delayed thereby, or that he does not attain the full measure of the Vaikunta-bliss that is his due. Therefore, let the *gnanin* work as well as the *agnanin*. Thus, it will be seen that, whereas Sankaracharya has expounded the verse on the footing that Arjuna, being poor in spiritually, *Karma Yoga* suited to his status was taught to him, Sri Madhwa has proceeded on the totally opposite footing that Arjuna is a great seer, and yet, he was under an obligation to work, as, of course, lesser people are.

### RAMANUJACHARYA

Ramunjacharya interprets मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूः in such a way as to bring out the divine Hand working in everything including *Karma* and fruits. Arjuna being a person of great purity and piety (शुद्धसत्त्व), it was his duty and privilege not to pride himself as the author of any work or the producer of any fruit. He ought to see God in every movement and merge his own individuality in the Divine Will. From the mightiest task of man down to the lowest one of gratifying the mere appetite, the true devotee sees God as the author of both work and its result. (In मा कर्मफलहेतुः, कर्मफल is a Dvandva compound) हेतुर्माभूः means "Do not imagine that you are the author of work and fruit". This rendering accentuates an important and noteworthy point of religious duty. We have more and more of it by and by.

## SANKARACHARYA

Sankaracharya construes this very cause, stripped of any reference or allusion to God, and makes out that Arjuna is simply asked not to be the author and father of *Karmic* fruits. For, he does become the producer of fruits, if he wishes for them and not otherwise. It is within his will and choice whether he will create the fruits or not by desiring them or no. In effect he is told not to create them by forbearance from desires. (Here कर्मफलहेतुः is a Tatpurusha compound). Sri Madhwa demurs to the notion of man being the parent or author of *karmic* fruits. He construes the clause to mean that men are asked not to make कर्मफल a magnet of attraction and repulsion. (Here कर्मफलं तत्कृतौ हेतुः is a Bahuvrihi compound). Though, grammatically Bahuvrihi stands on a lower level than the other compounds, Neelakanta and Sridhara have adopted Sri Madhwa's rendering because of the sound sense it brings out.

## MADHWACHARYA

Sri Madhwa offers an alternative exposition of this verse, as he very often does, in Geeta Tatparya. Says the Lord, "you are competent only for work, but the fruit is in *my* Hands. The author and giver of *Karmic* fruits is God. कर्मफलहेतुः is God. Do not arrogate to yourself that function. Lay not the flattering unction to your soul that you will ever rise to Godhead and become either God or His peer".

This exposition lays stress on the well-known saying and belief that man proposes but God disposes.

That man is a helpless being who is unable to accomplish any result except with the aid of God is the experience of mankind all the world over. Even in respect to work, to mere proposals, man's freedom is, of course, limited. This is a point of note in the controversy between the theories of Free-will and Predestination, that we cannot pause now to discuss. It is enough to note that, like Ramanujacharya, though in a different vein, Sri Madhwa introduces the hand of God as the true dispenser of every good.

It is important to fix well in mind the true scope of the repeated injunction given, that desires, in general, should be shunned. Psychologically, a mental blank devoid of any desire or volition is well-nigh an impossibility. Hence, the injunction should be limited in its scope and confined only to unworthy desires. Whatever will impede the path of the seeker must be avoided. But *Bhakti*, for instance, far from impeding his way, helps him forward. Knowledge of God is a consummation to be devoutly wished for. So every one may warmly cherish a desire for true devotion or a desire to know God. Such desires are not forbidden, and great sages have ardently entertained them.

On several of the points adverted to, the reader is referred to the Sanskrit exposition for important quotations of authority culled mostly from Sri Madhwa's commentaries.

48) योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि संगं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय ।  
सिद्ध्यसिद्धयोस्समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥

|                 |     |  |
|-----------------|-----|--|
| योगस्थः         | ... | Firm in yoga (way to or means of knowledge). |
| कुरु            | ... | do   |
| कर्माणि         | ... | every task                                   |
| संगं            | ... | attachment to fruit                          |
| त्यक्त्वा       | ... | abandoning                                   |
| धनञ्जय          | ... | O! Arjuna                                    |
| सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्यः | ... | of success or failure                        |
| समः             | ... | equally balanced                             |
| भूत्वा          | ... | being  |
| समत्वं          | ... | equanimity                                   |
| योगः            | ... | Yoga   |
| उच्यते          | ... | is called                                    |

"Firm in *"yoga"* (=the path to knowledge), do every task abandoning attachment to fruit, being equally balanced in respect of success and failure. This equanimity is called *"yoga"*."

"Yoga" is a term not always used in a uniform sense. It denotes, generally speaking, one of three notions:—

1. disinterested work;
2. or the performance of such work;
3. or the devotional mind underlying it.

Literally, it denotes उपाय (=means to the attainment of an end); knowledge is the end in the present context. Unselfish *karma* and its performance and devotion are all necessary elements in building up the spiritual life that makes for knowledge.



The chief predicate of the verse is, "do every task, fixed in *yoga*." "Yoga" here means task. There seems to be a redundancy in saying, "Taking your stand on work do work". Hence, "Yoga" in योगस्थ is construed to mean, generally, the means of, or path to, knowledge. Two queries may be supposed to arise out of the chief predicate of the clause "do your duty firm in *yoga*":

1. What is it to be firmly established in *yoga*?
2. What is the definition of *yoga* itself?

The rest of the verse furnishes an answer to these queries. When the grasping desire for fruit is relinquished, then alone is the mind balanced between success and failure. Renunciation of greed is thus the parent of mental equanimity. To be thus settled in mental peace, regarding success and failure with equal calmness (सिद्धयसिद्धयोस्समः), after abandoning passion and prejudice (संगं त्यक्त्वा), is the state of being established in *yoga*. The second query is answered by the statement that equanimity is *yoga*. It is a short way of saying that disinterested and dispassionate performance of work just alluded to in the two phrases सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा and सिद्धयसिद्धयोस्समः is *yoga*. The word समत्वं stands for the whole sentiment just mentioned. Instances of abbreviated reference are not unknown in any speech or writing. I may observe that one point is rather clear, that the word "*yoga*", twice used in the verse, must convey the same meaning, as also the word सम also twice employed. The flow of the language as well as the exigencies of the context seem to make this clear.

Sankarananda introduces *Adwaita* herein by rendering 'sama' to mean *Brahman* in the word समत्वं. He construes समत्वं योगः to mean that yoga consists of unity with *Brahman*. He takes योगः in the first word of the verse, viz., योगस्थः to mean also *Brahman*. The meaning is, according to him, "being intensely fixed on Moksha as the aim, do work. The realized attainment of oneness is *yoga*. In this rendering 'Sama' is *Brahman*; 'Samatva', is monism realized; *yoga* is also realized monism. Of the two words used twice, *yoga* denotes unity with *Brahman* in both places, and सम also in one place denotes *Brahman* with regard to the same doctrine. There remains one other 'समः' used along with भूत्वा. Sankarananda leaves this word alone and permits it to convey its ordinary meaning of 'equal' instead of meaning 'Brahman' also.

Reading the second line once again, one cannot help thinking that the juxtaposition of समो भूत्वा and समत्वं योगः makes it quite clear that the word carries but one meaning in both places. To interpret one in the sense of 'equality' and the other as 'Brahman', seems doing violence to the language. There is no good reason why Sri Krishna should use सम in the rare sense of *Brahman*, more especially after he had just used the same word in an ordinary sense. Then again, to define *yoga* as monistic union is to render it synonymous with सांख्य. This conflicts vitally with the subdivision of the Geeta theme into सांख्य and योग referred to in verse 39. The section of सांख्य was closed, and the new section of

*Yoga* was begun in a formal manner with many an encomium bestowed on कर्मयोग and censure hurled at काम्यकर्म.

In verse No.47 (कर्मण्येवाधिकारः), Arjuna was told to look to कर्म as his province. *Karma Yoga* was evidently pointed out to him as his proper field. In the present verse (48) why suddenly bewilder Arjuna by defining *Yoga* as something totally different from *Karma*? Such a meaning seems quite out of tune with the whole of the preceding and succeeding context.

If Sankarananda's meaning be accepted, this will be the second of third time when Sri Krishna forgets Himself in adjusting His teaching to the capacity of His pupil. He set out *sankhya* in vain from verses Nos. 12 to 30, chapter II. Then it flashed to Him that Arjuna was but a novitiate not yet fit for *sankhya*. He therefore started *yoga*. He proceeded a few paces and when He came down to verse 45, He forgot Himself again, and according to Sankarananda, He told Arjuna, "if you, Arjuna, have however assimilated what I taught you in 'वेदाविनाशिनं' and other *Sankhya* verses, then you better become निश्चैगुण्य, and become a sanyasin". As if recollecting Himself again, Sri Krishna proceeds to give a hard hit to Arjuna by an emphatic ते in verse 47 कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते, focusing attention on his poor spirituality and exhorting him to turn to work as his only sphere. Thus, wherever Sri Krishna taught *Karma*, it was as a part of *Karma Yoga*. This is the only '*Yoga*' taken in hand for expatiating upon. In these circumstances, if

Sri Krishna should define योग as monistic union in the verse under notice, it can only be justified on the hypothesis that the Lord has forgotten Himself once more. Poor compliment to His godhead !

Sankaracharya, Madhusoodana, Neelakanta, Sridhara and others have forced no such construction into the verse. Ramanujacharya is inclined to read in समत्वं an allusion to the mental restraint spoken of by Patanjali in his *yoga* treatise. This, however, does no serious damage to the true sense of the verse. According to all these, 'सम' in 'समत्वं' has the same meaning as the word सम used with भूत्वा and the idea conveyed is likeness in respect to results, a state of mental balance that refuses to be deflected by the magnet of sensuous pleasures.

Coming to the expression संगं त्यक्त्वा, Sankaracharya unfortunately indulges in a fling at God that seems hardly needed or warranted. He says that Arjuna was called upon to renounce even a wish like this that God should bestow His grace on him. "Do not seek for any fruit. Do not even pray, may God have mercy and confer His grace". Coming to the words सिद्धि and असिद्धि to which equal indifference is enjoined, Sankaracharya says that one should be indifferent even as to Divine knowledge – should not care whether that is attained or not – should feel no joy if it be got and no grief if it be unattained.

I think that this explanation carries the doctrine of disattachment too far and enjoins it with a ven-



geance. It is nothing short of heresy not to pray for God's grace or to be heedless of Divine knowledge. It can never be religious piety to do so.

Hence Sri Madhwa renders संग to mean 'attachment to fruit', and the necessary qualification is implied that the fruit to be despised is sensuous pleasure of every kind here or hereafter. Whatever desire or wish is prohibited should alone be eschewed. Desire to know God and obtain His grace, is not only not forbidden, but forms a part of enjoined religious life. To despise these is to despise God, and no amount of Karma Yoga is of any value if God is either despised or relegated to the back - ground.

The vocative address, 'O Dhananjaya' may here be observed to be suggestively significant. Arjuna was a well-known apostle of wealth. In Virata Parva he explains to Uttara Kumara why he came to be known as Dhanajaya. He says that, because he conquered every king, prince and ruler, and filled the coffers of the sate with treasure, he derived the epithet conqueror of wealth. In Shanti Parva, chapter VIII, he expatiates to Yudhishtira on the importance of wealth and traces every conceivable blessing to its possession (*vide* quotation in Sanskrit). Bheemasena, on the other hand, extols work and duty. He says that, if mere non-work can secure beatitude, mountains will be the first to be redeemed. He concludes a vigorous plea for work by saying that work at any cost or sacrifice should be done and that the idler has no blessing anywhere.

Sri Krishna here upholds Bheemaseena's view and declaims against renunciation. With some humour,

he alludes to Arjuna's partiality for wealth by calling him धनंजय. The Lord says in effect, "with all your partiality for wealth, with which, however, I have no quarrel do your duty for duty's sake and God's sake, and nor for the sake of wealth. Let wealth come, by all means. It is but an incident of task well-done, but let not that be the motive actuating you in doing your duty".

The word धनंजय may be taken to consist of two words धनं and जय meaning "conquer wealth" instead of as a vocative proper noun. The line, as a whole, will then read thus:

"Do work, firmly fixed in yoga. Give up attachment and make conquests of wealth."

49) दूरेण ह्यवरं कर्म बुद्धियोगाद्धनंजय ।

बुद्धौ शरणमन्विच्छ कृपणाः फलहेतवः ॥

|              |     |  |
|--------------|-----|--|
| दूरेण        | ... | far, very much                           |
| हि           | ... | verily                                   |
| अवरं         | ... | inferior; lower                          |
| कर्म         | ... | selfish work                             |
| बुद्धियोगात् | ... | to <i>gnana</i> which leads to salvation |
| धनंजय        | ... | O Arjuna                                 |
| बुद्धौ       | ... | in knowledge                             |
| शरणं         | ... | refuge                                   |

|          |     |   |
|----------|-----|---|
| अन्विच्छ | ... | seek  |
| कृपणाः   | ... | pitiable                                    |
| फलहेतवः  | ... | are they whose motive of action<br>is fruit |

"O Arjuna, far inferior is selfish work to the *yoga* of knowledge (viewed as guides to goals). Take refuge in the way to knowledge. They are pitiable who act on the motive of fruit."

In verse No. 46, the fruit of selfish work, such as *swarga*, was compared to a pond and the fruit of knowledge, to an ocean. It was said that the one was virtually submerged in the other, and he who owns the vaster possession has no reason to bemoan the want of the lesser one. The same thing is repeated now from another point of view. Here, selfish work viewed as a guide to cherished goals, such as *swarga*, is contrasted with knowledge also viewed as such. Both are paths, no doubt, leading to some goal or other. But vast is the difference between the two. Selfish *karma* is far inferior to the *yoga* of knowledge, for as Sri Krishna puts it, they are truly pitiable who barter their soul for low profit. The sentiment in No. 46 (यावानर्थं) is very similar to what is contained in the present verse. Both these are meant to prepare the way for the conclusion contained in the next verse, "Therefore apply yourself to *yoga*".

No doubt, बुद्धियोग may easily lend itself to the meaning कर्मयोग, and कर्मयोग understood as contrasted with selfish work does no violence to the context and

makes perfect sense. But *karma* (काम्य) viewed as means to an end being spoken of in antithesis to बुद्धियोग implies that what is alluded to by the latter term is also *some means to a goal*. As for the ends or goals alluded to, there is not dispute. There are *swarga* and *moksha*. *Kamya karma* is the means to attain the former and *gnana* is the means to reach the latter. Hence the contrast lies appropriately between *kamya karma* and *gnana* as both resemble in being the means of attaining some goal or other, and require, therefore, to be compared and contrasted.

I have just pointed out that *karma* herein contrasted does not comprise work of every kind but only selfish work. Sankarananda, however, takes the word comprehensively to include selfish as well as unselfish work. This forces him to say that what is set off against work is *gnana* or *sankhya*, and this again makes him expatiate on the value of renunciation. In this view, the conclusion in the next verse "Therefore do you apply yourself to *karma yoga*" makes no sense. Mark the word "Therefore" please. Wherefore? Because, if Sankarananda is right, *karma yoga* and *kamya karma* are alike very far inferior!

Sankaracharya, Ramanujacharya and Sri Madhwa are all agreed on this, that the subject of contrast expressed by the word कर्म must be काम्यकर्म, and not *every karma* comprehensively understood.

The most difficult word in the verse is *Buddhi yoga*. Does it mean *yoga of Buddhi*, i.e. *Karma yoga*, or



*yoga* namely, *Buddhi*, i.e., *gnana*? Sri Madhwa takes it to denote the latter, while most others, except Sankarananda, adopt the former. To sum up in a word, Sankaracharya and Ramanujacharaya contrast *kamya karma* with *karma yoga* described in the previous verse as based on equanimity or समत्वबुद्धि. According to them, बुद्धि is used in a restricted sense as denoting only the balanced mind just adverted to. Sri Madhwa takes *Buddhi* to mean knowledge, meaning of course, knowledge of God.

Having made out the contrast between *kamya karma* and *karma yoga*, Sankaracharya and Neelakanta dart off to an alternative meaning and say that Arjuna was exhorted to take refuge in *sankhya*. This alas, is an exhortation to renounce *karma*, so out of tune with the drift and context as I have repeatedly pointed out.

In the second line बुद्धौ शरणमन्विच्छ, Sridhara suggests the idea that Arjuna was asked to seek God, the Universal Protector, for the sake the knowledge. This makes, of course, very good sense. The giver of every blessing is God. The word शरणं means Protector. "Seek the Protector", is truly appropriate. Sridhara is the well known commentator of Bhagavata. In spite of himself, as it were, and in spite of his monistic brethren, he now and then, suggests flashes of devotional interpretation; but his colleagues do not spare him. The commentator of Sankara Bhashya (उ.दी). comes down upon Sridhara and attacks this construction as involving a needless ellipsis, and as out of place, in this connec-

tion. I cannot follow this attack. No *karma yoga* is intelligible without God. An allusion to God cannot be deemed out of place. शरणं undoubtedly means 'Protector', and where is the strain in adopting this meaning?

Sri Madhwa reads an allusion to God in the word शरणं. "For the sake of knowledge seek the great protector" is one idea that the line admits of. "Even after knowledge has been attained, though you may be a sage and a seer, still seek Vishnu as your refuge" is another lesson that the verse conveys. Sri Madhwa has adopted this construction in his Tatparya. He gives prominence to the lesson that God is ever to be sought after and relied upon even after the *summum bonum* has been reached. Those who arrogate to themselves power to secure fruits, leaving God out of account or deeming themselves the supreme God, are pitiable for their wrong beliefs. They are कृपणाः.

The expression "कृपणाः फलहेतवः" is elastic enough to convey some more allied ideas. For instance, कृपण means a *worm*. The life of a worm or a mere animal is mainly in organs of action. Reason is still undeveloped. Instinct is its only guide. It is responsive to light and food. Its movements are dominated by the gratification of appetites. It knows no higher life. Sri Krishna compares the mercenary man to this low life which rises not above appetites and instincts, and which is responsive, if at all, only to sensuous emotions.

Leaving the animal kingdom and coming to mankind, कृपण means a very dull man akin to a savage.

His reason seldom comes into play. He works on the impulse of selfishness. The mercenary actor is described aptly as this dull man who carries his brain in his hands and in his heels. कृपण, we may note, stands for a bought slave (पणक्रीत). Just as a slave has no freedom whatever, has no volition or action except as regulated by his master, so is the selfish worker the slave of the sensuous pleasure he has chosen as his master.

Rising a bit higher, we may note the meaning of कृपण which denotes the hard and incorrigible miser. He hoards wealth upon wealth, counts, recounts it over, feels a gleam of joy over its beloved sight, and yet he sighs, for hoards are wanting still. Such a man hugs sordid coins to his bosom and never thinks of the pleasure an expenditure thereof could purchase. The pious ritualist is content like the miser to hug swarga to his bosom and will not think of the immensely greater joy that a higher life could lead him to. Hence he is a कृपण.

To rise above the life of a कृपण, to soar above animalism of every kind, literal or figurative, and seek shelter more and more in the intellect, one has to get beyond the sphere of instinctive impulses, the field of the mere appetites, — the field of selfish enjoyments — to the sphere of reason, morals and spirituality. Psychologists trace the evolution of the simple animal mind upward to the developed mind of the sage, from a state of mere percepts onwards through receipts and concepts to the supra-cosmic consciousness of the *Aparoksha gnanin* who has visioned God and is

plunged in bliss ineffable. बुद्धौ शरणमन्विच्छ not inaptly suggests these ideas tracing the said history of psychological evolution.

Professor Rangachariar reads the chief lesson of this verse in a new light. He translates बुद्धियोग to mean 'the disposition of the mind'. He explains his meaning by pointing out how motive is infinitely more important than work. Duty ably and skillfully done may benefit society, whatever the motives of the doer. But, to the individual himself, motive is all in all as a factor of his character. It is not the work or its quantity that affects him so much as the motive that rules his social, moral and religious life. Sri Krishna therefore calls on Arjuna to look to the motive, first and foremost of all, and to secure mental purity by cultivating and developing altruism. This exposition no doubt carries the colouring of western ethical philosophy. What I have said above in respect to the evolution of higher life from the lower is also a leaf borrowed from western ideas. Sri Krishna, the Divine Teacher, uses no doubt simple language, but, on deep cogitation, every word of his immortal verse emits flashes and side-lights such as our poor eyes can hardly bear to gaze upon. It is not therefore impossible that these truths were also in the Divine Mind while addressing this verse to Arjuna.

50) बुद्धियुक्तो जहातीह उभे सुकृतदुष्कृते ।  
तस्माद्योगाय युज्यस्व योगः कर्मसु कौशलम् ॥

बुद्धियुक्तः

...

He who has visioned God



|               |     |  |
|---------------|-----|--|
| जहाति         | ... | gives up   |
| इह            | ... | herein   |
| उभे           | ... | both   |
| सुकृतदुष्कृते | ... | the effects of merit (such as are<br>clogs in his way) and demerit |
| तस्मात्       | ... | therefore  |
| योगाय         | ... | for what conduces to knowledge                                     |
| युज्यस्व      | ... | exert yourself   |
| योगः          | ... | yoga   |
| कर्मसु        | ... | in work  |
| कौशलम्        | ... | is skill   |

"Possessed of knowledge (God-vision) he throws away here the effects of sin and of merit (such as is unwelcome). Therefore gird up for *yoga*. Efficiency in work is *yoga*."

The *yoga* for which Arjuna is called upon to exert himself, is, of course, *Karma yoga*. This is the chief clause of the verse. In support of this, the despicable character of the mercenary worker was pointed out. In further elucidation of the same reasoning, it is now pointed out that *gnana* (the Divine vision) stands sublimely elevated at the other extreme. The selfish one is *Kripāna*. He grasps at any fruit. The wise one gives up merit and demerit. He is able to overcome the domination of sin over him. He is able also to sweep out of his path whatever among his good deeds clog his spiritual advancement and beatitude. As *karma yoga* is the road to *gnana* which blesses one thus with the conquest of good and evil, Arjuna was advised to practise it.

The last clause of the verse seems to pick out the essence of *yoga* in one word. It is skill or excellence that constitutes *yoga*. Among our practices, whatever is good and excellent is calculated to promote piety and devotion, and conduces to progress in spiritual discipline, is *yoga*. The clause also means that, do what we may, the skill in converting it into something holy and pious, is *yoga*. Ordinarily, work and efforts forge every day additional chains to fasten us to worldly possessions. The more we work and achieve, the greater our bonds to fetter us with ties of attachment. But *yoga* takes hold of our character and conduct, and purifies it. The element that operates as a fetter is removed. What makes work deleterious in effect is rendered by *yoga* not only innocuous but positively beneficial. Just as a robber dealt with in a skillful manner may be converted from a powerful enemy into a valuable ally, so *karma* handled under the rules of *yoga* is transformed from a foe into a friend. This is indeed skill, and this skill in action is called *yoga*.

Sankarananda is somewhat original in rendering this clause. According to him, it is not religious skill or the efficiency in the discharge of duties, that is praised as *yoga*. He imports into the clause a reference to the good and evil deeds spoken of in the first line as the objects of the seer's conquest. In the clause योगः कर्मसु कौशलं, 'कर्मसु' is taken to denote the good and bad deeds to be conquered. In respect to them, that is, for overcoming them, *yoga* by which is meant *gnana yoga*, is alone efficient. The knowing seer conquers them. If the query arises how he is able to do so, the reply is that *gnana yoga* alone is capable of the achievement, and

nothing else. Therefore strive for *gnana yoga* is the advice in the first clause of the second line. Sankarananda is persistently rendering verse after verse and clause after clause to do commands for renunciation which is another name for *gnana yoga* according to their school. This exhortation is not consistent with *karma yoga* that is praised and taught, and the command to do duty and to fight.

Grammatically, the clause, "among duties, yoga is efficiency" hardly allows room, without wholesale gaps filled in, for the statement that *gnana* alone is competent to bring about a victory over good and evil deeds. The strain is only too obvious.

No other commentator of note has interpreted योग occurring twice in the second line to mean *gnana yoga*, as far as I can see. All of them (except Sankarananda) explain the clause योगाय युज्यस्व to mean 'prepare for *Karma yoga*'.

The first line of this verse is the more difficult of the two and has given rise to much difference of opinion. It speaks of one who is बुद्धियुक्त (=possessed of knowledge). It says, of him, that he casts away the fruit of meritorious actions as well as sinful actions. Who is the individual spoken of as बुद्धियुक्त? What are the things he gives up? In what manner does he do so? These points require some explanation.

One would expect बुद्धियुक्त to be taken, without any fear of contradiction, to denote a person possessed of some kind of बुद्धि (knowledge or wisdom). He would be

confirmed in it by the use of the word जहाति which means abandonment by a fiat of will or choice. But Madhusoodana renders बुद्धियुक्त to refer to *karma yoga* itself, and not to the human possessor of *Yoga*. *Karma Yoga* is the sum total of human conduct which is pure and holy. This group of pious actions is supposed to avoid or give up bad and good deeds. It is difficult to follow the sense in this proposition.

How one good action called A can avoid another good action called B, is difficult to comprehend. *Karma yoga* being an inanimate something, is not to be credited with volition and choice, except by a weak figure of speech or personification. Having spoken of *karma yoga* thus, as an agent that could kill good and evil by its own inherent efficiency, Madhusoodana darts off, at a bold stroke, to say that Sri Krishna intends a covert censure at Arjuna by praising *karma yoga* at his expense. "The Lord is deemed to have said, Look here, Arjuna, you refuse to fight; *you* will not kill your unworthy kinsmen.

See *Karma yoga*, inanimate as it is, it kills its kith and kin, namely other good and bad deeds. Though it is inanimate, it is better than you, an intelligent rational Being, as you are, for, *you* will not do what *it* does". Every one who rambles into the subtleties of commentators should, no doubt, be prepared for some fantastic flights of ingenuity at times; but for an extravagance of this kind, no one can be prepared. Arjuna weighed in the scale against a mere inanimate object, and found wanting! What an idea! '*Yoga* is efficiency', is the statement made. Therefore, the implication is said to be that Arjuna is not efficient. I hope it is enough to



state the matter without anything like comment, for, the fallacy is obvious, and common sense must refuse to tolerate such an exposition. The members of Madhusoodana's school seem over-anxious to clutch at any chance or opportunity to have a fling at Arjuna and the present occasion is an instance of their doing it without rhyme or reason.

Sankaracharya, Neelakanta and others take बुद्धियुक्त to mean the *Karma yogin*, the doer of duty in a disinterested spirit. They qualify the word बुद्धि by borrowing समत्वं from verse No. 48, and the result is "समत्त्वबुद्धिमान्" i.e. "one who possesses the yogic equanimity", There may not be much strain in this. The difficulty comes in, however, in considering how the karmayogin gets over सुकृत and दुष्कृत, good and evil deeds or their effects. It is an accepted tenet of all Vedantins that God-vision or self-realization alone destroys old *karma* (except प्रारब्ध) and prevents the future too, and what is destroyed or prevented includes good and bad *karma* (herein there is a qualification which will soon be explained). How then does *karma yogin* conquer karma?

Sankaracharya and several of his disciples offer the explanation that he achieves it in due course after reaching the next higher stage of mental purity and then the next one of self-realization. What it comes to is this, that बुद्धि meaning knowledge or realization is first limited to mean समत्त्वबुद्धि, and when the sense comes into conflict with the predicate (जहाति सुकृतदुष्कृते), a gap is cre-

ated and words put in to fill it up. These two points, *viz.*, a borrowed qualification and ellipsis, make the commentary of the line somewhat tortuous, if avoidable.

Neelakanta sets out the solution of Sankaracharya, *viz.*, the ellipsis and the way it is supplied, and keeps it aside as the explanation of ancient writers. He proceeds then to suggest what he calls a modern explanation. He says that *karma yogin* is able to kill sin by his merit and prevents *karmic* fruit, such as Swarga that accrues due hereafter, by not wishing for the same.

Thus जहाति means that he kills one and obstructs the birth of the other. The difference between the *karma yogin* and the *gnanin* is that the latter burns up all the past good *karma* while the former is not able to do so, and can choose such *karma* in the present and do it in such an unselfish manner as will obstruct the birth of future good (unwelcome, because it is obstructive). In this alternative exposition, the objections appear to be greater.

There is, of course, the first one of reading *Buddhi* as समत्वबुद्धि. Secondly the term जहाति (avoids or kills) has to be understood differently, according as it refers to sin or merit (पाप or पुण्य). Thirdly, सुकृत referred to, should be limited by the exclusion of past good *karma* and leaving it to the *gnanin* to burn up in proper time.

All this is avoidable by reading बुद्धि in its plain sense. It does mean knowledge or realization primarily. The term (बुद्धियुक्त) is equivalent to *gnanin*. That

he tackles *Punya and Papa* is common ground for all. There is no gap to be created and supplied, nor violence done to the predicate.

Sankarananda therefore adopts this and thinks that the first line as well as the second speaks only of *gnana yoga* and its results. We differ from him in the second line where we think that *karma yoga* is enjoined, because of the *gnana* that results immediately and the conquest of *Punya and Papa* following upon *gnana* thereon.

Madhusoodana, too, in addition to his startling note that बुद्धियुक्त means 'the inanimate yoga itself', offers an alternative suggestion that the word means 'gnanin'.

Sri Madhwa has, throughout, understood बुद्धि to mean *gnana*. The sage gets rid of good and evil (with the qualification next to be explained), the next verse. No. 51, which is explanatory of the present one makes the point clear, that the persons described as बुद्धियुक्ता are freed from the bonds of birth.

We now come to the predicate of the first line. "He abandons or gets rid of *sukrita and dushkrita*". The first point is, what are the things he gets rid of. That he discards all that is evil, sinful and unpleasant, is allowed by all. As to his *punya* achievements the good he has stored in ages incalculable, does he give them up, too? Then again, for the future, does he refrain from every good action and omit to earn any more *punya* after he becomes a *gnanin*.

Sri Madhwa argues that there is no reason for the sage doing so. The sage rejects whatever of good *karma* and its fruit is unwelcome and undesirable for him. Whatever must prove an obstacle in his path to *mukti* and in the enjoyment of *mukti*, he discards, of course. But there are *punyas* he need not and does not discard thus. They are such as are helpful and useful to him.

It is a vital part of Monism that *karma* has no art or part in the equipment of the *gnanin*. All *Karma*, all *punya* must die, like all sins; otherwise, no *gnana* is possible and no *mukti*.

There is difference between us and Monists fundamentally as to what *mukti* consists in. Whereas they hold that *mukti* is self-realization, or, in other words, attainment of unity with the Absolute (Brahman), we say that the redeemed Jeeva only gets rid of his material prison in *mukti*, dwells in abodes of bliss, retains his individuality, and enjoys whatever state of pleasures he chooses, reveling in the supreme bliss of the Divine presence.

If *mukti* be understood in the Dwaita sense, there is no conflict or absurdity in the *gnanin* keeping some *punya* intact, in acquiring fresh *punya* even after he turns out a *gnanin*, and deriving from them additional fruits in the shape of Divine grace and enhancement of Heavenly Bliss. I have already observed that, whatever *punya* would be a clog, he forsakes. With this qualification, the *sukrita* or the seer is helpful and useful to him. By *gnana*, the *avidya* or ignorance of the sage is dispelled. But this is not the only veil he has to remove before launching upon *mukti*.



The Divine will (ईश्वरेच्छा) is a great factor to be taken into account. Hence, His Grace should be secured. He should be prayed to, to withdraw His great will which holds the Jeeva bound. Good *Karma* of the past and the future helps the sage to secure this Grace. Even after *mukti*, it helps him to develop the full measure of bliss of which his soul is capable.

It enables him to secure and enjoy without effort, as a mere fiat of volition, to create, on the spot, whatever state of pleasure he may desire, to go anywhere and see anybody, and to do anything or achieve any thing.

The Advaitic conception of *mukti* allows no individuality or bliss to one who has reached salvation. He is merged in the ocean of Brahman and becomes one with him. As Brahman enjoys no bliss though He may be *bliss* itself (on the analogy that sugar-candy does not enjoy sweetness though it is sweet), the *mukta* feels or enjoys no bliss. He has no past to call to memory and no individuality for thought, emotion and volition. In this system, there is naturally no place for any benefit or advantage to be derived in *mukti* from good *karma*.

This subject is a vast one as it is a fundamental point of difference. I cannot take up more space for further details or quoting authority. The Sanskrit portion contains some quotations and a short discussion.

51) कर्मजं बुद्धियुक्ता हि फलं त्यक्त्वा मनीषिणः ।

जन्मबन्धविनिर्मुक्ताः पदं गच्छन्त्यनामयम् ॥

|                       |     |                                     |
|-----------------------|-----|-------------------------------------|
| कर्मजं                | ... | born of work, action or observances |
| बुद्धियुक्ताः         | ... | possessed of knowledge              |
| हि                    | ... | indeed                              |
| फलं                   | ... | fruits                              |
| त्यक्त्वा             | ... | abandoning                          |
| मनीषिणः               | ... | the highly wise                     |
| जन्मबन्धविनिर्मुक्ताः | ... | released from the bonds of birth    |
| पदं                   | ... | goal                                |
| गच्छन्ति              | ... | reach                               |
| अनामयं                | ... | free from suffering                 |

"Those who abandon the fruits of work attain knowledge, and become (in due course) supremely wise (by seeing God). They are freed from the bonds of birth and reach the goal where there is no suffering."

This verse consists of two separate predications.

It sums up (1) *what leads to gnana*, and (2) *what gnana leads to*.

The first line speaks of the philosophy of conduct which lies in not desiring the price of work. The second line speaks of the shackles of the prison-house rent asunder, and the released reaching the goal where there is no trouble.

Knowledge is of two kinds : (1) Repeated study of sacred books and contemplation that produces conviction and faith. This is knowledge of an inferior order. It is strengthened by the piety and purity of the reli-

gious life which is unmindful of rewards. This scriptural knowledge results, when it is ripe, in the direct vision of God. (2) This is true realization, when the seer stands face to face with God, bathed in the bliss and glory of His presence. The indirect knowledge acquired by study and contemplation is referred to in the expression बुद्धियुक्ताः, while the term मनीषिणः refers to *God-vision*, a state which American psychologists (Buck, etc.) seem to call supra-consciousness or cosmic consciousness.

The reader may note that the verse points out five steps which the devotee must take:

- (1) the unselfish religious life,
- (2) the acquisition of conviction and faith by piety and study
- (3) the attainment of Divine wisdom by visioning God,
- (4) the release from *samsara*, and
- (5) the entry into *Vykunta*.

A word on each of these five stages may not be out of place. We are, by this time, somewhat familiar with the oft-repeated notion that mercenary motives should not rule our life. But some confusion is possible in reading the phrase बुद्धियुक्ताः and कर्मजं फलं त्यक्त्वा along with the clause in the preceding verse बुद्धियुक्तो जहातीह उभे सुकृतदुष्कृते. The language of the two expressions looks similar. In both, the subject of the sentence is बुद्धियुक्त.

In both, the predicate is abandonment. In spite of the apparent similarity, the points urged are not the same. Whereas the previous verse spoke of all *Karma*, past, present and future, being forsaken in the sense of being burnt up, the present verse only speaks of the doer abandoning the coming fruit by refraining at the time of action from desire of price. In other words, the former is next door to the final beatitude, while the latter is a preliminary stage, the first of the five steps in the onward march. To be rid of karmic shackles after God-vision is one thing: Not to set one's heart upon sordid ends is quite another, though both are described by the word 'abandon'. Closely observing, the similarity of words, too, is not so very great as to be really misleading. Mark the expression सुकुतदुष्कृते used before, as against कर्मजं फलं herein. The difference between the two affects the meaning of the subject बुद्धियुक्त and the predicate त्याग as pointed out.

Sankarananda has, as a matter of fact, construed the past verse and the present one in such a manner that the ideas conveyed seem identical. According to him, both the verses urge *gnana yoga* for adoption. That the *gnana yogin* burns up *Karma* by the force of *gnana* is said to be the doctrine taught in both. The Sanskrit passage contains in parallel columns, his notes on the chief words of both the verses in order to show how Sankarananda has failed to distinguish between the two verses.

It is to be noted, moreover, that बुद्धियुक्ताः and मनीषिणः are redundant, if literally understood. Possessed of intellect, knowledge, reason, or mind, is the general



idea. It is necessary to see what Sri Krishna meant by two such apparently synonymous words. Ramanujacharya does not notice the redundancy, nor does Sankarananda. Sankaracharya and many of his school render बुद्धियुक्ताः to mean समत्वबुद्धियुक्ताः so that, the word refers to *karma yogins* – i.e., people possessed of mental equanimity (explained in verse 48) and engaged in a life of action. They say that मनीषिणः refers to the gnanins who have attained self-realization. The relation between the two is that the former is the preparatory stage to the latter.

This view is in general agreement with Sri Madhwa's, except that he does not link the word बुद्धि with समत्व as Sankaracharya does in verses 49, 50, and in the present verse (51). The word बुद्धि lends itself to mean the mind, the intellect or knowledge, higher or lower, according as the context requires. But, lined with समत्व, it acquires a technical signification and denotes only the *karma yogin*. Sri Madhwa sees no good reason for dragging in the word समत्व at every step and in every verse to form a compound with Buddhi wherever used.

The second line of the verse speaks of the stage after *gnana* has been attained. The seer is freed from the bonds of birth. Here birth stands for whatever continues to hold us in prison. It, of course, stands for death also. We are tossed about by an infinite series and succession of births and deaths. Avidya, the positive illusion that holds us in fetters from beginningless time, is our enemy. *Gnana* kills it like a cat devouring a

mouse, with all its latent potentialities. The Lords's will is another important factor that veils us from the goal. Pleased with the sincerity of the devotee and his true devotion and wisdom, God withdraws the veil out of pure grace and wills it, 'he shall be free'. The word 'birth' spoken of as a bond is a short expression to signify all the factors and elements constituting impediments in our way to the goal.

As to what our bondage consists of, what it is to become free, and what it is so go to the abode of no suffering, the conceptions of the dualist differ from those of the Monist. The Monist holds not only that our bond is forged for us by *avidya* but that the bond itself is a delusion. He says that we fancy, as in a dream, that we are in bondage, and the process of getting free is to fancy that we are really and truly free. Whatever may be the merits of this doctrine of delusion, it is a stern fact that we are all plunged in trouble and misery in *samsara*, and no amount of imagination to the contrary can get rid of it. Secondly, the words of the Geeta lend no room for the view that the bondage we suffer from is a mere hallucination.

The last clause of the verse says "they go to the abode of no suffering". The Monist sees that the expression 'they go to' might mean that some spot such as *Vaikunta* is reached and dwelt in by the emancipated soul. He thinks that such a notion is unphilosophical and unvedic, and promptly interposes an explanation that no such journey is truly meant, but that the unification of the soul with Brahman in complete identity is all that is meant to be said. So says Madhusoodana.

It is a point of some interest to observe that Sankaracharya, Sridhara and even Madhusoodana, allow that “पदं” abode herein alluded to, is the region of Vishnu (Vaikunta, where he is said to live in a special sense). Annotators like Neelakanta, Sankarananda and Venkatanatha, fight shy of Vishnu (Vaikunta, where he is said to live in a special sense.) Annotators like Neelakanta, Sankarananda and Venkatanatha, fight shy of Vishnu, evidently, and do not see any allusion to Vishnu’s abode as contemplated here.

The Monist is partial to what is known as *Jeevanmukti*. According to him, when unity is realized, there is no further gap or step between him and the goal. To realize it is the same thing as to attain it. It is done now and here as soon as the conviction dawns on the mind that he is Brahman and all is Brahman. In such a system, there is no such thing as the goal being postponed to a future time, nor is there any occasion, need or possibility, of journeying in space from such a thing as this world to a region called Heaven.

Here again, the language of the Geeta does not lend scope for any such subtlety. It speaks of the journey and of the Heaven in which, once reached, there is no further trouble. The plain words, plainly understood, read as if the seeker, now become a seer, reaches the divine abode and dwells there for ever in unalloyed bliss.

The school of logicians known as *Naiyayikas* hold that Heaven, by which the final release is meant, offers us no positive bliss but only an utter absence of suffering. The *summum bonum* is, according to them,

a negative condition of non-suffering. The commentator of Madhusoodana (Brahmadatta Sarma) vehemently attacks this position saying, "if Mukti is but absence of misery, it resolves itself into an inanimate something and is hardly worth aspiring for, because, after all, a condition of no-bliss is mere inanimate inertness akin to a swoon. Assuming that, unlike a swoon, Mukti is a *conscious* absence of misery, the objection still holds that it is not worth while aspiring for a merely negative condition".

The view of the Nyaya school that *mukti* is nothing but दुःखाभाव, is not shared by other Vedic followers. According to Sri Madhwa, Mukti is absence of misery together with supreme positive bliss. Though the word used in the Geeta is अनामयं (free from disease or suffering), it denotes the positive aspect of bliss also (the prefix अ means 'not' as well as, 'the opposite of').

It is curious, however, that the commentator aforesaid, a monist of monists, makes this attack on the Nyaya school. For, the Monist's conception of Mukti seems to be no better. Drowned in the ocean of Brahman, losing all individuality therein, devoid of memory and consciousness, possessed of no attributes, mental or spiritual, it is no consolation to the sage, that Brahman whose identity has been obtained after such protracted struggle, is *Bliss* itself though He (or it) enjoys no bliss whatever. To be or become sugar itself is nothing, though to taste it is sweet. Thus, as salvation means, in this school also, reduction to a state of inertness (void of animation), the Monist cannot with grace criticize the Nyaya view. The critic has evidently forgotten that he who lives in a glass house cannot afford to throw stones.



52) यदा ते मोहकलिलं बुद्धिर्व्यतितरिष्यति ।  
तदा गन्तासि निर्वेदं श्रोतव्यस्य श्रुतस्य च ॥

|               |     |                                    |
|---------------|-----|------------------------------------|
| यदा           | ... | when                               |
| ते            | ... | your                               |
| मोहकलिलं      | ... | the confusing barrier of ignorance |
| बुद्धिः       | ... | reason                             |
| व्यतितरिष्यति | ... | surmounts                          |
| तदा           | ... | then                               |
| गन्तासि       | ... | you attain                         |
| निर्वेदं      | ... | the full benefit                   |
| श्रोतव्यस्य   | ... | of all future study                |
| श्रुतस्य, च   | ... | and of the past study              |

"When your reason surmounts ignorance, then you reach the full benefit of future and past studies (*i.e.*, of work or yoga)."

The previous verse spoke of five things. It spoke of one who abandons the fruits of work, attains knowledge, becomes a seer, throws off the fetters of birth, and reaches the abode of bliss. Of these five matters, *viz.*, abandonment of fruit, attainment of knowledge, securing God-vision, emancipation and entry into the abode of bliss, a doubt may be based on any one of these and a query addressed to the Lord, 'when can I attain it?' and it may well be argued that the present verse is meant to answer such a question. Many of the commen-

tators understand the link between the last and the present verse in this manner. Sankaracharya and Madhusoodana, for instance, introduce the verse by the query, when shall I attain the mental purity produced by abandoning all mercenary motives? Or when shall I secure disattachment to *karmic* fruits? Another (Neelakanta) states the query to be, when shall I reach *sankhya* or the condition of self-realized light? Sridhara thinks that the question impliedly asked, is when will bondage snap, or when shall I reach Vaikunta?

I cannot say, that, if the doubt which the present verse is meant to dispel be based on some one or more of the five predicates of the previous verse, this relative connection is wrong. But if it be possible to find a closer connection between the verse under comment and the context which deals with the obligatoriness of *karmic* performance, I should certainly prefer that construction. Sri Madhwa shapes the query thus, "How long am I to perform work in the manner laid down by you, that is, in a spirit of dispassionate disinterestedness, and as a piece of Divine worship?" This doubt is quite legitimate and arises very naturally and beautifully from the mandate of Karma yoga. How long? what is the limit? is an important point to discover.

The answer is contained in the teaching that disinterested work is our lot until the barrier of confusing doubts, ignorance, illusion and misapprehension, which beset our erring life, has been surmounted. There is no time-limit such as can be fixed in months, years or ages. Work must be done in the proper spirit till the delusions of *samsara* are overcome.

The commentator of Sankaracharya does not miss the opportunity of a fling at Arjuna in this connection and thinks that “ते” “your” is a pointed reference to Arjuna’s great ignorance. More than once, I have tried to show that Arjuna should be deemed a great *gnanin* rather than as an ignoramus. Even Venkatanatha of the Advaitic school chafes at the endeavour of his brethren to belittle Arjuna. The word ते in the present verse as elsewhere (e.g., verse 47) is quite impersonal. It applies to any *jeeva* who gropes in *samsara*. The teachings of the Geeta are not meant for Arjuna alone. He only furnished an occasion for the lessons taught.

In commenting on मोह or ignorance, the annotators have give free vent to their own pet theories and tenets of religion and philosophy. Some think that the mental distraction of life caused by troubles, cares and disappointments, is meant by the word. (Neelakanta). Others think that the likes and dislikes that rule our life are pointed to. (Sankarananda). Ramanujacharya makes out that the magnetic attraction to petty fruit is what is termed मोह. All these are doubtless aspects, manifestations, or products of ignorance or delusion. मोह is ignorance in a comprehensive sense, and it is needless to single out any of its offspring for special notice.

It is however necessary to note one subtle rendering of मोह greatly emphasized by Venkatanatha. Ignorance is understood in Vedantic literature as of two kinds. That which is the root of *samsara* is known as मूलविद्या and is said to be a positive substance. Every

other ignorance which screens off mundane knowledge and is removed by the light of sciences, observation, inference and testimony, is not positive in character but is negative (is अभाव). The Vedantic doctrine is that the former (root-ignorance) is destroyed only by god-Vision, or Realization whatever this consists of.

Venkatanatha says that मोह in the Geeta verse denotes root-ignorance (मूलविद्या), because Arjuna, the highly qualified pupil of Sri Krishna, must be deemed to have already possessed knowledge of a superior order and the only ignorance remaining to be dispelled in his case was the *positive avidya*.

The question of Arjuna being a sage or no sage has been often discussed. There seems to be three positions on this point. Sankaracharya and Ramanujacharya put him low in the scale and make, of him, an exceptionally dull, confused, and ignorant person. Venkatanatha protests against this and raises him to be a very advanced pupil, but next door to sage and seer. Sri Madhwa holds Arjuna to be a Deva who had visioned God and accounts for apparent exhibitions of ignorance and doubts on his part.

The present verse may well be construed apart from and irrespective of this controversy. मोह by which is meant ignorance, confusion, misapprehension and other allied mental conditions, in which, light is absent or deficient, prevails largely in the world, leaving root-ignorance severely alone. The Geeta verse is addressed impersonally to every one who gropes in the darkness of ignorance.



Then again, pursuing Venkatanatha's line of thought, what does the teaching come to? "When the root-ignorance is overcome (which, according to his school, takes place by the realization of the world being illusory), you are disattached from the bonds of desire condemned in the past verses of the Geeta and going to be censured in future ones". This teaching seems quite out of tune with the context, and the two lines of the Geeta make little sense as set out by this commentator. According to him and all others (but Sri Madhwa), निर्वेद denotes 'disattachment from worldly desires'. "On the disappearance of *root ignorance*, dispassion follows" is the sense evolved. This is not monism. If *Avidya* goes, everything goes, not merely 'desire'. Expulsion of *Avidya* is *the* final stage and not a vestige remains, thereafter, of anything to be attained, while वैराग्य spoken of in the second line is but a very inferior stage and step in the progress of the seeker.

It is thus unintelligible, in this context of *Karma yoga* and the obvious trend of thought, to confine मोह to root-ignorance. It is more reasonable to include in the word every piece of false knowledge that has to be cleared out of the mind before reaching the purity and piety that form the outfit of the seeker. Study alone can confer knowledge. Duty well done purifies the mind. Equipped with purity, the seeker studies, fixes God in his mind, and contemplates. The first line of the Geeta speaking of मोह overcome, relates to the process of mental purity sought and reached. This is the interpretation of Sri Madhwa. It answers the query

How long is unselfish work to be done? Answer— Until mental purity is reached, so that it may aid and strengthen the task of sacred studies.

The brunt of the controversy in this verse is to be found in the second line. The expression श्रोतव्यस्य श्रुतस्य च निर्वेदं is undoubtedly difficult to construe. निर्वेद means, ordinarily, 'disattachment from desires' — what is known as *Vairagya*. This is the sense put on it by all the commentators but Sri Madhwa. He however departs from this meaning and construes the word to mean "full benefit"— the literal significance of the word. Now, what is the reason for this departure, and is it right and sound?

To see this, we turn to the words श्रोतव्यस्य and श्रुतस्य. These mean "of what is to be heard and of what has been heard". If निर्वेद stood by itself, we might easily reconcile ourselves to the meaning of 'disattachment'. But it occurs in connection with the words श्रोतव्यस्य and श्रुतस्य; to be disattached from these is, indeed, unintelligible,

Neelakanta and some others would take the whole range of scriptures, Vedas and all, as things to be disattachment from, and to be utterly cast away. When ignorance disappears, all the scriptures studied in the past and to be studied in the future, become vain and useless. Neelakanta adds an explanatory gloss. "If the mind is ignorant and confused, scriptural study is useless, for, it fails to grasp the subject. If the mind be pure and clear, it grasps the truth at once and no scripture is needed. Hence, either way, Shastras are fit objects to shun".

One feels astounded at this reasoning, and the fallacy thereof is obvious. If study is dispensed with, where, ever, is the chance of reaching mental purity at all?

Sankaracharya's note is, "what has been studied and remains to be studied is discovered to be useless". The language is ambiguous. His annotator (Anandagiri) feels that the condemnation should apply only to secular studies and not to the scriptures dealing with the soul, and interprets accordingly. He evidently cannot reconcile himself to a wholesale neglect or censure of all *shastras*.

Ramanujacharya thinks that the allusion is to the teachings given in the previous portion of the Geeta, and going to be repeated later on also in the same work,. He makes out that, if मोह vanishes, the man becomes disattached from selfish desire. What is to be shunned is just what has been censured in the Geeta.

It is to be observed that श्रुतस्य and श्रोतव्यस्य are words of general import. Ramanujacharya has to limit their application in two ways, (first) by confining them to the Bhagavad Geeta and (secondly) by further confining them to such parts thereof as speak of what we should shun and abandon.

Sridhara takes श्रुतस्य and श्रोतव्यस्य as containing no specific reference to studies, scriptures, or works of any kind, but as a general reference to whatever we have heard of or are going to hear of. In other words, the injunction is to abandon all the temptations of the sense.

Sankarananda covers, under the words in question, the whole range of cosmic experience, and says that the seer finds everything unreal like a mirage, and transcends it. Here again we cannot help observing that the notion of the unreality of the cosmos is rather remotely, if at all, connected with *Karma yoga*, and the words under comment can hardly bear the strain put on them so as to signify not only the entire cosmos but also their unreality.

Venkatanatha is one who is evidently partial to Patanjali. From his *yoga* system (which, however, all Vedantins are agreed, the Geeta does not care to adopt) the definition and classification of *Vairagya* is borrowed by Venkatanatha and the present Geeta verse construed accordingly. He says *vairagya* is twofold, the higher and the lower. The lower one discards all worldly possessions, earthly goods, family and all. The higher *vairagya* discards and avoids the world altogether, and leads the disattached into the absolute trance known as "unconscious samadhi". Now Arjuna was already a विरक्त in the lower sense. Otherwise, he would not have been taken in hand by the Divine teacher as a competent pupil. Hence, in his case, the disattachment विरक्ति to be taught was the higher one alone. Thus the teaching means that "by conquering मोह, Arjuna would equip himself with the special disattachment leading to the trance of samadhi". (असंप्रज्ञात).

We have no quarrel with Patanjali's definitions and refinements. Nor is it possible to devote any space for criticizing it. But surely, Venkatanatha is novel in construing the Geeta verse on the technicalities of



Patanjali. As to the sense evolved. Venkatanath's rendering comes to this, "if मोह (by which root-ignorance is meant) is gone, then follows विरक्ति (disattachment) leading to the trance of समाधि''. No monist will accept this causal sequence for a moment, for, according to him, if मूलाविद्या is gone, nothing more is to be said or done. Sankaracharya, and Madhusoodana whom Venkatanatha admires and largely follows, think that the disattachment under notice relates only to the fruits of karma, to the mercenary price of work *here* and in *swarga*. Why does Venkatanatha think that they are wrong and he alone is right? If his only difficulty, as seems to be the case, is that Arjuna is already a विरक्त in the ordinary sense, and free from all worldly affections, and deserved to be taught what is called the higher *virakti* alone, an easy solution is found in the reply that the verse is one of general application to all men who are in मोह and want विरक्ति, and not to Arjuna alone.

That the line presents difficulties is obvious. निर्वेद in the sense of renunciation understood along with studies, sounds a jarring note. Few can tolerate the notion of any one renouncing, abandoning, or condemning, Vedic studies. This result is not appreciated by several of the Advaitic annotators themselves. A few reconcile themselves to it by violent *Adwaita*. To suit the words to sense, others do violence to the words श्रुत and श्रोतव्य. In this dilemma, it naturally strikes one whether all this trouble has not arisen from the as-

sumption that निर्वेद means वैराग्य, and cannot bear any other meaning. Sri Madhwa comes here to the rescue and explains the word to mean "full benefit" as it does literally. This does not offend against grammar and usage, as has been amply explained by him and by his commentator in Prameya Deepika. With a sense of relief, we see that the second line of the Geeta verse makes perfect sense. It now reads thus, then you reach the full benefit of the past and the future studies. Until delusion is conquered, the seeker is still groping away. He is yet far from the promised Land. When his delusions disappear, he is within sight of it, and all his studies begin to bear fruit. This agrees well with the context, for the doubt is, "How long am I to be engaged in Karma yoga?" Answer — "Till your ignorance vanishes; for, then you enter on a new stage when studies bear fruit by leading you assuredly to redemption".

For this rendering, authorities have been quoted by Sri Madhwa, and the reader who is interested is referred to the Sanskrit exposition.

A point incidentally arising in this connection has also been discussed by the Master. It is this, whether seers like Suka Muni have not to engage in study, contemplation etc., even after the attainment of God-vision. The answer is that they do and have to. But what is the object, if *gnana* the ultimate fruit of work has been got already. The reply is, that for achievements after the stage of *gnana*, there are appropriate results in mukti in the shape of enhanced bliss. This point has been discussed elsewhere. We do not hold that all

*muktas* enjoy an equal measure of bliss. They are alike in that they are not affected by the slightest tinge of pain or misery. But as to bliss, they vastly differ, and the gradation ranges from a small point to the Infinity of Divine Bliss. Sri Madhwa differs from Ramanujacharya radically on this point. It is, however, not possible to go into the further details of the discussion here.

Before closing, I beg leave to subjoin the translation of this verse by professor Rangachariar and leave it alone without comment.

“When your intelligence gets beyond the impassable confusion of illusion, then you will become disgusted with what is to be heard (as revealed teaching) as also with what has been already heard as such.”

53) श्रुतिविप्रतिपन्ना ते यदा स्थास्यति निश्चला ।  
समाधावचला बुद्धिस्तदा योगमवाप्स्यसि ॥

|                    |     |                                   |
|--------------------|-----|-----------------------------------|
| श्रुतिविप्रतिपन्ना | ... | at conflict with the <i>Vedas</i> |
| ते                 | ... | your                              |
| यदा                | ... | when                              |
| स्थास्यति          | ... | remains                           |
| निश्चला            | ... | steadfast                         |
| समाधौ              | ... | in meditative trance              |
| अचला               | ... | unshaken                          |
| बुद्धिः            | ... | mind                              |

|            |     |                                 |
|------------|-----|---------------------------------|
| तदा        | ... | then                            |
| योगं       | ... | the <i>summum bonum</i> of yoga |
| अवाप्स्यसि | ... | you attain                      |

"When your mind, at conflict with the Vedas at first, becomes steadfast in faith and is unshaken in meditative trance, then you shall have attained the *summum bonum of yoga*."

*Another rendering (following Geeta Tatparya):*

"When your mind accepts the Vedas with the conviction born of study, when it remains firm in meditation, and fixedly one-pointed by deep contemplation, then you reach a union with God."

The last verse spoke of मोह, its conquest, and the attainment of निर्वेद. We saw diversity of views as to what मोह consists of, what its conquest means, and what is denoted by निर्वेद. The present verse is meant to be explanatory of these expressions.

It is an extreme position that मोह means "Root-ignorance," the positive darkness, responsible, primarily, for our bondage. Some Monists, without going so far, took मोह to mean the notion of cosmic reality. Others took it to mean the thousand and one false notions that rule the life of man in this ignorant world. If we could gather some light from the Geeta itself as to what the Lord had in mind, that should of course be welcome. Sri Madhwa thinks that श्रुतिविप्रतिपन्ना is meant to define and point out the मोह of the foregoing verse in a way.



There is a stage, and the great majority of mankind are immersed in it, when men's beliefs and convictions are at conflict with Vedic teachings. We then refuse or hesitate to accept the authority of the Vedic literature. We prefer to base beliefs on our own unaided reason. We flounder miserably and emerge as atheists or agnostics. This conditions is one of मोह. It is, briefly speaking, characterized by conflict with the true Revelation.

Then we proceed to the conquest of मोह spoken of before. Ignorance or delusion is an intangible foe. What it is to grapple with it and overpower it, is explained in the clause “यदा स्थास्यति निश्चला” = “when the mind remains firmly convinced”. In this condition, the seeker has assimilated all the true teachings, and falters not. Misleading books and theories no longer distract or bewilder him. He has unutterable faith and conviction and believes firmly in the Vedas, and, in views, he is at one with them. This stage was figuratively described in the last verse as an act of surmounting मोह. Now the third and most difficult clause of the previous verse was where it spoke of निर्वेद. The reader recollects the heated controversy around it, as to whether it denoted dispassion in general, or renunciation of Vedic literature wholly or in part, and so forth. Sri Madhwa explained that word in a manner that steered clear of any difficulty. In the present verse, the last clause तदा योगमवाप्स्यसि throws light on the meaning of निर्वेद.

*Yoga* in the present verse denotes the goal and the *summum bonum* of yoga. This is conceded by most of the commentators; otherwise, it makes no sense to speak of *yoga* as the *end* reached by unshaken, firm and profound contemplation, if it means no more than *karma yoga* which is almost the first and lowest rung of the ladder rather than one which is high up, not to speak of the topmost. Thus, the parallelism of the two clauses is clear. While the last verse said तदा गन्तासि निर्वेदं "Then you reach the full benefit, the "present verse says तदा योगमवाप्स्यसि" you reach the fruition of *yoga*".

Looking further at the phraseology of the clauses in the verse, there are three difficulties in taking the expressions in their literal sense.

1. The first arises out of श्रुतिविप्रतिपन्ना which apparently means renunciation of Vedas and studies – a meaning akin to that of निर्वेद in the preceding verse, as understood, for instance, by professor Rangachariar who translates it, "You will become disgusted with Revealed teachings". Is it right and correct to accept such a rendering?

2. Secondly, the verse speaks of the mind being निश्चला 'unshaken' and अचला 'unshaken'. The object of the two synonyms has to be ascertained.

3. Thirdly, the last clause योगमवाप्स्यसि says that yoga is the end in view, whereas, far from being the goal, it is only a preliminary and preparatory step very far indeed from the goal.

## श्रुतिविप्रतिपन्ना

The reader recollects that there are interpreters of note who are prepared to accept with complacency an absolute renunciation of studies, Vedas and Revelations. Bhaskara thinks that the true recluse has to do so.

This notion that one does, or ought to, get disgusted with Vedas is not palatable to many of the commentators. Sridhara takes श्रुति in the sense of teachings in general, whatever falls on our ears, from various quarters, all sorts of sayings good, bad and indifferent, by which the mind is distracted. Madhusoodana thinks that श्रुति here is no doubt the Vedas, but the distraction of mind consisting of doubts and delusions spoken of, is caused by the Vedas not correctly understood. Venkatanatha says that श्रुति here corresponds to श्रुतस्य in the last verse, and refers to *sankhya* taught in the Geeta from verse 12 to verse 39, and coupled with विप्रतिपन्ना, the result arrived at by him, is that *sankhya* has perturbed Arjuna's mind and filled it with doubts and delusions. This rendering is both original and strange. Why, forsooth, has *sankhya* spoiled Arjuna? If that has done so, what is the guarantee that the Geeta teaching yet in store will steady his mind? Why should Sri Krishna have wasted breath in teaching *sankhya* whose effect was so disastrous?

The fact is that Venkatanatha borrowed from Ramanujacharya the meaning of श्रुतस्य before and श्रुति

herein. But he notices not that Ramanujacharya has understood विप्रतिपन्ना to mean "chastened by or equipped with". Thus understood, the sense is clear. (Equipped with the *sankhya* lessons). But Venkatanatha, having but partially borrowed from Ramanujacharya, has made out a jumble which lands him in the strange position that *sankhya* has spoiled and distracted Arjuna's mind. If विप्रतिपन्ना means, as it does, *conflict*, there is no difficulty in taking श्रुति in the ordinary sense of Vedas. The ignorant man is at conflict with Vedas in his ideas and beliefs.

The verse speaks, in fact of three different stages. The earliest one is where the mind is at conflict with Revealed teachings. The next higher one is what is described in the Geeta verse निश्चला स्थास्यति = "stands firm". By patient, long and careful study, when conviction is born and the mind wavers no longer like a weather-cock at every breeze of attractive theories or systems, it is at peace with Vedas. This is the middling stage when God has not yet been visioned, but the seeker is firmly fixed in Him through Vedic study. The third and highest stage is described in the Geeta verse as समाधावचला = "unshaken in God", being in the trance of समाधि. Herein, the seeker is face to face with Him, and immersed in the supreme bliss of the Presence. No trumpet or thunder can rouse him from reverie, for, his mind is one-pointed and cannot be diverted or distracted.

The reader may see that the verse makes little sense if the whole be taken as one sentence. On the



other hand, the meaning is clear if the first line and half of the second line be read as three distinct predications, dealing separately with the three different stages of the seeker. The redundancy noticed with regard to निश्चला and अचला now vanishes.

Other commentators have, with ingenuity, tried to solve the redundancy as to निश्चला and अचला in various ways. It is not necessary to go into those details. Some of them are fanciful.

The third difficulty noticed above relates to the last clause तदा योगमवाप्स्यसि. *Yoga* here stands for the fruition or goal of yoga, and the meaning then is clear.

That the verse should be read as alluding to three different stages, *viz.*,

1) Ignorance, 2) Knowledge, and 3) God-vision

is well impressed by Sri Madhwa and Teekacharya. In this respect, several of the Monist commentators seem to agree, though, as to the meanings of individual words, there is variance. All of them take समाधि to mean God or Brahman, while Sri Madhwa understands as as the unconscious trance of God-vision.

It is also possible to interpret the verse as dealing with *three stages* in another sense. Study, cogitation and deep contemplation are three processes in the progress of the seeker. श्रुतिविप्रतिपन्ना may be translated as "convinced by the Vedas". This is the first stage

of study. The second one is when the mind is steady, is निश्चल, unshaken in the cogitation of God. The third one is what is alluded to by समाधि and अचल concentration. Thus the three processes usually known as श्रवण, मनन, and निदिध्यासन are set out. Sri Madhwa has adopted this alternative rendering in Geeta Tatparya. This seems to be the view of Ramanujacharya also. He understands समाधि to mean 'the mind'.

I venture to subjoin Professor Rangachariar's translation of this verse:

"When your firm mind *which has (thus) rejected (Vedic and other) revealed teaching*, is steady in *Samadhi*, then you will attain *yoga*".

The Professor understands *yoga* to mean *samatva* (even mind, see verse 48) and efficiency, कौशलं (see verse 50). To be able to perform work unselfishly and efficiently, the present verse is said to lay down the qualifications. Among them, the first is to reject the Vedas and all revealed teaching. The second is to acquire a firm mind, and the third is mental concentration.

To any one who reveres the Vedas, the injunction that they should be rejected is startling. In what sense they are to be rejected, has not been explained. A Buddhist, Christian or Mahomedan or any one who scorns the Vedas may say so with consistency. How can Sri Krishna who praises the Vedas (वेदैश्च सर्वैरहमेव वेद्यः) give expression to such a sentiment?

To be firm in mind is the next equipment. It is not clear what this mental firmness is to be aimed at. We can conceive of firmness in God, in faith, in duty and so forth. What this particular firmness is associated with is not explained.

Thirdly, mental concentration समाधि is enjoined. Here again, the object on which the mind is to be focused, is not clear. It may be God, self, or duty, or anything else such as one's profession or occupation. There is an attempt to reconcile the mental concentration here spoken of, with the trance described by Patanjali as *Samadhi*; but the two notions seem very different. The Professor is evidently dealing with the concentration of mind that is essential for the efficient performance of any duty or work. In this sense, it means whole-hearted devotion to any work that a man sets his hand to, be it in the field of thought, or manual labour, or art, or anything else.

According to this rendering, the verse prescribes two qualifications for a successful performance of duty. One of them is negative and consists in rejecting the Vedas and revelations. The other is positive and consists in a developed will added to concentration.

No doubt the professor speaks of self-realization and God-realization in his exposition under this verse; but this is only by the way. There is no word in the verse to denote or connote this idea, for the verse is meant, according to the rendering, only to explain the simple psychology of *karma yoga* and deals with the mental equipment of one who wishes to do duty *dispassionately* and *efficiently*. I need hardly point out

that not a single commentator of note (Sanskrit or English) has ever interpreted this verse in this startling manner.

अर्जुन उवाच-

54) स्थितप्रज्ञस्य का भाषा समाधिस्थस्य केशव ।  
स्थितधीः किंप्रभाषेत किमासीत ब्रजेत किम् ॥

|                |     |                                |
|----------------|-----|--------------------------------|
| स्थितप्रज्ञस्य | ... | of one who is fixed in wisdom  |
| का भाषा        | ... | what is the description        |
| समाधिस्थस्य    | ... | who is fixed in <i>samadhi</i> |
| केशव           | ... | O ! Kesava                     |
| स्थितधीः       | ... | the one of steadfast wisdom    |
| किं प्रभाषेत   | ... | what does he speak of,         |
| किमासीत        | ... | why will he sit                |
| ब्रजेत किं     | ... | why will he go                 |

"Arjuna said: what is the description of one who is steady in wisdom, fixed in *samadhi*, O ! Kesava. What will that seer of fixed knowledge say, why will he sit, why will he go?"

The Lord spoke of the God-visioned seer and the deep contemplation in which he remains blessed. Arjuna takes up the idea and seeks to know the descriptive characteristics of such a seer. The context led to the query. No doubt the main subject was *karma yoga* but it was connected with God-vision, and the



seer who had achieved this consummation has been referred to in the closing words of the Master. Hence, Arjuna's enquiry for obtaining more light on the same subject was quite natural.

Some people fancy that as Arjuna was an ignorant person far away from the pinnacle of the seer, it was an aimless inquiry on his part to know of the seer and his movements and doings. Madhusoodana answers this doubt in his own way. He concedes that Arjuna was a deluded person and far from being a seer. But the truth is that whatever marks the distinguishing feature of a seer is, in the lower stages, an object of aspiration and endeavour for the seeker, so that, sustained effort for that end leads to *gnana*, and then, the qualities aspired for, are acquired, and become his natural characteristics. On this footing, Arjuna is competent to address an inquiry about the seer, for, he should make the seer's attributes his own aim and goal.

Sri Madhwa thinks that Arjuna was not, in fact, ignorant of the seer's qualities and attributes. He quotes texts to shew that in Itihasas and Puranas, where the narration is made in the form of dialogues, sages do put questions for various reasons, and not because they are really quite ignorant. They do so to emphasize some point of the teaching, or to seek more light than they possess, or put themselves in the position of ignorant people and state possible doubts on their behalf, for the illumination of subtle points not easily noticeable by ordinary folk.

The word भाषा is not to be understood in the ordinary sense of 'speech' in which case the question

asked will be, 'what does the seer say?' This will be flatly redundant with reference to किं प्रभाषेत in the second line. Hence, all the commentators agree in construing भाषा to mean a 'description' or more correctly, 'a descriptive definition' (of the sage).

It is clear that Arjuna asks for a practical definition of the seer. But the verse uses the adjective समाधिस्थस्य, to qualify the seer. Limited by this qualification, the question seems confined to the sage who is in *samadhi* or trance. Is this correct? Does Arjuna wish to know the characteristics of the sage whether awake or in trance, or of only the sage who is in meditative unconsciousness.

Opinions naturally differ on this. Sankaracharya says that Arjuna wished to know of the sage *who was plunged in samadhi*. In deference to this a view, Madhusoodana, Neelakanta and Venkatanatha amplify the point by saying that the first line of the verse under notice relates to the *sage in trance*, and that the second line, to the *sage who is awake*.

There is difficulty in confining the whole verse or even the first line of it to the *sage in trance*. If that was the question, the reply of the Lord would also have dealt with it. This reply extends from the next verse to the end of the chapter. In this we see no reference at all to the *trance* or conditions connected therewith. The Lord has spoken of renouncing desire, enduring pairs of opposites, restraining the senses, and so forth. These traits belong to the sage in general. In verse 57, the Lord says, "He who is

not attached to anything, and who, *coming by good and evil*, neither rejoices nor hates — is one whose wisdom is fixed." Let us mark the words "coming by good and evil". The *sage in trance* being utterly unconscious of the external world and being in a state quite non-responsive to outer impressions, cannot 'come by good and evil.' This phrase is almost conclusive of the point, that Arjuna's question related to the sage in general and the reply was framed accordingly.

From the frame and tenor of the whole reply, it is obvious that Sri Krishna took Arjuna's question to be general. Even Madhusoodana and others feel convinced of this, but they try to save their master Sankaracharya by adopting a medium course and saying that the first line of the verse relates to the sage in trance and the second to the wakeful. But there is little warrant for this division. स्थितप्रज्ञ in the first line is the same as स्थितधीः in the second line, the exigencies of versification having necessitated a slight verbal alteration by a synonym being used.

As to the language of Sankara Bhashya, it undoubtedly says that Arjuna wanted to know of the *sage in trance*. One set of his followers save the situation by the device of splitting the two lines of the verse and taking them to relate to the '*sage in trance*' and the '*sage awake*' respectively. There is not a word about the trance in the whole of the Lord's reply. Hence, another set of Sankaracharya's commentators give up the position entirely, and concede that the whole verse relates to the *sage in general*.

In *Sankara Bhashyotkarsha Dipika* which is a commentary on Sankara Bhashya, specially written to set forth and illuminate its merits, the author strongly criticizes Madhusoodana, and repudiates the interpretation that the verse deals partly with the *sage in trance* and partly with the *sage in wakefulness*. He thinks that the sage in trance is quite out of place and irrelevant in the context, and if he had been asked about it, the Lord would surely have touched on it by words relating to the control of breaths which chiefly characterizes the *samadhi trance*. The Deepika author then tackles the language of *Sankara Bhashya* and construes it to suit his own meaning. He makes out that *Samadhi* is not 'trance', but means *Brahman or mental balance*.

Another commentator of Sankara Bhashya also adopts the same construction (Anandagiri).

Thus, there is a sharp difference of opinion among the members of the same school. Madhusoodana leads off one view and Deepika, the other.

But sound reasoning drives one to think, as already set forth, that the sage in general (not alone the one in trance) is the subject of Arjuna's question. Sri Madhwa interprets the verse in this sense.

Then arises the doubt as to why the word समाधिस्थस्य has been used in the verse as an adjective qualifying स्थितप्रज्ञ. It is the look-out of every commentator who adopts the view of the 'sage-in-general' being the subject of the query, to dispose of the expression समाधिस्थस्य



so as not to hinder his interpretation. Desikar thinks that the word समाधि means simply 'the mind' and no more. He explains it saying, that the compound word describes 'one whose mind is under control.' Utkarsha Deepika thinks that समाधि is either 'Brahman' or mental balance. He thinks that *samadhi* is not a technical word but only denotes the condition of the sage in general, without reference to the trance on which Patanjali lays stress. He quotes long passages from वासिष्ठ where *samadhi* is seen defined in a general sense.

In Geeta Tatparya, Sri Madhwa says that समाधिस्थस्य means 'one whose mind is unwarpd by false reasoning'. Thus the word समाधिस्थस्य qualifying स्थितप्रज्ञ offers no difficulty, the two words being virtually explanatory of each other. The difficulty arises only if *samadhi* means the well-known 'trance', for, in this event, the Lord's reply would have said something on 'trance'.

In Geeta Bhashya, Sri Madhwa concedes that समाधि means 'trance' and construes the verse on this footing. He, of course, holds that Arjuna's question is not confined to the 'sage-in-trance' but relates to the sage in general. He vindicates his position by pointing out that समाधिस्थस्य is not a limiting epithet. It will be remembered that the last verse spoke of समाधावचला बुद्धिः (= "mind fixed in trance"). Arjuna alludes to this and quotes it by using समाधिस्थस्य. He means to say, "you have described the sage as one who is fixed in trance. I have not forgotten this

description. Of him, whom you have thus described I want further particulars". Hence, समाधिस्थस्य is merely an allusion to what the Lord has already said, and is only a *quotation* meant to suggest that Arjuna, remembering this, still wants a further description.

The doubt arises next, that if the sage has already been defined and described as समाधिस्थ and Arjuna understood it as such, why he should seek for a further definition or description of the sage. To this, the reply has been given in Teekacharya's Prameya Dipika to this effect:- "Every person fixed in *samadhi* (trance) is necessarily a sage, but the converse does not follow. If trance should be a distinguishing feature of the sage, it will be defective as a definition, as it is not universally distributed. Hence, Arjuna seeks for some other definition universally applicable, and more popularly understood".

In the second line, Arjuna asks, "What does the sage speak of, where does he sit what does he go to?". The verbs chosen are merely indicative of the sage's movements in general. Arjuna did not select 'speech', 'sitting' and 'going' as actions of any special importance or significance in the sage. He wants to know why the sage should speak at all, or be idle, or move about, being a person of accomplished ends. All activity is prompted by purpose. The sage having reached the *summum bonum*, what are the springs and motives of his actions?

Desikar thinks that किं प्रभाषेत = "*what does he speak of*", embraces all activities connected with speech;

किं ब्रजेत = where does he go”, embraces every bodily movement and action, and that, consequently, the remaining expression किमासीत relates to his mental activity. (आसन means here, ‘thought’). Thus, the three expressions, according to Desikar, cover every possible movement or action or energy in the range of thought, word or deed.

Madhusoodana’s explanation is that, having awoken from trance (स्थितधीर्भूत्वा), किमासीत? “how does he restrain the senses”, and किंब्रजेत “when he does not restrain the senses”, how does he get the desires qualified”. Madhusoodana does not make any special note about किं प्रभापेत. No doubt, it is always desirable, wherever possible, to take the language employed in the literal sense. But with reference to किं प्रभापेत, what does he speak of, for instance, there is nothing in the Lord’s reply about the speech of the sage – whether he studies, or does not, and whether he teaches, or does not. If Arjuna meant to lay special emphasis on, ‘speech’, the Lord would surely have couched his reply in words such as, that the sage engages himself in holy studies, reads or teaches Bhagavata and so on. Madhusoodana thinks that the wakeful sage, may at times, keep the senses under restraint and, at others, let the reins loose. But he is no sage at all whose senses get the better of him. If he does let go the senses, where is the difficulty in grasping at sensuous fruits and obtaining gratification? And, up to the end of the chapter, in what portion does the Lord deal with this doubt, as to how the sage obtains gratification when he allows free play to the senses?

It seems to me that it involves needless strain to find special force and significance for the three verbs employed in the second line of this verse and that it is enough to take them in a general way as covering all the movements of the sage.

A word more by way of summing up. While Sri Madhwa holds there are but two queries in this verse, others think there are four. According to the former, the first line contains only one question, *viz.*, what is a descriptive definition of a *gnanin*; and the second seeks to know the characteristics of his movements and actions. On the other hand, Madhusoodana takes the verse to put 4 questions, one in the first line and three by the three verbs of the second line. Desikar agrees as to the number of questions, but thinks that the three verbs of the second line stand respectively for the verbal, mental and physical movements of the seer.

These questions are answered by the Lord up to the end of the chapter. According to Sri Madhwa, only one verse, *viz.* 69, deals with the query of the second line, and the rest are meant as a reply to the question of the first line.

It is common ground that the next succeeding verse, *viz.*, 55, provides the definition sought of the sage. As to the remaining verses, Madhusoodana distributes them thus: 56-57 answer the query किं प्रभाषेत "what does he speak of". 58-63 answers किमासीत्, which, according to him, means "how does the seer, when awake, restrain his senses". Nos. 64 to 71 answer किं ब्रजेत् which he construes as meaning, "how does he,



when awake, attain the desires of the senses", if he does not restrain them? Other commentators resort to other sub-divisions to allot replies to the four queries under notice.

श्रीभगवानुवाच—

55) प्रजहाति यदा कामान्सर्वान्पार्थ मनोगतान् ।  
आत्मन्येवात्मना तुष्टस्स्थितप्रज्ञस्तदोच्यते ॥

|              |     |               |
|--------------|-----|---------------|
| प्रजहाति     | ... | abandons well |
| यदा          | ... | when          |
| कामान्       | ... | desires       |
| सर्वान्      | ... | all           |
| पार्थ        | ... | O! Arjuna     |
| मनोगतान्     | ... | of the mind   |
| आत्मनि, एव   | ... | in God alone  |
| आत्मना       | ... | through God   |
| तुष्टः       | ... | is content    |
| स्थितप्रज्ञः | ... | the sage      |
| तदा          | ... | then          |
| उच्यते       | ... | is called     |

*The Lord said :*

"When he has cast away all the desires of the heart, O ! Arjuna, and rests contented only in God and through His grace, then he is called a sage."

As already observed, it is agreed on all hands that this verse begins to answer the first question of Arjuna relating to the characteristics of the sage who has visioned God. The subject transcends the personal experience of most men. The religious literature, not only of Hindus but the most nations, contains thrilling descriptions of prophets, sages, seers. Their introspection and self-contained joy is the theme of many an eloquent outburst in sacred writings. It is bound to be a marvellous experience altogether, quite above and beyond any known states of knowledge and pleasure.

The reader is already aware of the controversy whether Arjuna wished to know only of the sage-in-trance or the sage in general. In this connection, the last clause of the verse स्थितप्रज्ञस्तदोच्यते may be emphasized. It is not seen coupled with the epithet समाधिस्थ. It is also noteworthy that, throughout the chapter, the Lord does not tack on this epithet, so that the inference is irresistible that Sri Krishna spoke only of the sage in general and not merely of the seer-in-trance.

The most important characteristic of the sage is renunciation of desires. The verse says that he is one who has abandoned all desires. The sense of the word "all" has to be limited in a way. Firstly, it is only desires that impede the path of the seeker and the seer that need to be renounced. The desire to know more of God, the desire to love Him with all the heart and all the soul, the desire to serve Him and secure His Grace, the desire for Vaikunta and

the ineffable bliss of the final salvation, these desires are quite legitimate. They are no impediments in the way. Why should they be banished? Secondly, even Devas from Siva downwards have entertained wrong desires at times. Rudra, it is said, challenged and fought with Hari. Indra has given vent to passions, and so also down to the lowest gods, and men even in the admitted circle of seers; for, sages as they may be, they are not always face to face with Him. When their mind is turned towards the world, and when it happens to be dim by reason of worldly contacts or of *Prarabdha Karma*, they may fail into venial lapses, and these are but temporary.

Thus, the sage defined by Sri Krishna is one who has, for all intents and purposes, renounced unworthy desires. In this connection, critic Venkatanatha attacks the view of Sri Madhwa. He says that the sage must give up not only worldly pleasures such as of pelf and power, but also lower heavens such as *Brahma Loka* as well as superhuman realizations, such as *Anima* and other *Siddhees*. He assumes that Sri Madhwa opposes the abandonment of these desires and proclaims, on that ground, that Madhwas stand refuted. (माध्वाः निरस्ताः) But where does Sri Madhwa or any of his followers say that *Brahma Loka* should be sought as an end or the eight or more *Siddhees*. Whatever is an impediment to Moksha is kept aside, and whatever is an aid thereof is accepted. If Monists say that no desire, not even one for God's Grace is admissible, then of course, we are at issue with them.

The epithet मनोगतान् meaning "of the mind" looks at first, quite superfluous, as it qualifies कामान् desires and no desire can be conceived which is not mental. The object of this epithet has been variously explained by various commentators. Some say that, as Naiyayikas hold *desires* to be attributes of the Spirit rather than of the mind, the Lord uses the adjective to disabuse the reader of this error. If *desires* were of the spirit, they would be incapable of eradication, for, everything spiritual is not differentiable from the Spirit itself and is eternally co-existent therewith. Sri Krishna, therefore, meant to say, "desires are mental and therefore banishable in character". Most Monists adopt this explanation. Ramanujacharya does not notice this point. Sri Madhwa explains the object in the following manner. In verse 69, the Lord is going to say that relish or desire dies only on God-vision being attained. This latter is well-known to be a mental function until Mukti. If desire be not mental, there could be no hostility between the two, and one could not kill the other. The Lord draws attention to desires being mental so as to convince Arjuna that God-vision can destroy desire.

The greatest merit of the sage is that he rejoices in God and by His grace. His happiness does not depend on the senses and their gratification. He does not look outward for his joys, but is self-contained. He is supremely joyful and contented resting in Him solely, and fed by His infinite Grace.

Ramanujacharya renders आत्मना (in the second line) to mean 'with the mind'. The sense conveyed



seems to be that the sage is happy in mind, through mental balance and control. Sankaracharya takes the word to mean Self or the Jeeva. He renders आत्मनि also similarly. Sri Madhwa prefers आत्मा to mean God in both places, so that, according to Him, the neverceasing joy flows from God rather than Self. Venkatanatha has a very long note, in explanation of the view that this verse is confined to the sage-in-trance and does not deal with the sage who is awake. Following Yogasastra and the writings of Vidyaranya, he prefaces his note by enumerating seven stages of *Yoga*. The first stage is that of the seeker, elementary and preparatory, where the devotee turns his heart to Mukti and longs for it. Next he approaches a teacher and studies Vedanta. Then he contemplates, and trains the mind to be one-pointed. In the fourth stage, he visions *Brahman*. The next, is one where he is deep in meditation, duality having disappeared. While in this trance, he is able to rouse himself to wakefulness at will. The sixth stage is a more intense trance. He is now beyond his depth, because he cannot rouse himself, but some one must bring it about. The seventh stage is an outright trance when the unconsciousness is perfect and there is no waking the person up. The body alone endures breathing low by some inscrutable law of Providence. Having set out the seven stages, Venkatanatha says that the Geeta verse under comment deals with the sage in the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> stages, which, as stated, are all conditions of trance in various degrees of intensity.

I cannot see what words in the Geeta verse compel this restriction, or justify the exclusion of the sage

in the fourth stage set out above. This person who has visioned God (though wakeful) has certainly renounced desire and is self-contained in joy. The description in the verse therefore fully applies to him.

Much may be said for or against the classification noted above, borrowed, as it is, partly from Patanjali and partly from Adwaitic cult. It is however needless to pursue that line as it would be a clear digression.

If the wakeful sage (of the fourth stage) be deemed not to come under the Geeta definition, on the idea that he has not fully rooted out desires, then the definition is equally inapplicable to the sage in the fifth and sixth stages, for these do wake up at times and this means that sense-impressions वासनाः are not totally absent from their minds.

No doubt, Madhusoodhana is responsible apparently for Venkatanatha's idea for he thinks that समाधिस्थ is an ellipsis to be supplied into the verse as an adjective qualifying स्थितप्रज्ञ. This view of Madhusoodhana is quoted and criticized as wrong by the author of Sankara Bhashyotkarsha Deepika. Having regard to the word स्थितप्रज्ञ which means the sage (who has visioned God), and to the absence of any limiting expressions or good grounds for doing so, Sri Madhwa construes the verse as of general application to the sage wakeful or in trance (4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> stages).

The Geeta verse follows a well-known hymn of the Upanishads.

यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्यन्ते कामा येऽस्य हृदि स्थिताः = “when all desires of the heart vanish”. It is to be noted that, while the Geeta, uses the expression मनोगतान्, the Veda contains a paraphrase of it हृदि स्थिताः and the two expressions obviously convey the same idea. Monist commentators, however, lay emphasis on the word मनः and go off to find another passage in the Upanishads which runs thus: “कामस्संकल्पो विचिकित्सा श्रद्धा - धृतिरधृतिर्हीर्षीर्भीरित्येतत्सर्वमन एव” “all is mind, desire, resolution, doubt, belief, unbelief, courage, weakness, shame reason and fear”. The said commentators think that the word काम in the Geeta stands for all the ten mental states mentioned in the Vedic verse, and, so standing, the purport is that the sage has, in fact, destroyed and transcended all mental functions whatsoever.

It does not seem to be reasonable that the sage should thus annihilate the mind. He must have will to concentrate his mind on God, and wish for more and more light from God, more and more of love for God, more and more of God's grace. It may be that the word कामाः has to be understood in a comprehensive sense. But it may comprehend the whole brood of mental cankers that the Lord is going to set out soon in verses 62-63 of this chapter, namely,

- 1) nursing sense-objects,
- 2) attachment,
- 3) desire,
- 4) anger,

- 5) delusion,
- 6) confusion,

and 7) loss of reason ending in ruin.

There is something very appropriate in senses as well as context to take काम as comprehending these unwelcome tenants of the heart or mind, rather than construe it to mean the total subversion of mental functions.

In marking the relevancy of this section about sages in a context dealing with *karma yoga*, it has to be remembered that the seeker and the seer are on a par in one sense, in respect to certain qualities and attributes. Whereas the seeker aims at them, struggles and scrambles for them, and puts forth mighty efforts to reach them, the sage is one who has got at them, and assimilated them as flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone. They are pre-eminently the sage's qualities and attributes, as he lives, moves and has his being in them; they are as natural to him as the breath of his nostrils, and are brought on without effort. Thus the section about the characteristics of the sage is not out of place in *Karma yoga*, because the seeker has to be pointed out what his aim has to be. On this explanation, Sri Madhwa and Sankaracharya are agreed.

In the light of this explanation, the reader may observe that in प्रजहाति, the preposition प्र denotes the easy, natural and involuntary renunciation, that alone marks the accomplished sage.



Ramanujacharya thinks that these 4 verses, Nos. 55, 56, 57 and 58 go together and are linked up in a certain logical order. Desikar explains it in a long note (see especially under verse 58, in book) by pointing out that every aspirant has to pass through four different stages of ascent before reaching the end. The first step is that of the seeker endeavouring to control the senses. Verse No. 58 deals with this. The next higher is a stage where the mind is half mature, and is being trained to ripen the yet unripe longings. Verse No. 57 relates to this. The third is where the man has conquered them in fact, but retains lurking traces of the impressions alone. Verse No. 56 speaks of this. What is dealt with by the present verse marks the fourth stage where true conquest has been achieved and there is no vestige of the foe in the mind.

It has to be pointed out that the four stages spoken of are technical expressions borrowed from Patanjali's and Hiranyagarbha's systems of *yoga*. These have defined the terms in their own way and marked out gradations for their own purposes. What one cannot see is how far the Geeta Verses Nos. 55 to 58 tally with that exposition. What is there, for instance, to show that verse No. 55 deals with the fourth stage and not with stages Nos. 1-2-3 and so likewise, about verses 56, 57 & 58. The language employed does not show that any one of these verses speaks of a higher or a lower stage than any other or others. The whole subject is addressed to स्थितप्रज्ञ and his characteristics, and all the four verses deal with that matter. What indication is there in the verses themselves to show that the attributes or qualifications mentioned in any

particular verse are of a lower or higher level than the rest?

Sri Madhwa thinks that verse 55 gives the definition and that this is simply amplified and explained by verse 56,57,58. The language of the Geeta fully supports this.

56) दुःखेष्वनुद्विग्नमनास्सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः ।  
वीतरागभयक्रोधस्स्थितधीर्मुनिरुच्यते ॥

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| दुःखेषु        | ... amid troubles                          |
| अनुद्विग्नमनाः | ... of unconcerned mind                    |
| सुखेषु         | ... as to pleasures                        |
| विगतस्पृहः     | ... devoid of relish or joy                |
| वीतरागभयक्रोधः | ... of banished passion, fear and<br>anger |
| स्थितधीः       | ... of stable wisdom                       |
| मुनिः          | ... sage                                   |
| उच्यते         | ... he is called                           |

“Being of unconcerned mind amidst troubles, devoid of joy or relish in respect to pleasures, and having banished passion, fear and anger, he is called the sage of stable wisdom”.

The relation of this verse to the context and to the last foregoing verse may first be noticed. That it is meant as a reply to a question of Arjuna goes without saying. But the doubt remains as to which

among the questions it is meant to answer. The reader knows the controversy over verse No.54 as to whether it consists of 4 questions or two. It may be remembered that Madhusoodana and Venkatanatha are among those who hold that the first line of verse No. 54 asks one question and the second line three questions, and that the former relates to the sage-in-trance and the latter to the sage awake. They say that the verse under notice deals with the sage who has awakened and refers specially to Arjuna's query as to what the sage *speaks* about (किं प्रभाषेत).

It is difficult to follow these two annotators when they try, by a sort of special pleading, to make out this particular point. Let us try to follow Madhusoodana whom Venkatanatha simply copies. It is said that the ignorant man laments over a mishap and gives way to wild expressions of grief: similarly when he comes by good luck, he gives way to expressions and ejaculations of self-gratulation. But the sage of stable wisdom behaves and *speaks* out differently on these occasions. He teaches his disciples that calmness and moderation of temper is the most appropriate thing under the circumstances. His teaching is calculated to subdue excitement under pain, and elation over joy. This is the explanation of the position that the verse answers the query किं प्रभाषेत. But the verse contains no words at all to shew that it is dealing with the speech or teachings of the sage. It speaks of calmness, absence of elation, relish, and the banishment of passion, fear and anger. These are mental conditions pure and simple. There is nothing said about the sage's speech or words.

Sankarananda is another of those who think that the present verse deals with किं प्रभाषेत. But he explains the drift and purport of the verse in a different manner. According to him, the sage is a redeemed Monist. He sees nothing but *Brahman* anywhere. So, when evil occurs, or good, the sage is neither distracted nor elated. But what does he do? He does nothing. What does he say? Simply nothing. Thus the answer to किं प्रभाषेत is that the sage maintains a stolid silence.

The reader may note the difference between Madhusoodana and Sankarananda. The former puts a speech into the mouth of the sage, and the latter makes him a mute, while both are agreed that the verse answers the query किं प्रभाषेत. But there is as little warrant for reading the sage's muteness into the verse as for putting speeches into his mouth, because the verse does not deal with that matter obviously, and relates only to his mental condition. Hence, Sankara Bhashyotkarsha Deepika quotes Madhusoodana on this point and attacks his view as unsound.

Ramanujacharya proceeds on a different track altogether. His view is that verses Nos. 55, 56, 57 & 58 set out four different stages of the seeker, that No. 55 began with the topmost stage and that the present verse (56) deals with the next lower one. In outline, this point will be found discussed already, *vide.* page 446/447.

I may only add that there is nothing in the verse under comment to show that the author is thinking



of Patanjali's yogic stages and gradations, and that the third stage एकोन्द्रियसंज्ञा where a man is supposed to be free from every dross of worldliness but for an extremely fine and thin coat of ashes over his spiritual brilliance is the special subject of reference here. Verses Nos. 55, 56, 57 and 58 are so worded that there is no clue as to which verse deals with what stage, assuming that they deal at all with the *yogic* jargon.

One cannot help observing that Madhusoodana, Sankarananda and Ramanujacharya have indented largely on imagination and read into the verse all sorts of words and intents.

Sri Madhwa's view is, Arjuna asked only two questions, *viz.*,

Give me a descriptive definition of the sage (be he one awake or one in trance);

What are the springs, motives, and the direction, of his movements and action.

There is no special charm about the sage's *speech* for Arjuna to base and address a special query on it. Verse No. 55 gave the definition, and in that verse, काम or desire, whose renunciation is the sage's merit, stands for a whole brood of the heart's cankers. The Lord proceeds to throw further light on this point, and explains some of those other faults and failings of the mind, which, He had briefly adverted to as काम. Verses Nos. 56, 57 and 58 are the three verses intended to elucidate the said foibles. All the verses up to the end of the chapter, except No. 69, are

addressed to this single topic, namely, furnishing a descriptive definition of the sage with such explanations and incidental elucidation as the context required.

Coming to a closer view of the verse, and studying its language, we see that the person of stable wisdom is called a मुनि (or sage). Etymologically, a Muni is one who is given to contemplation. He deserves the name, because he rests in God and is content with Him (आत्मन्येवात्मना तुष्टः). Moreover, one who is devoid of passions is called a Muni. The verse speaks of one who is free from anxiety, elation, passion, fear and anger, and these go to make a Muni. Sankaracharya renders *Muni* to mean a *Sanyasin*. This teacher is very partial to ascetics, viz., persons of the fourth order, for, he thinks that no other order is consistent with spirituality.

Some people render दुःखेषु, सुखेषु to mean fears of unhappiness and hopes of enjoyment. The sense brought out is that the ignorant man worries himself on the approach of evil, and springs forward with elation over a mere prospect of joy. There is no reason to criticize this rendering. But the verse speaks, not only about the mental condition of fear and hope, but also of the mind after an evil or good has actually come to pass. The after-effects, too, of both are different in a sage to what they are in a fool.

It is to be observed that the qualities herein spoken of are common to the progressing seeker and the accomplished sage. In strict logic, the definition

may be held fallacious as, being meant for the sage, it embraces a wider field by applying to seekers too. But the fact is, that the qualities of the sage are qualifications also for the seeker; only the latter struggles and scrambles for them with varying success, and the former possesses them as part and parcel of his nature. These mental attributes in the seeker are not equipments and aids leading him directly to Heaven. They are but stepping stones to God-vision, and the latter alone through God's grace ushers him to *Vaikunta*.

In the first line of the verse, freedom from concern and absence of wish are spoken of. In the second line, three qualities, *viz.*, passion, fear and anger, are referred to. Some doubt has been left as to the mutual relation of these expressions. Are these *five* distinct and independent qualities, that the sage eschews, or are they only two, *viz.*, those mentioned in the first line, for which an explanatory reason is furnished by the second line. Venkatanatha adopts the latter construction. He says that the chief predicate runs thus, "the sage of stable wisdom is free from concern and is devoid of desire (wish or relish). Why? Because, he is free from attachment, fear and anger. Freedom from attachment is the reason for the absence of desire. Freedom from fear and anger is the reason for the total absence of concern".

Other commentators, however, take the five attributes as being distinct and independent.

In either view, it is necessary to understand the distinction between *स्पृहा* and *राग*, as well as that be-

tween उद्वेग and भय. Of the five terms, these are two couples each of which, ordinarily understood, consists of synonyms. The fifth, *viz.*, anger needs no special notice.

Taking the second couple, उद्वेग and भय, it must be said that उद्वेग here, does not mean fear, but stands for every sentiment of concern, mental uneasiness, distraction and alarm. The root उद्+विज् denotes in the lexicon, (1) fear; (2) loss of balance. The latter is the sense in the present context.

As to the other couple स्पृहा and राग, Ramanujacharya and Desikar say that the former is a generic expression and the latter specific, and as both have been used, the former is limited thereby to what the latter does not cover. Thus understood, स्पृहा means 'attachment, wish, desire or joy for the good actually realized' and राग means hopes and longings for the good to come.

Sri Madhwa thinks that राग here has a kind of technical significance, and denotes the attraction felt towards an unworthy object on the false notion that it is worthy. It is an attachment superimposed on a delusion, while स्पृहा embraces every kind of desire, elation or relish. He quotes the lexicon as his authority.

The verse says that the sage is one who is freed from the faults in question. But how does he achieve



that conquest? Madhusoodana has a long note on this point, interspersed largely with the Monist's cult. He says that the five faults referred to here are delusions in *form, essence, and substance*, just as the notion of the serpent-in-the-rope is. The ignorant man, coming by a misfortune, curses himself and worries about it, being ignorant of the *Prarabdha karma* that is responsible for it. He vainly wishes he were free from the mishap. Being a vain wish, it is a delusion. So again, when he comes by a good, he flashes forth into elation, indulges in self-gratulation, and wishes for more of the kind, though he has, in fact, no meritorious performance in stock to his credit which could produce more. This wish again is vain and is a delusion. Now the sage, who has realized *unity*, is not a victim of delusion. He is absolutely impervious to it. Hence, the moment he becomes a sage, he is above उद्वेग, स्पृहा and the rest, by the sheer effect of Monistic realization.

This explanation of how the sage comes to conquer these enemies is, no doubt, interesting. But it gives rise to doubts. The notion of the 'serpent-in the rope' is false, because there is no serpent really in front. Analogously, राग is a delusion, as it takes an unworthy something as a worthy object. But उद्वेग (=concern), स्पृहा (=wish), भय (=fear) & क्रोध = (anger) are no delusions in essence, though they may sometimes arise out of delusions. As sensations merely, they are true. If the reply is, that what is meant is that they are based on delusions, even then one has no doubt whether it is always so. One who ignores *prarabdha*, and curses himself over a misfortune, acts

no doubt, on a delusion. But one who is conscious of the causal relation between *prarabdha* and the evil, may also indulge in similar lament. It is not always safe to say that laments, griefs and worries are necessarily based on such a delusion.

If instead of talking of *prarabdha* and other specific causes, the argument be based on the general truth that the concern etc., of every fool is based on the delusion that he is the arbiter of his own destiny, that he deems himself a free agent, in utter ignorance or neglect of God who alone is the Great Dispenser, the reasoning will be unexceptionable.

Leaving aside these minute points of controversy, it is desirable to reflect, for a moment, on the purity and loftiness of the sage who is free from the faults in question. It falls within the experience of few men to be unconcerned over any ill-luck, mishap, or evil, or to be unelated over any joy, or to be free from any passion, fear or anger. Oh ! for a mental peace so serene and sublime ! The world has nothing equal to it. Religious literature makes frequent mention of it and tells along stories of blessed men who have achieved the end—not merely the literature of India but of many other countries, races and nation. The secret of this calmness and self-possession is the undoubted trust in God that they feel. Prahlada (*vide* Bhagavata, VII the Skandha) passed through a series of excruciating torments, was hurled from the mountain top, was cast into the sea, and into fire, was trampled by elephants under foot, was bitten by adders fanged, and was hacked by deadly weapons. Yet, he was perfectly unruffled before, during and after the torture. He is a great example of the great serenity

of the sage. Of *Avadhootas*, there are thousands in India; but many are such only in name. But a few, there are, who really discard the joys of the sense out and out.

Of an unworthy fondness, a forcible illustration is *Jada Bharata* (*Vide* Bhagavata, Vth Skandha) fondling the young deer with all his heart. Modern people often substitute a dog in that place. The self-same *Jada Bharata* was born a deer in the next birth, and, in the next one after that, he was a veritable sage quite free from any of the faults we have been discussing. He lived with his brothers, went through the routine of life's work and tasks, but his heart was absent in God. He was once compelled by sheer force to bear the king's palanquin, but he went along perfectly unconcerned, and when taxed by the king for the serious inconvenience he caused by his unconcern and uneven step, he replied, without fear, that he had nothing to do with the tasks imposed on his body and limbs. King Alexander is said to have met a *Sadhu* in the Punjab or so, whom he tempted with wealth and other allurements to join the Royal camp. The *Sadhu* declined absolutely. The king threatened to behead him. The sage laughed outright, and burst out that he had heard of nothing more silly, because, the soul being deathless, there was no occasion whatever, for fear.

57) यस्सर्वत्रानभिस्नेहस्तत्तत्प्राप्य शुभाशुभम् ।  
नाभिनन्दति न द्वेष्टि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥

|              |     |                  |
|--------------|-----|------------------|
| यः           | ... | whoever          |
| सर्वत्र      | ... | universally      |
| अनभिस्नेहुः  | ... | is unattached    |
| तत्, तत्     | ... | whatever         |
| प्राप्य      | ... | coming by        |
| शुभाशुभं     | ... | good or evil     |
| न, अभिनन्दति | ... | does not rejoice |
| न द्वेष्टि   | ... | does not hate    |
| तस्य         | ... | of him           |
| प्रज्ञा      | ... | wisdom           |
| प्रतिष्ठिता  | ... | is stable        |

“Of him the wisdom is stable, who is universally unattached and who neither rejoices nor hates, coming by any good or evil”.

The verse speaks of three things (1) disattachment, (2) likes and (3) dislikes. These are other weaknesses and failings included in काम of verse No.55 understood comprehensively. The last verse spoke of the sage being free from anger. Hate is not very different. But the present verse speaks of joy and hate being overcome by, first of all, getting rid of attachment, while the last verse spoke of anger in a general way. The additional lesson we derive now is that disattachment is the first step, and this paves the way to, and brings about, freedom from likes and dislikes. The relation of the first line to the second is one of cause and effect. Venkatanatha also adopts this construction pointed out by Sri Madhwa.



सर्वत्र means "universally". But it must be understood with some limitation. None seeks or attaches himself to evil, displeasure, or misery. Hence, to be disattached implies a conscious, exerted, disattachment from coveted pleasures of the sense. So says Ramanujacharya. Towards God, one ought to feel love and reverence. For, the object of the disattachment herein spoken of is to ensure one-pointed devotion to God. Hence, to be disattached does not mean renunciation of God. This is a good point to which Madhusoodana directs attention.

The verse speaks of the sage coming by good and evil. One who is in trance, not being responsive to any sensations from the external world, is incapable of any feeling. Hence, the sage we are dealing with cannot be one who is in trance, but must be one who is awake. Arjuna wanted to know generally of the sage whether awake or in trance and the Lord gave some general descriptions applicable to the sage (awake or in trance), and some special descriptions, too, which apply only to the one who is awake. The present belongs to the latter class.

Advaitic commentators except Sankaracharya are almost unanimous in the view that the verse under notice is meant to answer the question किं प्रभाषेत (what does the sage say)? Neelakanta says that अनभिस्नेह 'disattachment' implies that the fond doter indulges in senseless language from which the sage abstains and that the ignorant man uses words of praise or flattery when he comes by good, and employs words of abuse or hate, when the reverse happens. The verse *speaks*, in fact, according to Neelakanta, of the *speech*

in the mouth of the wise and the unwise, on the occasions of doting, rejoicing, and hating. Others like Madhusoodana construe अभिनन्द and द्वेष as pointedly referring to outbursts in *speech* while अभिस्नेह refers to the mental condition of disattachment.

Whether all the three expressions are held to be a reference to the words of the wise, or only two of them are held to be such, the doubt strongly faces us as to what there is in the verse to denote that it deals with the speech, in particular, of the sage, and not with his general attributes and qualities. The latter is Sri Madhwa's view and enough has been already said on the point

Ramanacharya's rendering of this verse is that the second stage of the sage called व्यतिरेकावस्था is the subject of reference here. The sage enters upon this condition partly redeemed already, and bent on a further progress in the path. He is already disattached, and, being such, he strives to conquer likes and dislikes. The first line of the verse relates to the conquests already achieved, and the second, to what will be attained before entering on the third stage.

There is ingenuity in rendering thus. Coupled with some imagination, I grant that the technical classification of Patanjali may, no doubt, be read into the verse; but I fail to see what there is in this verse or other verses of the context, to show that the Lord is, in truth, alluding to Patanjali's system and shaped his teaching on his lines. If so, one would have expected more pointed reference to the chief catch-words of Patanjali, more especially to the names by which the four stages are said to be known.

The universal disattachment, spoken of here, is indeed a hard thing to find among the mundane experiences of life. Where is the person who does not identify himself with wife and children, with kith and kin, with dear ones of some sort or other, and does not flame up in joy or grief over their rise or fall? Where is the man who is not partial to his favourites, and who *sincerely* dislikes undue praise and undeserved blandishment? Show me one who feels not, nor exhibits, dislike or hate in respect to any person or thing that is calculated to do him harm. These are well-nigh impossible conditions of mind, but discipline and devotion can take us to this goal, through long, wearisome, and sustained effort blessed by the grace of God.

Let us not run away with the impression that the sage's mind bereft of attachments, likes and dislikes, is bound to be a vacuum where no emotion can get ingress. On the other hand, it is and ought to be full of devotion and piety. It is full of sympathy and kindness. No doubt, it does not flame up at the touch of temptations as fire does at the contact of fuel. But, though it is not responsive to sensuous enjoyments, and is not fed on the oil and wick of conventional or artificial affection, still, it burns like an electric lamp without oil and without wick, and electrified by God, for the benefit of humanity.

58) यदा संहरते चायं कूर्मो गानीव सर्वशः ।

इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेभ्यस्तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥

|          |     |               |
|----------|-----|---------------|
| यदा      | ... | Whenever      |
| संहरते च | ... | and withdraws |

|                   |     |                                |
|-------------------|-----|--------------------------------|
| अयं               | ... | he                             |
| कूर्मः            | ... | tortoise                       |
| अंगानि            | ... | limbs                          |
| इव                | ... | like                           |
| सर्वशः            | ... | in entirety                    |
| इन्द्रियाणि       | ... | senses                         |
| इन्द्रियार्थेभ्यः | ... | from the objects of the senses |
| तस्य              | ... | of him                         |
| प्रज्ञा           | ... | wisdom                         |
| प्रतिष्ठिता       | ... | is stable                      |

“When he withdraws his senses from their objects as a tortoise does its limbs, his wisdom is stable”.

The example of the tortoise is significant and forcible. The tortoise withdraws its limbs without the slightest effort. It has a perfect command over that movement. The sage is one who acquires a similar mastery over the senses and is able automatically to close them against the impact of external temptations.

अयं. The reader may mark the pronoun “he” in the first line. One would have thought that the antecedent is स्थितप्रज्ञ, the sage of poised understanding, that is the hero of the context. But some commentators think that the person referred to is not the sage but the seeker yet treading the footsteps of ascent and far from the goal. Sankaracharya seems to be of this view. His note is अयं = he – i.e., one who has



entered on *gnana nishta*, the path of knowledge. This is ambiguous, but his annotator (Anandagiri) says that his master's view excludes the sage. Sankarananda follows suit in the same strain.

The difficulty in excluding the sage as being outside the reference is that Arjuna primarily wanted to know only of him. The seeker comes in only in a secondary sense by a sort of side door, being only relevant to the general topic of *karma yoga*. If the verse under notice does not refer to the sage at all, it does not legitimately form an answer to Arjuna's query. No doubt, the self-control that is spoken of is a qualification of the genuine seeker. But, surely, he has not yet assimilated it into his moral and mental nature. He cannot yet draw in his senses like a tortoise. Being only a seeker, he has to strive for it as a consummation devoutly to be wished for. With the sage, however, the mastery is perfect and has been achieved, and with him, the volition disposes of the senses like an automaton.

There is another ground also for thinking that the pronoun "he" (अयं) does refer to the sage. We may note the word सर्वशः (= "in entirety") in this connection. It means *all* the senses, sound, touch, sight, taste and smell. In the next coming verse, the Lord is going to pick out "taste" as a sense that is subdued only by God-vision. As the seeker does not get a mastery over "taste" until God-vision, the present verse speaking of an absolute mastery over all the senses, alludes to the sage as the person who has achieved this end, and refers incidentally to the seeker as one who is on the road thereto.

यदा. It is to be observed that the verse begins with the word "whenever". It shews that, though one may be a sage, there may be lapses in him, and that he is a sage only when the control over the senses is absolutely perfect, and not at other times.

The self-control herein spoken of forms part of the explanatory comment on what is meant by काम and its kindred. As already observed, verses 56, 57, and 58 are, all three of them, meant to be explanatory. They are not, as supposed by some, independent and distinct definitions of the sage. Ramnujacharya however thinks differently. He adds at the end of the gloss in verse 57, as also in verse 58, "He *also* is a sage; He *also* is a sage". The word "*also*" is significant.

Taking it that Arjuna put four distinct questions, *Adwaitic* commentators say that the present verse is meant to answer the third question, "what does he sit for" किमासीत् . While Neelakanta thinks that the present verse alone furnishes the answer to that question, Madhusoodana whom Venkatanatha copies largely (in language as well as matter) thinks that this and five more verses form a reply to किमासीत्.

What is quite clear is that the verse speaks of controlling the senses. It contains no expression connected with the notion of *sitting*, or any posture for that matter. Anandagiri thinks that the sage takes seat for discussing and attaining the said control. Neelakanta and Madhusoodana think that he *does so* (i.e., sits) to go back into trance. According to the last two writers, the sage having awoken from trance

by reason of prarabdha, is like the tortoise drawing in its limbs out of fear, anxious to go back into *samadhi* or trance and for that end alone, sits down. One cannot help observing that this looks quite fanciful. Because self-control is spoken of, Anandagiri adds the gloss that the sage sits down for that purpose as if that were impossible to achieve, standing, walking or in any other conceivable posture. Others, taking advantage of the words "withdrawing the senses from the objects," shew off their partiality for *samadhi* and read their pet theory that no sage is a sage apart from trance. What we can conclude from the verse as it stands, is that it talks of self – control as an attribute of the sage and says nothing at all about the posture. These commentators, first of all, make up their minds that किमासीत is a specific enquiry about the sitting posture. They, next, search for a specific reply thereto, somewhere, and are determined to find it. Then they think that the present verse can be forced to serve this purpose, words or no words to that effect notwithstanding. But, as Sri Madhwa points out, the queries about what the sage speaks of, sits for, or goes for, are simply questions of general import, standing for the springs and motives of the sage's action in general. This view steers clear of the forced construction attempted by Madhusoodana and his friends.

Ramanujacharya takes this verse to be a description of the sage in the first and lowest of the four stages, namely, a stage of mere endeavours (यतमानावस्था). It is said that the sage herein tries hard to withdraw the senses from the material world and focus the mind on God. It is hard to see how one

who is thus at the mere threshold of self-control, engaged only in pious resolves and attempts, can be said to be a sage. Nor is it easy to see how the self-control which he tries to acquire, can be compared to the highly involuntary and easy action of the tortoise. Ramanujacharya and Desikar try hard to read in verses 55, 56, 57 and 58 a graduated scale of stages, from the top downwards, marking the progress of the sage. They further read in the self-same verses answers to the four questions put by Arjuna. It may be remembered that the four questions according to Desikar, are,

- 1) what kind of person is the sage?
- 2) what are the characteristic features of his utterances,? and
- 3) of his thoughts? and
- 4) of his bodily action?

In examining how these four queries are answered seriatim, one might see well enough that verse 55 replies the first by furnishing a descriptive definition of the sage. As to 56, how it specially relates to the sage's conversation or vocal performances, rather than to his thoughts, it is not easy to see. As to 57, it speaks, no doubt, of certain mental negatives, but this is the verse pitched on by erudite *Adwaitic* commentators as pointedly clear in describing the speech, conversation, or utterances of the sage. किं प्रभाषेत The contrast is noteworthy. As to 58, the verse under comment, here again, it is difficult to see how and why it is to be read as a description of the sage's physical and external movements only, rather than his mental mastery over the senses.



59) विषय विनिवर्तन्ते निराहारस्य देहिनः ।  
रसवर्जं रसोप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते ॥

|              |     |                   |
|--------------|-----|-------------------|
| विषयाः       | ... | sense-objects     |
| विनिवर्तन्ते | ... | turn away         |
| निराहारस्य   | ... | of the fasting    |
| देहिनः       | ... | person            |
| रसवर्जं      | ... | except the relish |
| रसः अपि      | ... | even the relish   |
| अस्य         | ... | of him            |
| परं          | ... | the supreme       |
| दृष्ट्वा     | ... | having seen       |
| निवर्तते     | ... | turns away        |

“Of the fasting person, the objects of senses turn away – except the relish; and even relish turns away when the Supreme is seen”.

This and the next two verses are meant to emphasize the difficulty of conquering the senses. If the seer be one who has achieved the conquest of senses and if that conquest be attainable by fast, why then, every one may try and reach the goal. The Lord says, ‘not so: no amount of fast will secure this end. What the fast may do is to subdue the power of the senses by starvation, the heyday in the blood may get tame, but the relish, the mental desire does not easily vanish; God vision alone is capable of destroying it’.

It is one thing to deprive the senses of their sensing efficiency and vitality, and it is another thing to dislodge from the mind the relish or desire which is the root. Sense-conquest does not consist in the former achievement alone but comprises both.

The effects of starvation or rigid fast are not uniform among all men. In some, it kills the strength of the senses to enjoy any of the sense-objects, leaving the relish of all the five senses unaffected. In others, it kills the power as well as the relish of the four senses, namely, of sound, smell, sight and touch, leaving the vitality as well as the relish of taste alone unaffected. In the former, the relish of all the senses and in the latter, the strength and the relish of taste alone, remain to be annihilated by God-vision. The word रस means relish. It means also the faculty of taste. Hence, the verse lends itself easily to a double interpretation. In Bhagavata, XI th Skandha, a verse (quoted in the Sanskrit exposition) prominently differentiates taste from other senses and points out how taste does not give way under the stress of mere fasting. In Santi Parva (*vide* Sanskrit passages) we find the lesson well brought out that relish of any kind is not liable to be killed by hunger. These texts are reconcilable on the footing that different men are differently affected by hunger. As already observed, some lose the strength alone of the senses, the relish of the four senses, the vitality as well as the relish of taste alone surviving. Others lose the strength and the relish of the four senses, the vitality as well as the relish of taste alone surviving. It is accepted by all that God-vision is the only solvent for the melting

away of relish. As to how this process takes place, Monists are ready with their theory of "Universal Oneness" to account for the loss of relish. They say that the seer sees nothing but *Brahman* anywhere, and finds that there is no such thing as the enjoyer, the enjoyed or the enjoyment. Ramanujacharya says that desire for material objects vanishes at the attainment of a bliss greater than all material pleasures. When the self is realized, the seer has come by a mine of bliss far higher than any he could derive on the material plane, and naturally his longing ceases for the lower pleasures.

The plain language of the verse seems to allow no loophole for smuggling monism in. Nor does it appear very cogent to rely on self-realization as the conqueror of desire. The true meaning of ॐ is the supreme i.e.. God. When God is visioned, He blesses the seer, and then, the Bhakta hankers no more for petty pleasures. It is by the grace of God and the merit of God-vision that the devotee can get rid of 'desire' which has stuck to him so long and so tenaciously.

This verse is found in identical language as No. 16 in chapter 204 of Santi Parva. The previous and subsequent verses throw light on the purport of this verse. Verse No. 19, there, ends by saying that knowledge ends by reaching Him. (ॐ) As true Bhaktas relying on God for every bliss, let us interpret the verse in a truly devotional spirit and bring out, wherever possible, and especially when the language is plain, the greatness of God and the unlimited power of His grace.

Plainly understood, the second line of the Geeta verse lays down that nothing short of God-vision can kill this inveterate foe of ours, desire.

It may be observed that desire is, in a sense, a foe to God-vision and will not permit the latter to be born. If so, the vicious circle is obvious in the argument. So long as 'relish' subsists, no God-vision is possible, and relish does not die except by the agency of God vision. Anandagiri tackles this conundrum and says that by means of fasts and studies, desire does vanish in all its gross aspects and endures in a subtle form, awaiting the advent of *gnana* to kill that also. The subtle aspect in which desire endures, is apparently not a radical foe of, or an impediment to, God-vision.

The first line speaks of one who has not yet conquered राग (desire, thirst or relish). Adwaitic commentators lay hold of the word देहिनः, and make out that the person referred to is one who identifies the soul with body and is consequently a very ignorant man and a materialist (vide Sankarananda). There seems no good reason to lay so much stress on that word as to resort to the meanings of its root and affix, and, by filling up an imaginary ellipsis, evolve a sense like this out of it. I can't see why the first line may not rather relate to one who is treading the true path, has assimilated the right teachings largely, loves and worships God in the proper spirit and devotion, and faithfully observes the fasts of Sanantana Dharma whereby he is able to keep the senses much under control. Such a person is a wise man though still far short of the sage who has visioned God.



The word निराहारस्य (=without food), has been a trouble to some writers. Neelakanta thinks that the Lord had in mind conditions like sleep, swoon, death or devil-possession, wherein the person is beside himself involuntarily and cannot take any food or sense any object. Sankaracharya and others take it that the ignorant and obstinate hermit who undergoes hard penance is the man in view as well as the sick, the infirm and others, who reject food and pleasures. Neelakanta quotes this view and seems to disapprove of it. According to him, the second line distinguishes the sage from every one who is in an involuntary condition of helpless fast. He then points out that between these two, there is a vast gulf, because the latter has his avidya still at the bottom and the lurking, though subtle, relish shaped out of it, whereas the sage-in-trance is free from both.

Apart from this controversy as to whether निराहारस्य refers to the helpless sleeper and others of that sort, or to voluntary fasters, there is difference of opinion on another possible purport of that word. आहार is food. As bread is food for the appetite of hunger, so is *sound*, food for the ear, *colour*, for the eye and so on. In a comprehensive way, all the objects of sense are food for the respective senses. Ramanujacharya and Desikar disapprove of the restricted meaning, (bread), and take it in this literal significance. Sridhara arrives at a similar result by taking आहार to mean the act of drawing or accepting (आहरणं). Sankarananda takes आहार to mean the senses themselves. He resorts

to a grammatical feat to make this out. Let us see how the sentence reads, on the footing of these renderings. "The objects of sense retire, of one who does not sense them". This looks like a truism, similar to the saying "what is, is". It is difficult to think of the retirement of the senses except by saying that the man does not feel the objects though in contact with them. The tautology is thus obvious. It may be that the redundancy pointed out may be got over in some way. But what I cannot see is why आहार should not mean food of the hunger-appetite here. Food that satisfies hunger supplies nutrition to the system and keeps up all the senses, while starvation keeps all the senses low. The Lord might well refer to the case of the devout who undergo frequent and prolonged fasts, and there is nothing that jars with sense in this meaning. What is said is, "the sense retire of one who eats not and the reference is to the well-known experience of famine or hunger striking at the root of all activity and vitality.

The Lord says विषया विनिवर्तन्ते = 'the objects of sense retire', This is figurative, because the objects of sense do not, literally speaking, move out. The author of Sankarabhashyotkarsha, therefore, renders the word विषयाः to mean the senses and not the sense-objects. But what is the meaning of the senses retiring unless that is also figuratively understood. The senses move not any more than the objects. The Madhwa therefore holds that विषयाः refers to "the power of the sense to enjoy the objects". This power wanes with foodlessness, as already pointed out.

The reader may recollect the discussion since Arjuna put his questions in verse No. 54. The doubt was how many distinct questions he put, and what they related to. Commentators differed widely as to which question was answered where. Sri Madhwa's view is that all the verses upto the end of the chapter, except No. 69, discuss the characteristic features of the sage. It is needless to refer again to the conflict of view on this point.

About verses 55, 56, 57 and 58 Ramanujacharya held that they described four gradations of the sage. Sri Madhwa held that the definition asked for of the sage was contained in verse 55 alone, and that the three later verses only amplified the meaning of कामत्याग by pointing out what were the failings and faults of the mind denoted comprehensively by the word काम. Coming now to the present verse, one might imagine that the Lord begins a fresh description of characteristics. This is not so. Having said that the sage withdraws senses like a tortoise, the subject naturally introduces a connected theme whether 'sense conquest' may not be achieved by means of starvation which is within the power of any animal. If abstention could secure it, why then, wisdom should be easily within reach. To remove this objection and to impress the lesson that God-vision and the sense-conquest which that vision implies, are not so easily acquired, the Lord proceeds to say "the objects of sense may retire, of one who fasts; but the relish does not, except by and after God-vision". The next two verses Nos. 60 & 61 are also meant to elucidate this very point.

60) यततो ह्यपि कौन्तेय पुरुषस्य विपश्चितः ।  
इन्द्रियाणि प्रमाथीनि हरन्ति प्रसभं मनः ॥

|             |     |                 |
|-------------|-----|-----------------|
| यततः        | ... | who strives     |
| हि          | ... | verily, indeed  |
| अपि         | ... | even            |
| कौन्तेय     | ... | O! son of Kunti |
| पुरुषस्य    | ... | of the person   |
| विपश्चितः   | ... | the learned     |
| इन्द्रियाणि | ... | the senses      |
| प्रमाथीनि   | ... | invulnerable    |
| हरन्ति      | ... | rob             |
| प्रसभं      | ... | by force        |
| मनः         | ... | the mind        |

"Even of the person who strives and of him who is learned, the invulnerable senses do indeed rob the mind, by force."

We have been discussing the tremendous difficulty of reaching true knowledge. We were told that fasting might kill the strength of the senses but that it cannot destroy the underlying relish which God-vision alone can tackle. The query arises thereon, whether nothing but fast can kill the vitality of the senses and nothing but God-vision will destroy desire or relish. There are, for instance, heaps of ordinary efforts, pious resolves, and holy acts performed with comparative ease – will they not do for the end in



view? Can they not subdue the vigour and strength of the senses? This is one doubt. Another is whether a study of the true *shastras* or a thorough knowledge of the revealed teachings, though short of God-vision, will not and cannot weed out this noxious growth, called desire, root and branch. The Lord answers these two queries in the negative. He says that nothing short of mighty efforts, such as rigid fasts imply, can tackle the senses whose vitality is indeed tremendous. He says that book-learning, however profound, cannot weed away relish, and that God-vision alone is efficient for the purpose. Hereby, the lord confirms the truth of his teaching in the last foregoing verse and points out how strong are the senses to capture the mind of any one, however religious in acts, and however learned in books.

The reader may, at first sight, run away with the idea that यत्ततः "of the striver" and विपश्चितः "of the learned" are both adjectives qualifying each other and the noun पुरुषस्य, in which case, the meaning would be "of the striving knower". But the two expressions are distinct and independent. "The senses of the striver capture his mind". This is one distinct predication. "The senses of the knower too capture his mind. This is another proposition. These two averments are connected respectively with the lessons conveyed by the first line and the second line of the last verse. The first averment negatives the efficacy of ordinary endeavours. The second averment negatives the efficacy of book-knowledge to do away with relish. In the case of both these individuals, the striver and the learned, the senses are dominant.

The reader sees in this exposition of Sri Madhwa, a close logical connection between the last verse and the present one. The last verse having spoken of mighty effort and God-vision as the true saviours, and the objector stepping in with a doubt suggesting other means of salvation, the Lord repudiates the efficacy of the latter and confirms the lesson already taught.

Neelakanta presents this verse in a different aspect. He explains the relation of the verses thus:—“The sage (who has visioned God) restrains his senses as the tortoise does its limbs. The movement is perfect, natural and almost involuntary (verse 58). Then again, the person plunged in sleep or swoon or any other involuntary condition of helplessness, is free from the worry of the senses by reason of exhaustion and unconsciousness (verse 59). There is left a third alternative the individual who is not yet a sage, and who is not unconscious, but who is a religious devotee and master of sacred lore withal, represents an intermediate stage, and herein the senses are still dominant. Having spoken of the seer and the sleeper, the Lord speaks of the scholar who may be engaged, however much he pleases, in holy discipline, and be learned however much he pleases, in sacred literature, but still continues a slave and a toy of the senses”.

Neelakanta, no doubt, makes out sense in this rendering, but it is not satisfactory. His view that the sleeper was alluded to in the last verse by the term निराहारस्य is not convincing. Then the force of the word “even” has to be noticed. “Of even the striver and of the learned, the senses prevail” is the statement. If the sage and the sleeper have been disposed of and

a new proposition is made of the bookish scholar, there is no force in using the word "even". On the other hand, in Sri Madhwa's interpretation, that little word "even" conveys a great force. When the objector brings up the case of the striver and the scholar as a sort of counterpoise to the faster and the seer, the Lord says 'no, my dear fellow, of even your striver and your scholar, the senses are dominant over the mind'.

Ramanujacharya says, like Neelakanta, that the object of the present verse is to shew how difficult it is to subdue the senses and reach true knowledge. But his commentary of the verse ends with an abrupt fallacy known to logicians as *vicious circle*. He says, "Self-conquest depends on God-Vision and God-vision depends on sense-conquest". Neither is possible without the other. Desire or relish is the nutritive sap of the senses. Armed with a good supply of this, the senses are masters of the situation. God-vision alone can destroy the sap, but God-vision is not born as long as the senses remain the victor. The vicious circle is thus plain. The last verse said that relish is killed by God-vision only. The present verse says that, strengthened and armed with relish, the senses rule triumphant and prevent the birth of God-vision.

It is to be observed that Ramanujacharya has pointed out no solution of this fallacy. He finds none in the language of the Geeta and offers none out of his erudition. But, surely the lesson of sense-conquest and God-vision is not so hopelessly fallacious. No doubt, the Lord meant to emphasize the difficulty of attaining both, but surely, He did not mean to say that they were both utterly and absolutely impossible of attainment.

In these circumstances, Sri Madhwa's exposition seems most reasonable that what the Lord meant to point out was only the futility of *ordinary and meager efforts*, and of book-learning.

Besides Sri Madhwa, Neelakanta and Ramanujacharya are the only two commentators who try to point out the close connection between the last and the present verses. Other adwaitic commentators from Sankaracharya downwards, think that the present verse is only an exhortation to restrain and control the senses lest they should capture and run away with the mind. For the realization of *Brahmic* unity, the mind is the instrument. If the senses rob us of our mind, then the Monists' goal becomes impossible. Therefore, to avoid such a disaster, the senses should be kept under sway. The Lord says that they are a powerful lot not easily amenable to discipline and control, acting like robbers seizing a treasure under the very nose and sight of the owner and the guard. One might be on the alert and be striving hard, one might be learned, still the senses would make an on slaught on the mind and carry it away despite all resistance. Hence is the need to put forth more and more of effort and check the enemy.

Apart from the discussion how the last verse is connected with the one under notice, there is no doubt that Sri Krishna's chief object is to impress on men the difficulty and desirability of keeping a firm control over the sense. They are brigands verily, and, by sheer force, will turn our minds away from pious resolves. Manu says, "let no one even sit alone by the side of his mother, sister or daughter. The senses



are very strong and will draw away even the wise". (Chapter II, 215).

How powerless we often are to resist animal temptations in spite of beliefs and convictions to the contrary, our daily experience in life often testifies.

61) तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत मत्परः ।  
वशे हि यस्येन्द्रियाणि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥

|             |     |                                |
|-------------|-----|--------------------------------|
| तानि        | ... | them                           |
| सर्वाणि     | ... | all                            |
| संयम्य      | ... | having restrained              |
| युक्तः      | ... | fixed in Me                    |
| आसीत        | ... | shall sit                      |
| मत्परः      | ... | believing in Me as the Supreme |
| वशे         | ... | under control                  |
| हि          | ... | verily                         |
| यस्य        | ... | of whomsoever                  |
| इन्द्रियाणि | ... | the senses                     |
| तस्य        | ... | of him                         |
| प्रज्ञा     | ... | wisdom                         |
| प्रतिष्ठिता | ... | is steadfast                   |

"Having restrained them all, one should remain fixed in Me, convinced that I am the Supreme. Verily, of whomsoever the senses are under command, of him the wisdom is steadfast".

Some commentators lay stress on the word आसीत्, (=shall sit) and make out that this verse is a reply to Arjuna's question किं आसीत्, "why sit" in verse No.54. It may be remembered that, in their opinion, Arjuna put four questions (in verse No. 54) viz.,

1. what are the characteristics of the seer?
2. what does he say?
3. what does he sit for? and
4. why does he move about?

The third of these questions relating to the seer's sitting is said to be now under reply. Thus say Madhusoodana, Sridhara and Venkatanatha. It is difficult to make out any depth of thought or sense in taking the word so literally here or in verse No. 54. For, the chief predication here is that the seeker should turn Godward, fix his mind in Him, and believe in His Supremacy. It is not meant to lay down here any physical posture for this end. Whether he sits, or stands, or walks, he is to be intent on God. This is the substance of the teaching. No doubt, the word आसीत् does convey an underlying idea that the senses should be calm and quiet. To go beyond this connotation and insist on the idea of actual sitting as distinguished from other postures physical, involves a straining of the sense.

Then again, युक्तः = 'whose mind is fixed in me', is taken by some to be an exhortation to *yogic* practices. And the expression संयम्य encourages them in the same line of interpretation. The reader is referred to the discussion under verse No.39 to shew that the योग

spoken of in the Bhagavad Geeta is not the system of Patanjali.

मत्परः is the expression some *Monists* catch hold of to point out Adwaita in the verse. Sankaracharya says that it denotes one who regards Sri Krishna as the great goal, ever meditating that he and God are one and the same. Sankarananda says that it means one who meditates "I and all are Supreme". The doubt arises, in trying to understand these commentators, whether the oneness with the Supreme is denoted by the word मत्पर itself, or whether it is the tail of a gloss added by the annotator. For, the word मत्पर is used by Sri Krishna and the First person imbedded in it must relate to Him. Hence, it means literally 'one who thinks me (Sri Krishna) as the Supreme'. It is therefore Sri Krishna's Godhead that is asserted and not that of every Jeeva or meditator.

Other commentators, such as Madhusoodana, Neelakanta, and Venkatnatha, though of the Adwaitic school, do not attempt this monistic feat here. They construe the word literally in the sense of 'one who believes in, or is devoted to, the Supreme God'.

As already observed, the Lord uses मत्पर as the chief predicate of the present lesson. Its full force has to be realized.

In the previous verse, the senses were described as powerful brigands. To keep them at bay is the first great task of the seeker. Sri Krishna exhorts the seeker to fix his mind on God as the only efficient

means of combating the brigands. One who wishes to safeguard his property resorts to the king, and the latter checks or punishes the thief. So also, let us resort to the king of kings to safeguard the most precious of our possessions, our mind, from the onslaught of the senses. The mind resting in God is in safe custody. Thieves dare not lay rough hands thereon. If we trust in God, He takes care of us out and out, and our enemies come to fear us, too, and become our allies or servants rather than assault us. Madhusoodana and others have thus brought out the force of the metaphor.

Ramanujacharya says that, when the mind is entrusted to God, He purges it of dross by His purity and effulgence, and thoroughly cleanses it of passion. Thus purified, it is able to resist the senses and conquer them. Hence is the exhortation to dedicate the mind unto God.

To understand the force of मत्पर as Sri Madhwa expounds it, let us go back a little and remember the context well. Arjuna put his questions and the Lord answered them. The essence of the answer was that God-vision and subjugation of the senses went hand in hand. The query arose, thereupon, why every one should not check the senses and gain knowledge. The Lord replies "Not so easy; even fasting only reduces strength; but the arch-enemy 'relish' is destroyed only by God-vision". The next question was, why not resort to other means, such as the regulation of breaths, to beat down the power of the senses- Why not acquire mundane knowledge and conquer relish. The Lord said; 'Not so; they are too powerful to be checked by



ordinary efforts or ordinary learning'. Then, is there no alternative but to fast for killing their strength and vision God for killing relish? This looks a hard condition, well-nigh impossible; for, to fast long means loss of the physical system itself, and God-vision, the remedy for 'relish' is unattainable without *an antecedent conquest of the senses*. Hence, the vicious circle is obvious that God-vision precedes self-conquest and succeeds it also.

In this dilemma, Sri Krishna offers a substitute for the prolonged fasting spoken of as the remedy for subduing the power of the senses. He says, "Do what you will, be quiet and fix the mind in Me. Believe in Me as the Supreme. Divine contemplation and trust makes one strong and powerful, and the senses yield to him.

As for God-vision alone conquering relish, that, no doubt, is true. But there is a distinction to be noted. Self-conquest is of various grades and degrees. It comes in at every step. It is important before God-vision, as leading to it. It follows God-vision as a characteristic incident of that blissful condition. To be मत्पर is the only true way of achieving self-conquest leading to God-vision.

Whether one is able to fast or not, whether one is able to master all the sciences and treatises of the world or not, if one be truly devotional in spirit, ever trustful in God and relying on Him, one's senses cause to give trouble and become one's slaves rather than masters. They materially help the seeker in achieving true knowledge and God-vision.

The reader may not fail to note expressions in the opening of the verse तानि सर्वाणि "them all". The pronoun "them or those" is meant to remind the reader of the *power* of the senses (प्रमाथीनि) Powerful as the senses usually and naturally are, they are powerless before the true devotee. Next, note the expression सर्वाणि; *all* the senses. The necessity to watch every sense is obvious. We are water-pots full of holes. It is necessary to keep every hole water-tight. Even if a single sense be leaky, the mind is poured out through it and the entire pot gets empty. Thus describes Manu (Chapter -II,99).

In the second line of the Geeta verse, the Lord uses the particle हि alluding to the well-known texts of Srutis and Smritis which declare a conquest of the senses as the first requisite and preparation for true knowledge and wisdom. Says Kathaka-1-III-3-7 (*vide Sanskrit*), "Know the self as the chariot owner, the body as the chariot. Know reason as the charioteer and the mind as the reins. They call the senses the horses, the sense-objects their fields. The self, joined to the senses and the mind, is the enjoyer — thus say the wise. Whoever is ignorant, always with mind loose, his senses are uncontrolled, like the bad horses of a charioteer. Whoever is wise, always with mind tightenend, his senses are controlled like the good horses of a charioteer... .

He who has wisdom for charioteer and the mind for tightened reins, reaches the end of the journey and the goal is the abode of Vishnu".

62) ध्यायतो विषयान्पुंसः संगस्तेषूपजायते ।  
संगात्संजायते कामः कामात्क्रोधोभिजायते ॥

63) क्रोधाद्भवति संमोहः संमोहात्स्मृतिविभ्रमः ।  
स्मृतिभ्रंशाद्बुद्धिनाशो बुद्धिनाशात्प्रणणश्यति ॥

|               |     |   |
|---------------|-----|---|
| ध्यायतः       | ... | musng upon  |
| विषयान्       | ... | the objects of sense                                |
| पुंसः         | ... | of him  |
| संगः          | ... | attachment  |
| तेषु          | ... | thereto   |
| उपजायते       | ... | is created  |
| संगात्        | ... | from attachment                                     |
| संजायते       | ... | is created  |
| कामः          | ... | greed, passion                                      |
| कामात्        | ... | from greed  |
| क्रोधः        | ... | anger, prejudice                                    |
| अभिजायते      | ... | bursts out  |
| क्रोधात्      | ... | from anger  |
| भवति          | ... | is born   |
| संमोहः        | ... | unworthy desire                                     |
| संमोहात्      | ... | from sinful desire                                  |
| स्मृतिविभ्रमः | ... | deluded memory<br>(of commandments and injunctions) |

|                |     |  |
|----------------|-----|--|
| स्मृतिभ्रंशात् | ... | from deluded memory                    |
| बुद्धिनाशः     | ... | destruction of good sense              |
| बुद्धिनाशात्   | ... | from the destruction of<br>good sense  |
| प्रणशयति       | ... | he is ruined (by going to hell, etc.,) |

“Whoever muses upon the objects of sense, forms an attachment thereto. From attachment, grows passion and from it, is anger born. From anger, ariseth wicked desire and from it, deluded memory (such as of scriptural commandments and prohibitions). From deluded memory, ariseth a total loss of good sense and this leads to ruin”.

These two verses deal with the psychology of the brooder's downfall. There are eight stages rapidly traced. Undue brooding over the comforts of the flesh is the first step in the downward slip.

This links the person with the vast external world. The connection thus established creates a passion for securing the coveted object. He leaps up inflamed against everyone thwarting or supposed to thwart his way. The infuriated mind desires forbidden things, and goads the man to do sinful deeds. The mind is then confused and bewildered, and forgets the moral law. Good sense takes leave, for ever, of him who has thus slipped down. Ruin here and hereafter is his certain end. Alas! This is the unfortunate trend of materialism, the precipitate fall sure to follow in the wake of an insatiable thirst for, and hunt after, physical comforts.



It is necessary to examine how this subject, seemingly a digression, has arisen out of the context. The main subject of the chapter is Karmayoga-the performance of unselfish duty with a view to gain true knowledge. The seeker is thus the hero of the theme. When he was being taught what he should do and in what spirit, a digression arose as to what the seer is like. It was, however, relevant to the main thesis on the view that whatever is an involuntary characteristic of the seer is, in a sense, the aim and goal of the seeker, for which he has to strive hard by self-denial and exertion. Self-conquest or subjugation of the senses is an involuntary attribute of the seer, and the best efforts of the 'seeker' have, therefore, to be directed towards this end. The Lord emphasizes the importance of this by devoting several verses to it. "Would the senses yield to mere fast? Not so. Would they submit to ordinary exertion? Not so. What then? Devotion to God can overpower the senses" said the Lord in the above foregoing verses. This is the sovereign remedy. There is another remedy of a negative and subsidiary character, not a substitute for the former, but auxiliary to it. That is going to be taught in a few verses from No.64 onwards. The seeker will be exhorted there, to relinquish राग and द्वेष which may be rendered into passion and prejudice. These are the same as काम and क्रोध. The renunciation of passion and prejudice is an important step towards self-conquest. If so, it would be proper and important to consider how passion and prejudice are begotten, and what dire results they lead to. One who knows the causes as well as the effects of passion

and prejudice will avoid the whole brood more rationally than otherwise. Thus, the verses under comment (62-63) are meant to trace the psychology of the matter so as to furnish a prefatory lesson to verses 64 onwards.

We see that there are eight stages referred to here:-

1. Musing on sense-objects,
2. attachment,
3. passion,
4. prejudice,
5. wicked thought,
6. delusion,

7 and 8. loss of sense and ruin. Of these, Nos. 3 and 4 are the principal pair. It is these that are going to be picked out for special mention as राग and द्वेष in verses 64 onwards. These two, काम and क्रोध, which are but other names for राग and द्वेष, are closely related to the other six conditions of mind herein noted. Nos. 1 and 2 are the causes of passion and prejudice and Nos. 5, 6, 7 and 8 are the effects thereof.

Thus, Sri Krishna deals only with the seeker जिज्ञासु, here. Taking up self-conquest for which he has to qualify himself, the Lord tells him that devotion is the efficient means for this end. He recommends, in addition, the avoidance of mental impurities.

Among them, passion and prejudice are yielded the place of honour, and they must be eschewed like

poison. Their causes and effects are taught to us, by the way, in a couple of verses under notice. This is the exposition of the context, according to Sri Madhwa.

There are two other views as to how the verses are related to the preceding topic:—

1. It may be seen that the last foregoing verse laid down तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत् मत्परः. Ramanujacharya propounds the doubt that, if one has restrained all outward senses, there is no need to trouble about the mind. The outer senses shut the doors of every trouble and misery, and if they are closed and barred, there is no cause for fear at all. Hence, it is needless to take any special care of the mind and purify it by directing it towards God, so long as the outer gates are secure. The objector means that the exhortation to be 'मत्पर' in the last verse is superfluous. The Lord replies to the objection by pointing out that, if the mind is not properly guarded and kept pure by means of devotion, the psychological downfall, noted in these verses, is sure to follow. When the mind broods, it gets linked to pleasures, and the results flow, in spite of the weakly resisting outer senses. These are too feeble to resist the pressure, and will yield soon enough. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that, in addition to restraining the outer senses, the mind should be kept pure and devoted. The present verses are meant to confirm, justify, and elucidate the statement already made about the mind being kept pure and devoted.

2. Madhusoodana and others do not lay the same emphasis as Ramanujacharya does on मत्परत्वं, or devotion to God, which means a religious life. They pick up

the expression “युक्त = one-pointed” of the last verse, and formulate an objection upon it. If a man has restrained all the senses and leads a religious life, why should he still be of one “pointed-mind?” *Ex hypothesi*, -the gates of mischief are closed. What if the mind wander about? It can do no harm like a snake deprived of fangs. The Lord answers the objection that ‘one-pointedness of the mind’ is indispensable as, otherwise, the dire consequences, noted in the present verses, will surely result. While Ramanujacharya lays stress on मत्परत्व, Madhusoodana picks out युक्तत्व. Devotion looms large in the system of the former, intellectual one-pointedness looms large in that of the latter; and each selects the expression which suits him best.

Taking the expressions of the verse for a brief notice, we are told that whoever muses on material pleasure gets stuck to it as if by ‘glue’. Experience testifies to this as only too true.

The words सङ्ग and काम may seem to be synonymous; but the latter denotes a more intense longing than the former, a condition in which, as Ramanujacharya puts it, it is impossible for the person to be without the coveted object.

The word संमोह is not easy to translate. It means ‘swoon’ and this idea does not fit in. Sri Madhwa renders it to mean ‘desire to do sinful deeds’ and quotes उपगीता texts where मोह is so explained.

स्मृतिविभ्रम is delusion of memory. What is meant is that we forget whatever we have read or whatever



we have been taught of the moral law, and that, blinded by passion, anger and delusion, and our memory betraying us by not coming to our aid, we rush forward in wrong paths.

बुद्धिनाश. This is a pretty easy expression; but unfortunately, attention has to be drawn to an elaborate note thereon, by Sankarananda. A total loss of good-sense is obviously meant by the context — not an annihilation of the reasoning faculty.

Sankarananda renders 'Buddhi' to mean the, 'mental shape of Brahman' and नाश means 'non-birth'. The result is that "Brahmic Unity" is not realized. Occasion is thus taken to introduce Monism through this expression.

Sankaracharya explains the word to mean "loss of discrimination", and why this could not satisfy Sankarananda, it is difficult to see.

64) रागद्वेषवियुक्तैस्तु विषयानिन्द्रियैश्चरन् ।  
आत्मवश्यैर्विधेयात्मा प्रसादमधिगच्छति ॥

|                   |     |   |
|-------------------|-----|---|
| रागद्वेषवियुक्तैः | ... | freed from attraction and repulsion (passion and prejudice) |
| तु                | ... | on the other hand   |
| विषयान्           | ... | sense-objects   |
| इन्द्रियैः        | ... | with senses   |
| चरन्              | ... | (although) enjoying   |

|            |     |                    |
|------------|-----|--------------------|
| आत्मवश्यैः | ... | obedient to self   |
| विधेयात्मा | ... | of controlled mind |
| प्रसादं    | ... | purity of mind     |
| अधिगच्छति  | ... | attains            |

"On the other hand, enjoying sense-objects through senses which have been freed from Attraction and Repulsion, and which are under control, one whose mind is submissive reaches purity and clearness."

We were warned of the baneful origin and results of passion and prejudice. In other words, these are known by similar couples of Love and Hate, Likes and Dislikes, Attraction and Repulsion. Let us assume that, afraid of the ruin that is the sure end, we avoid the causes of the trouble and live a life unaffected by these polarizing influences. We refuse to be attracted by passion, and avoid repulsion too. What then? Self-conquest is within reach. What of this? It leads to mental purity, that leads to God-vision. Thus, to renounce passion and prejudice results in self-control; and the latter leads to mental purity, which again paves the way to His vision.

The verse contains the particle तु, which may be first noticed. It means "on the other hand" – so as to draw attention to the fact that quite a different picture is going to be drawn. Whereas the downward course associated with materialism and secularism was pointed out as the sure road to a fall, the upward course associated with spiritual peace is to be set forth as the sure road to Salvation.

Each phrase in this verse should be read as a predication by itself. It consists virtually of four different sentences which may be read thus:

- i. He who has freed his senses from attraction and repulsion goes through the world of senses free of likes and dislikes.
- ii. His senses become his slaves.
- iii. His mind is similarly obedient.
- iv. His mind becomes clear and pure.

It may be objected, that the sense-control, as the road to knowledge, is not a new predication or a new lesson. In verse 61 it was said, "For, whose senses are mastered, of him knowledge is fixed". No doubt, the causal connection between sense-mastery and God-vision has been taught already. But it is repeated here with a purpose. The object is to show that sense-conquest is not the direct cause of God-vision, but can operate only by cleansing and purifying the mind. In order to draw attention to the intermediate stages between sense-control and God-vision, the lesson, though stated before, is repeated.

Now, in laying down the course of discipline, the verse speaks of the sense-experiences being enjoyed. This is startling. How can addiction to sensory experience be a training ground for spiritual progress? Ramanujacharya solves the difficulty by rendering the word चरन् to mean "renouncing". According to him, the seeker is not to sense the world of comforts at all, but should abandon it outright. The word चरन्, however, does mean "experiencing" or "enjoying," too. Sri Madhwa and all the Advaitic commentators

unanimously adopt this sense. Desikar condemns it, however, as erroneous. The reason for Desikar's condemnation is not clear. The idea conveyed by the first line of the verse, understanding चरन् in the sense of "enjoying" is, not that one can afford to give free reins to material enjoyments, but that one might make spiritual progress although one might live in and amidst material surroundings and partake of them in an unobjectionable manner and accept just an indispensable quantum of it. No leave is, of course, given for indulgence in forbidden pleasures, nor is license given to indulge therein to a larger extent than may be absolutely essential for healthy living. Well within these limits, a life of material enjoyment, free from likes and hates, is not obstructive of spiritual discipline and progress.

Ramanujacharya goes to one extreme in thinking that nothing short of a wholesale abandonment of worldly comforts is conducive to spirituality. Madhusoodana goes over to the opposite extreme and seems to hold that, so long as the mind is kept under control, the indulgence of the external senses does not matter at all. If the verse was meant to tolerate such a free indulgence of the outer senses, the second line of the verse would not speak of "the senses being mastered by self". Hence, avoiding both the extremes, the golden mean relates to the self-control with just so much of material enjoyment as would be enough and essential for a healthy, moral and spiritual life.

The verse speaks of the senses being liberated from Passion and Prejudice. These latter are aspects of the mind. The separation or liberation referred to



consists in the senses not being actuated and goaded by those two forces. The pure mind gets rid of these diseases by avoiding their causes and turning to religious devotion. It is the mental diseases that radiate to the senses, and, if the mind be free from the diseases, the senses are unaffected and ungoaded by them. This is the dissociation spoken of. It implies a mind free from likes and dislikes, attractions and repulsions, and similar pairs of opposites, by which ordinary secular life is ruled.

The process of mental weeding to get rid of these opposite influences, is brought on by many a cause. Ramanujacharya takes it that devotion to God alone can bring it about. No doubt this is quite true. God is the cause of all causes and the primary source of all blessings. But descending from that pedestal and examining causes and effects on a lower plane, we see that likes and dislikes are the immediate results of the musing and the longing spoken of in the previous verse, and are avoided by the latter being eschewed.

Consequent on moderate and regulated sense-enjoyment, freed from attractions and repulsions, with senses subdued and mind controlled, the seeker reaches the fruit of all this discipline in a high state of mental transparency. This is called प्रसाद in the verse – a state just before God-vision with which the seeker's huge efforts are about to be rewarded. Mrs. Beasant translates प्रसाद into *peace*. This rendering does not closely follow the language of the text, for, in the next verse, the language refers to the clearness of the mind expressly.

An old controversy has to be referred to, in considering what sort of a devotee is the person spoken of in this context. It may be remembered that at least three sorts of devotees may be persons contemplated in this part of the chapter. There is, *firstly*, the seeker who is still struggling and qualifying himself; *secondly* there is the Seer who has visioned God. Seers are of two classes: one is the unconscious sage plunged in the trance of meditation; another, the sage who is awake and moves about like Suka.

Among commentators of this verse, Sankarananda is of opinion that it relates not to the seeker but to the seer, and that one portion of the verse deals with the sage-awake and another with the sage-in-trance. He thinks that the verse, in so far as it speaks of the dispassionate person partaking of worldly comforts in a limited way and subduing his sense, relates to the sage-awake. The other portion, speaking of one who has controlled the mind and attained the high purity known as प्रसाद, refers to the sage-in-trance. The whole verse is thus, according to Sankarananda, a description of the God-visioned sage, sleeping or waking. This commentator is uniquely original in applying this verse to the seer-in-trance.

Madhusoodana and his friends Neelakanta, Sridhara and Venkatanatha think that the verse deals with the sage-awake alone. It may be recollected that, according to them, this section of the chapter began with four questions put by Arjuna (verse 54). In that verse, the first line related to the sage-in-trance and the second line to the sage-awake. As to the latter, three questions were addressed by Arjuna about the

sage's *speech, sitting and walking*. In their order, these questions were duly answered. These commentators say that the verse under notice and the succeeding verses take up the last question of all, the one relating to the movements and activities of the wakefull sage.

I have already discussed, at sufficient length, that a great deal of ingenuity has been spent in allotting various verses to the supposed four questions of verse No. 54. After all, what is the reply to the question about the sage's speech? See verses Nos. 56 & 57 which contained the reply, "The sage speaks unruffled and dispassionate". What is the reply to the question regarding the sage's being seated? See verse 61 which says that he sits with senses restrained. What is the reply to the question regarding the sage's walking, motion, or activity? It is contained in the present verse (No.64). He acts without passion or prejudice. Judging from these answers, the inference is irresistible that the questions have no special reference to any particular function, posture, or activity, of the sage. On the other hand, the common character of the reply leads us to infer that it is the characteristic attribute of the sage that has been asked about and that is discussed in various primary and subsidiary aspects. Admittedly, no magic attaches to the sage's speech, sitting and going. They are merely specific instances which symbolize the entire activity of the sage. There is nothing in verses 5 to the end, which can be specifically allotted to these special functions rather than to others than can be thought of. Nor is there any special reason to hold, as Madhusoodana and others say, that the verse under comment deals with the movement of the sage-awake called ब्रजन.

I may point out that the verses from 62 onwards and the one under comment do not seem to relate to the seer at all. Nos. 62 and 63 deal with the deluded materialist and secularist who is slipping down to ruin. The present verse deals with one who is treading the upward path. It speaks of moderated worldly life and renunciation of passion ending with mental purity. The next verse speaks of knowledge or God-vision as the reward of this mental excellence. Thus, it is obvious that the person spoken of here is the seeker struggling for मनःप्रसाद, mental purity, and its fruit, God-vision. Why, then, should commentators dispute about the present verse relating to the seer-in-trance or the seer-awake? For, it seems to me that it deals neither with the one nor with the other, but with a humbler individual, viz., the struggling imperfect seeker. How the subject of the seeker is relevant in a context about the sage has been already explained.

For one moment, let the reader turn back to the verse to appreciate and admire the lesson conveyed by it even to the busy man of life. It advocates no extreme fasts and abnegations. It imposes no impossible restrictions and artificial Puritanism. It tolerates an even life of regulated activity. While plunged in work, it warns the person against worry whose deadly effect is but too well-known. The steady honest man of hard dutiful work is never lost. But the weather-cock that turns to every breeze of passion or prejudice who, thinking always too much of himself, worries himself about what he likes and dislikes and what the world says of him or to him and how unjustly it always treats him, unlike himself ever treating the



world with too much of justice and generosity – that man is past all hope of redemption.

65) प्रसादे सर्वदुःखानां हानिरस्योपजायते ।  
प्रसन्नचेतसो ह्याशु बुद्धिः पर्यवतिष्ठति ॥

|              |     |                            |
|--------------|-----|----------------------------|
| प्रसादे      | ... | with mental clearness      |
| सर्वदुःखानां | ... | of all miseries            |
| हानिः        | ... | destruction                |
| अस्य         | ... | of the gnanin (seer)       |
| उपजायते      | ... | takes place                |
| प्रसन्नचेतसः | ... | of one who has a pure mind |
| हि           | ... | indeed                     |
| आशु          | ... | soon                       |
| बुद्धिः      | ... | knowledge                  |
| पर्यवतिष्ठति | ... | becomes firm               |

“With mental purity, all his misery is destroyed. For, of one whose mind is pure, knowledge (God-vision) becomes established”.

Sankarananda renders the pronoun अस्य “of him” to denote the sage-in-trance. This is because he has already held (विधेयात्मा प्रसादमधिगच्छति), that the last quarter of the previous verse referred to the purity of the mind attained by the sage-in-trance. It is difficult to make out what there is in this or in the last verse suggestive of the trance. Summing up the gist of the

two verses, Sankara Bhashya says, "Thus the meaning of the teaching is that, as the ascetic, firm in Brahman and clear in mind, has reached the *sum-mum bonum*, let him *partake of unforbidden and indispensable comforts of life*." Let us mark the last clause. According to Sankaracharya, the drift of the teaching is that leave is given to the ascetic for a moderate enjoyment of material comforts. If so, how could the reference be to the sage-in-trance who is not capable of sensing the external world at all and much less of enjoying any forbidden or unforbidden wants or luxuries? I cannot see why Sankarananda brushes aside his own master in favour of a far-fetched idea. According to him, in this very verse, Sri Krishna speaks of three successive stages. The *first* is the pure mind. The *second* is the total absence of distraction (which the sage-in-trance attains). The *third* is vision or realization of unity. If so, the seeker, while in the second stage, is not yet the accomplished sage of the third state. The expression समाधिस्थ, however, denotes the accomplished sage who has realized *Brahmic* unity even when awake but who chooses to slide into trance for a more absorbed meditation.

While on this point of Sankarananda's note, it may also be observed that दुःख is understood by him in a peculiar sense. Every other commentator takes that simple word to mean 'misery' or 'suffering' that flesh is heir to. Sankarananda, however, takes it figuratively and derives the sense of "non-distraction", so that the idea is that the sage withdraws his mind altogether from all sensations. He thinks that the ordinary meaning of misery or suffering is not contemplated at all.

Sankaracharya and Madhusoodana think that the person spoken of here is an ascetic — one who has gone into the fourth order of the Indian *Asramas*. Here again, it is difficult to see why the poor householder is cast outside the pale of the lesson.

The reader will observe that प्रसाद ordinarily indicates a pleased mind. Contentment or satisfaction resulting in gracious favours is the usual idea denoted by the word. The mental satisfaction denoted is one following upon gratified wants. Thus प्रसाद denotes gratified material want. If so, the sense offends against the present context. The mind rid of all attraction and repulsion looks on the world with indifference. It is incapable of the relish denoted by a sense of gratified want.

Sri Madhwa takes note of this point and explains that प्रसाद here is not the satisfaction resulting from sensual gratification, but a state of mental excellence and purity in which the mind voluntarily and automatically ceases to wander out, whether tickled and goaded by the senses or not.

The verse says his *knowledge* becomes established. Monists explain that the knowledge in question is Advaitic realization. Dualists hold that it is the God-vision they approve of.

The first line of the verse says that from mental purity results the destruction of misery. The second line says that knowledge results from mental purity. About the causal relation of these three things, *viz.*, mental purity, destruction of misery, and knowledge,

three different views are possible and have been pressed:

*First.* The one held by Sankarananda is that mental purity leads to absence of distraction (दुःखहानि), and the latter to knowledge.

*Second.* Mental purity leads to two different fruits, one of which is destruction of misery and the other is knowledge. This is the view of Sankaracharya and Anandagiri.

*Third.* Mental purity leads to knowledge or God-vision and the latter leads to Moksha where the seer knows no misery. This is the view of Madhusoodana, Neelakanta, Venkatanatha, Ramanujacharya and Sri Madhwa.

Of these interpretations, the first is original and unique. It is based on the idea that the sage-in-trance is the only hero of the present topic. Moreover, the language of the second half of the verse is suggestive. The particle हि "because" is full of significance. Having said that प्रसाद (purity) leads to destruction of misery in the first line, the query follows how the connection is made out. The second half steps in to explain the reason. It says, 'because purity leads to knowledge'. It is well known in Sastras that knowledge leads to moksha (तरति शोकमात्मवित्). Because knowledge leads to conquest of misery, and mental purity leads to knowledge, therefore, it follows that mental purity leads to conquest of misery. The word हि, of the second line is meant to point out the reason for the proposition of the first line.



The second of the view above noted, *viz.*, that mental purity leads to destruction of misery independently of knowledge to which also it leads, does not seem as satisfactory. In this construction too, the force of the particle हि (because) is lost. Vedic texts and scriptures lay down riddance of misery as the fruit of knowledge, and not of any condition of mind short of, or less than, that.

The third interpretation is the one largely adopted even by the disciples of Sankaracharya. It is also the one upheld by Ramanujacharya and Sri Madhwa. Madhusoodana explains that the gradation is as follows: *first*, Prasada or mental purity; *second* knowledge; *third*, the destruction of Avidya the root of misery; *fourth*, destruction of misery. He says that the Lord puts the first and the last together to show off, briefly and attractively, the causal connection, and emphasize the importance of Prasada which is the hardest stage to attain.

Sri Madhwa is also of opinion that प्रसाद and दुःखहानि mark the two ends and that they are related only by intermediate links. One such link is the God-vision mentioned in the second line. There is yet another link which we gather from the next verse. (युक्तत्वं=mental withdrawal). The stages are purity, mental withdrawal, God-vision and salvation.

In strictly weighing the question of relevancy, one might doubt whether दुःखहानि or salvation arises out of the context at all. We have been dealing with the seeker as also with the seer. But as to the fruits

that are in store for the seer, they seem, at first sight, to be beyond the topic. It is explained in Prameya Dipika, that this is, no doubt, true, but that it is not altogether a digression. Speaking of the seer, the associated idea occurs as to what bliss he can confidently and assuredly look for. Once before, (see verse 50) speaking of the seer, it was said that he is able to renounce all the effect of his merits and demerits. But this renunciation of merit and demerit by the seer is not an end by itself; for, no *summum bonum*, is such unless it resolves itself into either bliss or absence of pain. As the topic brings up the associated idea of what the seer ultimately gets, in order to show off the value of प्रसाद by relating it to the *summum bonum*, the averment is made, though it be through other intermediate stages.

A word about the summary and drift of the present lesson, as set out in Sankara Bhashya: It is said there that the purport consists in leave given to the seer to enjoy life in moderation. (Vide translation given on page 499.) Sankaracharya seems to lay stress on the clause of the last verse "enjoying the sense-objects through senses free from likes and dislikes" रागद्वेषवियुक्तैस्तु विषयानिन्द्रियैश्चरन्. He picks out the phrase "enjoying the sense objects", and gives it the place of honour by making it the chief and final predication of the whole lesson. "Therefore do thou enjoy" is the conclusion he draws.

The true trend of the teaching seems, however, to be otherwise. What the seeker has to do, or what the seer does, is the topic. He is devoted to God, and thereby conquers the senses. He abdicates likes and

dislikes and thereby triumphs over the senses. But then, does he not go through the world of senses and appetites? Does he not gratify them, at least to keep body and soul together? The lord says, "Let him do so, and this does not matter". Although he eats, drinks, and lives, like others, he is not affected like them. In spite of his worldly living, he progresses in spirituality because of the renounced likes and dislikes. The conclusion of the lesson is not "Therefore, do thou enjoy," but is, "Therefore do you abdicate likes and dislikes; be not *of* the world though *in* the world; triumph over the sense, conquer the mind and make the mind transparent, which purity carries you onward, through other stages, to Heaven." The reference to worldly wants and gratifications, far from being the chief or even an important predication, is but a parenthetical reference impliedly coupled with an 'although', and only mentioned to be dismissed out of consideration.

It is possible that the summary and purport of the lesson given by the Sankara Bhashya passage just quoted, gave the cue to the developed shape given thereto by Madhusoodana and others, who say that this verse and others are meant to be a reply to the fourth question of Arjuna (contained in verse 54), किं ब्रजेत, "What does the sage go about for?", the reply according to them being that he goes about for worldly enjoyment subject to limitations.

66) नास्ति बुद्धिरयुक्तस्य न चायुक्तस्य भावना ।  
न चाभावयतः शान्तिरशान्तस्य कुतस्सुखम् ॥

|           |     |  |
|-----------|-----|--|
| नास्ति    | ... | there is not                             |
| बुद्धिः   | ... | God-vision                               |
| अयुक्तस्य | ... | to one whose mind is not<br>one-pointed  |
| न च       | ... | not indeed, because                      |
| अयुक्तस्य | ... | to him who is not of one-pointed<br>mind |
| भावना     | ... | uninterrupted meditation                 |
| न च       | ... | nor is there                             |
| अभावयतः   | ... | to one who does not meditate             |
| शान्तिः   | ... | Moksha                                   |
| अशान्तस्य | ... | to one who reaches not Moksha            |
| कुतः      | ... | whence                                   |
| सुखं      | ... | is happiness                             |

“No God-vision is possible to any one whose mind is not one-pointed. For, if not to one-pointed mind, he cannot plunge in meditation (of God). Without meditation, there is no Moksha, and without Moksha, where is bliss?”

The last verse ended by saying that God-vision is the reward of the pure mind. The Lord impresses the lesson by describing the converse aspect. If this mental purity be absent, what then? The mind is not withdrawn and introspection is impossible. It cannot be one-pointed at all without concentration. Divine meditation, in which nothing comes up before the mental vision but unending flashes of the divine image, is not possible. Without this meditation, God cannot



be seen in spirit face to face. Without this achievement, the door of Heaven is barred, with the result that all chance of the supreme bliss is forfeited.

The verse sets out a long chain of causes and effects, beginning from प्रसाद or mental purity and ending with the bliss of Vaikunta. The verse is, at first sight, somewhat misleading; because it has to be read with ellipses filled in and because the various stages noted have not been set down in the verse strictly in their true order of sequence. To one whose mind is not one-pointed there is no God-vision. This is the first predication. The verse is meant to state the converse of what happens to one whose mind is pure, प्रसन्न. In stating that, it should say, "To one whose mind is not pure, such and such a result follows". Instead of doing so, it starts with अयुक्तस्य, 'the man of distracted thoughts'. The meaning, however, is that the person of impure mind cannot reach concentration of thought. This is the first step. Then we go to the next one. The person whose mind refuses to be one-pointed cannot reach बुद्धि, God-vision. This, again, marks a high jump. To put it briefly and attractively, ability to concentrate and God-vision are mentioned together in one breath. But there is a step between two, viz., actual, prolonged, sustained, and uninterrupted meditation of God, which alone leads to God-vision. The second quarter of the verse states this. The first line, therefore, read in its true sense, makes out that one who is not pure in mind is not able to concentrate, and who cannot focus his mind on anything is incapable of the divine meditation that leads to God-vision.

The second line also presents a similar difficulty. We are told that without meditation there is no Moksha. But this proposition is not strictly accurate as shastras tell us. After meditation is the stage of God-vision — what Mr. Nanjunda Rao calls in a small pamphlet “supra-consciousness,” — and after this comes Moksha. The Lord takes it that He has mentioned by clear implication that meditation is the cause-precedent of God-vision. Hence, with that link understood, he couples meditation with Moksha as cause and effect.

The net result of the teaching is that without a pure mind there is no Moksha. So far, it is all right. What is the occasion for the very last clause of the verse about the bliss of the emancipated? No doubt, it does not, strictly speaking, arise out of the topic. But, it has been mentioned here as incidentally relevant. The object is to draw attention, by the way, to the truth that Heaven or emancipation is not a condition of mere non-misery, as some systems, such as Nyaya, hold, but a state of positive bliss.

This is Sri Madhwa’s interpretation of the verse. It may be seen that he has filled in some gaps and put in some links of the chain of causation in a somewhat different order than what appears laid down in the Geeta. But he has done so to meet obvious difficulties of sense.

Other commentators prefer to take the chain in question as it stands. If so, Buddhi comes before भावना. If Buddhi means God-vision, it ought to come after, and not before, भावना. These commentators, therefore,

hold that बुद्धि here is the ordinary learning of the shastras and not the vision of God, the culminating point of all spiritual discipline.

The context does not seem, however, to fit into this. The last verse speaks of Buddhi as the result of mental प्रसाद or purity. There, undoubtedly, God-vision is the knowledge referred to. It is the same Buddhi that is alluded to now. To make out, for some reason or other, that it is the lower knowledge that is meant here, therefore, does violence to the context.

“अयुक्तस्य”. This word occurs twice in the first line. Some annotators take the word as used in two different meanings in the two places. Neelakanta is the chief among them. He thinks that the word used in the beginning denotes the man that is not eager for, or serious in, religious study; in other words, one who does not care for sacred books at all. He says that the same word used the second time means the man whose mind is not balanced and focused on *Brahman*. Vedanta Desikar also is in favour of a dual meaning. He is anxious to take the chain in question intact just as it reads. The first one is अयुक्तत्वं ‘want of devotion to God’; the next one is Buddhi ‘the ordinary religious learning’. Next is the want of भावना ‘meditation’. The second अयुक्तत्वं stands figuratively, in his opinion, for absence of बुद्धि or bookish learning.

If Buddhi stand for lower knowledge as thus stated by some writers, it is hard to find in the verse any suitable word to squeeze God-vision into. For,

all are agreed in this, that 'God-vision' or Realization does step in between भावना and मोक्ष. Madhusoodana comes to the rescue and renders शान्ति to mean this: and as for मोक्ष, the word सुखं or bliss seems to denote that. It is easy enough to make सुख stand for Heaven and its bliss. But how शान्ति could mean God-vision, it is somewhat hard to make out. Sankaracharya and Ramanujacharya both render शान्ति to mean the "subsidence of desire". In Sankarabhashya the idea is elaborated in this direction. Without meditation there is no extinction of desire, and, it is added, to one whose sensuous thirst has not been put out, there is no happiness, because thirst is always misery.

According to Sankaracharya's rendering, where is the word, then, for God-vision? None. Nor is it available according to Ramanujacharya. Then again, भावना or meditation is not the killer of desire. In verse No, 59, we were told that nothing short of God-vision can produce that result. Having given away the word बुद्धि which easily means God-vision etymologically and by context, and having rendered it so as to mean bookish learning, commentators have been at their wits' end to find a suitable word for God-vision in the verse and have failed in the attempt.

Moreover, शान्ति interpreted as the extinction of desire, and the gloss about happiness never arising from sensual experience, seem somewhat out of place here. We have been told already the whole course of the downward slip into which 'desire' precipitates



us (verses 62, 63). But, what about that now? We are here dealing with quite another matter;— How if prasada be not secured, the *summum bonum* is beyond reach. While speaking of this, it is far-fetched to harp on an old strain that *samsara* consists only of 'desires' and misery.

67) इन्द्रियाणां हि चरतां यन्मनोऽनुविधीयते ।  
तदस्य हरति प्रज्ञां वायुर्नावमिवाम्भसि ॥

|              |     |                            |
|--------------|-----|----------------------------|
| इन्द्रियाणां | ... | of the senses              |
| हि           | ... | verily                     |
| चरतां        | ... | roving                     |
| यत्          | ... | whereas                    |
| मनः          | ... | mind                       |
| अनुविधीयते   | ... | is turned (by God) towards |
| तत्          | ... | that                       |
| अस्य         | ... | of him                     |
| हरति         | ... | carries away               |
| प्रज्ञां     | ... | learning                   |
| वायुः        | ... | the storm                  |
| नावम्        | ... | ship                       |
| इव           | ... | like                       |
| अंभसि        | ... | on the waters              |

“If the mind of one is made to go after the roving senses, that straying carries away his wisdom as the storm does a ship of the sea”.

This verse is intimately connected with the last one. It was said that the unfixed mind was incapable of भावना, meditation. The objector asks, why not? If one is qualified by study and thought, श्रवण and मनन of the shastras, he is taken to be fit to enter on contemplation (भावना). Where is the need to introduce a fixed mind before the meditation of God known as निदिध्यासन? This is the doubt. The Lord replies that, if fixity of mind be not secured, if the mind goes after the senses that rove among objects, by this very act, the man loses all the benefit of his learning and knowledge. The verse is meant to shew the relation between युक्तत्व 'mental fixity', and भावना contemplation.

Sankarabhashya explains the relation of the last verse with the present one more or less in the same manner. If mental fixity is not established, why बुद्धि should be beyond reach is the objection which the present verse is, according to Sankaracharya, meant to answer. The relation between युक्तत्व and बुद्धि is what is sought to be pointed out.

The two explanations virtually agree, because it is conceded (see Sankara's commentator, Anandagiri) that the next stage after युक्तत्व is भावना and the latter leads to बुद्धि which, it is admitted, means God-Vision or Realizaion. So that, the objection really is, 'how does mental fixity lead to Divine meditation भावना without which बुद्धि is said to be impossible'?

"When the mind is made to go after the roving senses." Mark the verb in the passive voice. Who

makes it go after the senses? Some writers resort to grammatical authority to understand the passive verb in the active sense and make out the meaning to be "goes after" not "*made* to go after". Ramanujacharya takes the passive sense and understands the agent to be the purusha or person who allows the mind to go astray. "*Made by the man to go after the senses*" is his meaning. Sri Madhwa also takes the passive sense and thinks that the agent of the action is God. It is He that sends the mind after the senses.

ज्ञान in the second line, is the knowledge, learning, or understanding, derived from teachers and books. It is the lower knowledge that has not yet resulted in God-vision.

The pursuit of the senses by the mind affects the understanding in two ways: It colours and mars what has been acquired by laborious study and thought. It prevents the future acquisition of more. For, study is meant to produce conviction. Thought or reflection is meant to dispel doubts and false ideas, and to secure a firm grasp of the Vedic import. The study in which the absent mind is engaged, does not produce the conviction that leads to Divine meditation. The thought or reflection in which the absent mind is engaged is equally inefficient to fix the mind in the true Vedic import so essential for भावना.

The illustration at the end of the verse, of the storm capturing the ship, is very apt and forcible. The gale seizes the ship and hurls it into a whirlpool or fills it with water, and it flounders, – or dashes it against the rocks into pieces or runs it ashore some-

where and destroys it. So also, the pursuit of the senses by the mind is a fierce gale. It captures all the man's good sense, knowledge and understanding, and plunges it into disasters. The man is lost in the waters of materialism exposed to a thousand dangers.

Mrs. Besant translates the verse thus:— "Such of the roving senses as the mind yieldeth to, that hurries away the understanding, just as the gale hurries away a shop upon the waters". According to this rendering, what hurries away the understanding is some one of the senses which the mind yields to, It is the eye, ear, or some one of the senses that is supposed to capture the good sense of the mind. Now, there is a sharp difference of interpretation among the writers about the subject of the verb हरति. 'तत्' the pronoun used in the second line is the subject. But what is the antecedent? There are three possible views, among which Mrs. Besant follows the one commonly held by Madhusoodana, Sridhara and Venkatanatha.

"Among the roving senses, which ever single sense is followed by the mind, that sense carries away प्रज्ञा'', is the explanation of these writers. There is an old verse of Manu II-99 which runs to this effect. — "Of all the senses, if one sense leaks, the whole Prajna is poured out of it, as water is, through a leaky bucket of leather." Evidently, keeping this saying of Manu in mind, these annotators have introduced the notion that while even a single sense will cause a disaster, much more, therefore, will be the dire consequence of all the senses betraying us. Desikar



points out that the idea of the Manu text, is not the same as that of the Geeta. The former makes no mention of the mind. It is the mind going outward after the senses that is the leading idea of the Geeta. The relative pronoun यत् (= which or whichever) is connected with the word 'mind'. तत्, the pronoun "that", must relate also to the mind (मनः) that appears just before, and not to something not expressly mentioned.

Thus, Madhusoodana differs from Sankaracharya and Ramanujacharya who take 'the mind' as the subject of the verb हरति 'carries away'.

His Holiness, the author of 'Vivriti', thinks that तत् the pronoun forming the subject of the verb हरति, refers to the verb of the previous clause rather than to the word मनः "mind" or "one of the senses". in इन्द्रियाणां. It was said "the mind pursues the senses". This *pursuit* hurries away the man's learning or understanding. The words यत् and तत् refer to the action or process rather than to any noun that may be thought of.

68) तस्माद्यस्य महाबाहो निगृहीतानि सर्वशः ।

इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेभ्यस्तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥

|            |     |                |
|------------|-----|----------------|
| तस्मात्    | ... | therefore      |
| यस्य       | ... | whose          |
| महाबाहो    | ... | O mighty-armed |
| निगृहीतानि | ... | are restrained |

|                   |     |                           |
|-------------------|-----|---------------------------|
| सर्वशः            | ... | wholesale                 |
| इन्द्रियाणि       | ... | the senses                |
| इन्द्रियार्थेभ्यः | ... | from the objects of sense |
| तस्य              | ... | his                       |
| प्रज्ञा           | ... | knowledge                 |
| प्रतिष्ठिता       | ... | is established            |

“Therefore, O mighty-armed, of one whose senses are restrained wholesale, his knowledge is established”.

The force of “therefore” and the allusion implied in it is the chief point to be observed here. The word naturally points to the gist of the reasoning that has gone before. The doubt is whether the reference is to the substance of the next preceding verse alone, in which case, the meaning will be, “whereas the mind that goes after the senses hurries away Prajna, etc., etc., or whether the range of allusion is much wider, so as to comprehend the whole theme beginning with verse No. 59 at least. According to Sri Madhwa, it may be remembered, all the verses from 55 to 68 deal with a single point and answer the first question of Arjuna as to what is the descriptive definition of a *gnanin*. Verses Nos. 55, 56, 57 & 58 having given that descriptive definition, objections were next anticipated and answered in order to confirm the definition. The chief objection was, why should not every one kill desire and become a sage? ‘Not so easy to kill desire’ said the Lord, ‘for this means the conquest of the senses. Even fast kills it not, for, relish is so hard to die that God-vision is alone efficient for the purpose. Nor will ordinary efforts do. Devotion to God can achieve the end.

This is the highest means. There is one that is lower. Renunciation of love and hate may effect the object. The causes of likes and dislikes and their consequences, if duly understood and avoided, will be of value'. So said verses 62 and 63. Mental purity follows upon the abdication of passion and prejudice, and *that* leads to the goal of salvation by steps duly mentioned. The verse under comment concludes this collateral topic. Because mental purity that results from subdued senses results in mental restraint, and enables study and thought to mature into divine meditation, and because the latter results in God-vision and Heaven comprising conquest of misery and attainment of bliss, *therefore*, the sage is one whose knowledge is established by a conquest of the senses. In other words, the whole is one topic from verse 55 to the present. Of these, the verses from No. 59 onwards, embody a subsidiary theme meant to expound and confirm the lesson of verse 55 – 58. This is the force and the allusion of “therefore” according to Sri Madhwa.

Almost all the other commentators, especially of the Advaitic school, do not view the verses 55 to 68 as forming a single theme. They think that No. 55 alone furnishes the definition required and that the other verses contain, between them, the answer of the three questions furnished by the second line of No. 54 viz., those relating to the *speech, sitting, and movements* of the sage-awake. Madhusoodana says, accordingly, that No. 61 onwards give information about the sage's “sitting” and 64 about the sage's “going or activities”. In their opinion, “therefore” in

the present verse is not the conclusion of any topic so as to mark off the commencement of a new one, but denotes only the conclusion of a single line of syllogism among others, and relates back only to the last previous verse.

“Of *one* whose senses are restrained”. The person spoken of is not merely the seer but also the seeker. What is characteristic of the seer is the goal of the seeker. Both are relevant to the subject. Thus says Madhusoodana, and he is quite right.

“Whose senses are restrained *wholesale*”. The *wholesale* restraint, herein mentioned, may point to the disaster stated by Manu of leaving any one of the senses unguarded. They are the leaks of water-pot. Even if one hole remain ungagged. all the contents escape through it.

Hence the imperative necessity of guarding every one of the senses. In the alternative, ‘wholesale’ may refer to every method available for self-conquest. It may consist of devotion, of regulated and moderate fast, of the abandonment of passion and prejudice, and so on.

Madhusoodana and Sridhara think that the vocative महाबाहो, (Mighty-armed), conveys a significance of its own. It connotes the idea that, being mighty in arms, Arjuna can well fight the senses, his foes. Utkarsha Deepika points out the significance of the vocative, saying that, just as the mighty-armed win battles and achieve well-ordered dominion, so learned men conquer senses and obtain firm knowledge. One cannot help seeing some amount of fancy in the last two expositions.



69) या निशा सर्वभूतानां तस्यां जागर्ति संयमी ।  
यस्यां जाग्रति भूतानि सा निशा पश्यतो मुनेः ॥

|             |     |               |
|-------------|-----|---------------|
| या          | ... | what is       |
| निशा        | ... | night         |
| सर्वभूतानां | ... | to all beings |
| तस्यां      | ... | therein       |
| जागर्ति     | ... | is awake      |
| संयमी       | ... | the sage      |
| यस्यां      | ... | wherein       |
| जाग्रति     | ... | are awake     |
| भूतानि      | ... | beings        |
| सा          | ... | that          |
| निशा        | ... | is night      |
| पश्यतः      | ... | the seeing    |
| मुनेः       | ... | sage          |

"That which is night to all beings, therein, the sage is awake. Wherein beings are awake, that is night to the God-visioning sage".

At first sight, this looks somewhat enigmatic. But the meaning is not really very obscure. God is dark night to us, but the sage sees Him and enjoys Him like day. On the other hand, the other world consisting of mundane pleasures, joys, and griefs, is dark night to the sage. He moves about among them indifferent and unaffected, like a mad man or a

drunkard, who walks, laughs, or jumps about without purpose, and is unmindful even of his clothing.

It was pointed out, at the beginning of verse 55, that, of Arjuna's two questions, namely, the one relating to the definition of a sage and the other to the springs and motives of his actions, the latter would be answered by the present verse, No.69. Here is the answer now, that the sage lives the outer life as in darkness, that his movements have no deep purpose, and that his attitude generally is one of ignorance and indifference. What ordinary persons are keen about and scheme for with deep motives, what they revel in as comforts and luxuries, what they grieve for as unattainable or lost possessions, all this is dark night to him.

That the verse is meant to answer the second question of Arjuna (as put in verse 54) is one aspect. Another is that this verse, while pointing out by a sort of implication the shallow and hollow outer life of the sage, is really a brief summary of the verses 55-58. which spoke of the various characteristics of the sage.

According to Ramanujacharya and Desikar, this verse describes the fruition of the four precedent stages spoken of in verses 55-58. It may be remembered that, according to these writers, verses 58, 57, 56 and 55 describe four ascending stages of the seeker's preparation in subduing the senses, the trial (58), the abdication (57), the one-pointedness (56), and the conquest (55). These are technical yogic steps. The present verse is, according to them, meant to describe the goal.

It need hardly be pointed out again that verses 55-58 made no reference at all to the yogic stages laid down by Patanjali. Secondly, the present verse looks more a summary of what has been taught than as a description of the goal. Assuming that some or many of the foregoing verses taught lessons about preparation, it should not be forgotten that others did speak of the fruit also, the reward and the achievement: *vide*, for instance, No. 65 which mentions the annihilation of all misery consequent of God-vision. Desikar sees this point and says that, even though the goal also has been pointed out before, it is repeated here for the purpose of eulogising it.

Other commentators preface the verse in various other ways. Neelakanta virtually adopts the view of Ramanjacharya by saying that the verse in question states the fruit of antecedent preparations. He thinks that the verse is meant to expound the last clause of the Sruti which says, "when the five senses are subdued along with Thought and Mind, and when reason too waver not, *that is the supreme goal*. (यदा पञ्चावतिष्ठन्ते, ज्ञानानि मनसा सह । बुद्धिश्च न विचेष्टेत, तामाहुः परमां गतिम् ॥)

Sridhara thinks that, having spoken of the sage whose senses are in perfect submission and obedience, the Lord proceeds to answer the doubt that such a man is an impossibility. The present verse is supposed to furnish and confirm the definition already given of the sage as one who has triumphed over the senses. I cannot help observing that the present verse does not, in fact, state any new argument to probabalize the definition already given.

Venkatanatha makes out that among the foregoing verses some defined the sage-in-trance, and others the sage-awake, and that, as a comprehensive definition embracing both the conditions was needed, the present verse furnishes such a definition. This view does not seem sound. For, the very first verse of this section, *viz.*, 55, has given a descriptive definition that applies equally to the sage-awake and the sage-in-trance.

The favourite doctrine of Sankaracharya about the chief purpose of the Geeta is that the seeker is called on to renounce *karma* (action) and adopt *sanyasa*. Every opportunity is availed of, whenever and wherever any verse can plausibly be twisted for the purpose, to hammer this lesson on the reader by long passages of erudition. Thus, the present verse is interpreted by him as meant to lay down that the only course open to a sage is to forsake the world and adopt *sanyasa*. On the other hand, that the sage has his duties, has his karma and his worship, is a point repeatedly insisted on by Sri Madhwa. The primary purpose of the Geeta is to prevail on Arjuna to do his duty and not to make of him a sanyasin.

In this connection, it may be noted that the word संयमी is construed by the school of Sankaracharya to mean the sanyasin (ascetic). It seems a pet theory of theirs that the ascetic order alone is the gate-way to salvation, and that redemption is out of the question to any one who does not choose that particular entrance. Sri Madhwa combats this view. He instances Yajnavalkya and other Munis who are said to have



attained salvation through the help of women (तथैव याज्ञवल्क्याद्या मुच्यन्ते स्त्रीसहायिनः).

To insist on *sanyasa* as the only door to Heaven and to set down women as hopeless clogs and impediments on the path, looks somewhat illiberal; and Sri Madhwa, relying, of course, on authoritative texts, takes a broader outlook which is refreshing. Hence, the 'sage' referred to here, includes a person of any order (Brahmacharin, Gruhastha, Vanaprastha, or Sanyasin). Sri Madhwa further points out that the sage in question means only one who is not a Deva. The Śhastras say that Devas preside over the senses and over the forces and functions of nature. If then, they regard the world as dark night, they cannot fulfill their appointed destiny. But it is God's pleasure that they should be sages and seers in the highest sense and yet be engaged in the governance of Nature.

Coming to a closer view of the words and clauses of the verse, the reader may note what it is that is referred to as निशा or night. Most of the commentators are agreed in thinking that God is निशा for all ordinary beings. But, in weighing the comparison, it has to be observed that, while God is the object of human ignorance, the night is not the *object* of man's ignorance, but is only the time when he is ignorant of things. The analogy thus seems somewhat vicious. Venkatanatha answers this doubt saying that, just as a sleeper at night does not see the night, so every man though resting on God fails to see Him. According to him, the object of ignorance is night in the

one case and God in the other. But, surely, every one is cognizant of the night as such. He may be ignorant of things covered by darkness, but is not ignorant of the darkness itself. Time and space, according to Sri Madhwa, are objects of intuitive cognition. Hence, even a sleeper is in a sense cognizant of time and space.

Sankarananda starts an original exposition of the analogy, pointing out that, just as we cannot deal with night as an object because of its omnipresence and opacity, so we cannot deal with Brahman in its capacity of omnipresence and other vast attributes. (The notion seems to be that we can deal with Brahman in the only aspect of Monistic unity). The explanation of the analogy is forced and far-fetched, to say the least. What it is to deal with the night or to deal with Brahman is not intelligible.

No doubt, Brahman and the night have been compared to each other; but no comparison is ever perfect in all its aspects, and should never be pressed too far. The analogy holds good so far that, as we see very little of the world in darkness, so we know very little of Brahman, immersed in ignorance as we are.

We are here taught the lesson that we should never hastily judge men by their exterior alone. The sage full of inner light enjoys the rapture of the Divine sunshine. Compared with that incandescent light, soft and delicious within, the external world with the sun, moon, and stars is only darkness to him. He roams about sometimes in meaningless ecstasy, and some-

times in needless moodiness. He speaks, laughs, and acts, as if mad; at times, he talks profound wisdom with eyes glowing with intelligence; and, at other times, he, in sheer caprice, responds not to any call or sensation. Indian writings speak of many a sage like this, and agnostics are requested not to ridicule this literature.

70) आपूर्यमाणमचलप्रतिष्ठं समुद्रमापः

प्रविशन्ति यद्वत् ।

तद्वत्कामा यं प्रविशन्ति सर्वे

सशान्तिमाप्नोति न कामकामी ॥

|              |     |                       |
|--------------|-----|-----------------------|
| आपूर्यमाणं   | ... | filled from all sides |
| अचलप्रतिष्ठं | ... | remaining unmoved     |
| समुद्रं      | ... | the ocean             |
| आपः          | ... | waters                |
| प्रविशन्ति   | ... | enter                 |
| यद्वत्       | ... | just as               |
| तद्वत्       | ... | so                    |
| कामाः        | ..  | objects of desire     |
| यं           | ... | whom                  |
| प्रविशन्ति   | ... | enter                 |
| सर्वे        | ... | all                   |
| शान्तिं      | ... | salvation-moksha      |

|         |     |                                |
|---------|-----|--------------------------------|
| आप्नोति | ... | attains                        |
| न       | ... | not                            |
| कामकामी | ... | he who hankers after pleasures |

“Just as waters flow into the ever-replenished ocean which, however, remains unaffected thereby, he who senses objects of desire in that manner, attains Heaven; not one who hankers after pleasure”.

The last verse spoke of the night and the day of the sage as contrasted with the night and the day of ordinary people. The sage feels the affairs of the outer world as night. He moves about unmindful of temporal concerns.

But then, in order to live, he must do certain acts that mean the play of will, intellect, and emotion. He must think of means and bring about ends; such is life, and the sage is no exception to the rule. It may be possible for him merely to move about aimlessly, but other functions and avocations of life are impossible without understanding and pursuing rules of causation and effect. How does the sage act in respect to these activities and functions? Does he or does he not sense the objects of desire? If so, how? The present verse deals with these doubts.

The ocean is ever replenished by waters. The rivers continuously flow in, and rain brings a large supply, but the ocean remains just what it has been. It is not visibly affected by the in-flow. It never overflows the bank, nor does it dry away when the rivers cease to flow in. There occur no signs of the sea longing



for the waters. These flow into the sea without any effort on the part of the latter by way of inviting the flow. The sage, too, behaves in this manner. He exposes himself to the contact of the senses like the ocean. Objects of desire flow into him like rivers. He feels no elation on that account. He never transgresses the limit of law, religion, or morality. He pines not when desires remain ungratified and never goes out of the way to seek pleasures. Thus the simile is one of beautiful application. It may be seen that this verse, speaking of the sage unaffected by material pleasures, does not teach any new lesson. It cannot be said that a new characteristic of the seer is being pointed out or that any new reward that he attains is drawn attention to. For, self-control and Moksha have already been taught in many a verse. Venkatanatha makes this mistake in saying that this verse sets out a new definition of the sage and the *summum bonum* he reaches. That no new definition is attempted, nor a new goal, is fairly clear.

Desikar is partial to Patanjali. He explained verses 55-58 to refer to four yogic stages and No, 69 to set down the fruition. It would appear that, just before सिद्धि or fruition, there is another stage when the person remains unaffected though in contact with sense-objects, and this stage is the subject of the present verse, according to this writer.

I have already pointed out how great an importance the school of Sankaracharya attaches to the order of *sanyasa*. According to him, the present verse is meant to teach the lesson that none but a sage or *sanyasin* reaches Moksha. But surely, Moksha as

the reward of *gnana* has been abundantly taught already, as also the converse of it that one who is not a seer can never hope for it.

Two of the Adwaitic writers, namely, Neelakanta and Sankarananda have departed much from their brethren in the exposition of the meaning and purport of this verse. Let me take Neelakanta first. He thinks that many of the lessons already, taught, such as "abandon desires and pleasures" "withdraw senses from objects", misled the reader to think that objects and senses existed, in fact, individually or collectively, apart from Atman. This notion of separateness being fatal to Monism, the Lord hastens to dislodge the delusion, by the present verse. "Desires and objects enter the man as rivers enter the ocean. They are all one and the same with Brahman without any distinction whatever". This is the lesson we are now taught, according to Neelakanta.

The author of Utkarsha Deepika which is an annotation of Sankara Bhashya attacks this interpretation of Neelakanta as quite out of place in this context. The fear is ill-founded that the reader will, as soon as he is told to withdraw his senses from objects, run away with a notion fatal to Monism and the attempt to rehabilitate Monism upon the strength of the present verse is simply astonishing.

Sankarananda also pursues a similar line. A Vedic verse speaks of water mixed up with water becoming all one. The Ganges, the Indus, the Cauvery, and the Godavary lose their individuality, names and characteristics, when merged in the ocean. So like

-wise, foodstuffs, colours, tastes and everything else laid before the sage lose their individuality and are all *Brahman* in his eyes and nothing else.

These writes are so absorbed in Monism and so fondly and tenaciously stick to it, that they will not, on any account, allow Sri Krishna to speak of any subject on any lower plane of thought. It may be that everything is *Brahman* ultimately, but the present theme relates to the sage's self-control and his mastery over the senses. In this topic, the theory of ultimate *unity* is not in point and is calculated rather to mar the value and point of the teaching than shed light upon it.

After harping much on the oft-quoted Vedic texts and platitudes, Sankarananda winds up by saying that the verse answers the question किमासीत्. I am still endeavoring to find out exactly how आसीत् is really understood by these writers, and I confess I have not a clear idea of their notion. It is said that the analogy of the ocean elucidates the sitting posture of the sage. Why and how it applies to his sitting posture, rather than to his *standing*. I fail to see.

It is refreshing to turn from the extreme and violent interpretations of these writers to the modest and sensible comments of their brethren. Sankaracharya takes the analogy simply to bring out the absence of passion or elation, at the impact, or deprivation, of pleasure respectively. So does Madhusoodanam, an acknowledged leader among Sankaras. Sridhara follows Sri Madhwa and intro-

duces the verse as he has done, *viz.*, "If the sage regards sensory experiences as night, how then does he receive, go through, and enjoy them?" is the query that the Lord undertakes to answer here, according to Sridhara.

In studying these clauses and expressions of the verse, the reader may now take up the very last clause. "The desirer of desires", it says, "does not reach peace" (Heaven). The object of stating in this verse that the seer reaches peace and the non-seer does not, has to be ascertained. It is a repetition obviously, having regard especially to verses 65 and 68. One way of accounting for the repetition is that, having spoken of the steadfast wisdom of the sage, the reward he reaps comes in logically and naturally by way of showing off his greatness. It is not as a new lesson that it is introduced, but as an important point that shows off the great man by a sort of reflected side-light. Sri Madhwa adopts an alternative exposition of this point in his Tatparya. As renunciation of desire was largely spoken of, a doubt may occur whether the sage who cannot, after all, totally avoid appetites and gratifications is not really a "desirer of desires." Sri Krishna answers this doubt by the reply that the sage who receives joys and griefs like the ocean is really not a "desirer of desires", but rises to Heaven as his enjoyments are no impediments to salvation. In other words, the question is "who is a desirer of desires?". The reply is that the sage is not, because his desires are not objectionable or sinful; but the ignorant, worldly, person is because his desires are sinful and low.



The verse opens with the statement that the ocean is replenished and full. Some writers (see Ramanujacharya and Venkatanatha) think that the reference is to the intrinsic fullness of the sea apart from the inflow of any waters, and to the intrinsic fullness of the spiritual bliss that the soul ever possesses independently of outer pleasures flowing in. All the other commentators explain the sense in a different way. The ocean does get filled and replenished from various sources and, in spite of this supply, remains unmoved. So, in fact, the sage does undergo infinite experiences of the outer world and is constantly inundated by a ceaseless supply thereof. *Yet*, he stands unaffected, without elation or depression. It is necessary to couple the idea of steadiness with the replenishment, so that the contrast may be forcibly brought out. To say that, being full already with other waters (or other bliss), it is indifferent to fresh supplies of water (or material comforts) –through a very sensible construction – seems to lack the force of the other exposition.

Madhusoodana indulges in an etymological feat in annotating the expression अचलप्रतिष्ठं. It literally means “of unshakeable fixity” and, in the context, expresses the dispassionate calmness of the sage. Madhusoodana takes अचल to mean mountains like मैनाक which, according to the story in Ramayana, lies buried in the ocean. The allusion is intended to bring out the vast depth of the ocean. The author of Deepika criticizes the ingenious construction as inapplicable to the lesson herein emphasized. It is not the depth

of the sea that is of moment but its supreme indifference and dispassion. Taking अचलप्रतिष्ठं as a qualifying adjective of the sage, it is difficult to take अचल as an allusion to the mountain मैनाक.

The goal of the age is शान्ति. Peace is the expressive description of the final condition; Peace from the turmoil of warring passions. The word शान्ति means, as stated in a Bhagavata quotation, devotion to God. It is also a technical term for Heaven. These three ideas of Peace, Devotion, and Heaven are interrelated and interdependent.

71) विहाय कामान्यस्सर्वान् पुमांश्चरति निःस्पृहः ।  
निर्ममो निरहंकारस्स शान्तिमधिगच्छति ॥

|           |                                       |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| विहाय     | ... renouncing                        |
| कामान्    | ... sense-objects                     |
| यः        | ... whoever                           |
| सर्वान्   | ... all                               |
| पुमान्    | ... is man                            |
| चरति      | ... enjoys                            |
| निःस्पृहः | ... unattached                        |
| निर्ममः   | ... has no conceit of "mine"          |
| निरहंकारः | ... has no conceit of I-ness -egotism |
| सः        | ... he                                |
| शान्तिं   | ... Peace, Heaven                     |
| अधिगच्छति | ... attains                           |

“Whoever renounces sense-objects by means of non-attachment, and enjoys them with no conceit of “I” and “Mine” is truly a man, and he attains Heaven”.

The verse holds up the person that enjoys life, unattached thereto, as a great man. He is, indeed, a great man that is able to live *in* the world and not to be *of* the world. It was said of him already that he stands unaffected like the ocean. The same point is elucidated further and the lesson impressed again by a due meed of praise bestowed on him as a *hero*, and the reward of Heaven assured to him.

The verse is a compound sentence of two independent clauses. पुमान् “he” is a man, is the predicate of the first sentence. He who enjoys life, and is unattached withal, is पुमान् – is truly a man, implying that every one who is otherwise, is but an animal. The second clause adds that such a person attains Heaven. If the whole verse be read as a complex sentence, it would read thus: “Whichever *man* enjoys life and abdicates desire, having no thought of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ reaches Heaven”. In this reading, there is no eulogy of the person that he is a hero. There is only a plain statement that the person that he is a hero. There is only a plain statement that the man who is so and so reaches such and such a reward. The subject of the predication will be, as stated, a man—perhaps excluding women and others. This result is not approved. It may be a theory of some people that no woman as such will reach Heaven unless she becomes a man in a future life and passes through the order of sanyasa. But, Sri Madhwa holds that woman

like Maitreyi do get to Heaven like other seers, irrespective of sex. It can hardly be intended that the verse excludes women simply because it uses a masculine substantive.

Sankaras connect the present verse with the final clause alone of the last verse, because, they say, "the desirer of desires" cannot attain Heaven, and therefore, every man should abandon all desires. Desikar thinks that verses 69, 70 and 71 are meant to lay down three different stages. No.69, sets out the goal or fruition (सिद्धि) consisting of vision, (ज्ञान); No 70. sets out the condition of one who is unmoved like the ocean; No. 71 sets out a state just preceding the one referred to in 70 – a condition in which pleasure is shunned, desire given up, and conceits of "I" and "mine" cast away. In short, verse No. 71, depicts the first of these three steps; NO 70. the next higher; and No. 69, the one higher still. In accordance with this rendering, शान्ति the goal mentioned in 70 and 71, is only the self-realization set out in 69, and not Vaikunta as Sri Madhwa and others say. Thus, Desikar's view is that No.71 is a description, in fact, of the seeker, while 69 and 70 set out two degrees of the seer himself. Neelakanta, Madhusoodana, Sankarananda and others of their school say that this verse supplies the answer to Arjuna's question (verse 54) ब्रजेत किं- What does the seer go for? Some of them say that this (No. 70) is the only verse that deals with that query, while Madhusoodana thinks that No. 70 is the last verse of the series dealing with it.



This notion seems based on the expression चरति which may mean “goes”, synonymously with ब्रजेत. Sankaras are almost unanimous in construing चरति in this sense, and they think that the rule requiring Sanyasis never to take up a permanent abode anywhere but to be always on the move, supports this meaning. One of them confirms it by pointing out that, if the ascetic clings to a place he is liable to imbibe the passions of the locality. It has to be observed that the frame of the verse and the context lend little support to the view that Sri Krishna had in mind the itinerary duties of the holy order. In the first place, it is by no means clear that a Sanyasin alone is the person spoken of here and not a Brahmacharin, Grihastha or Vanaprastha. Secondly, the Lord is not speaking here of the duties of the Holy order. चरति does mean “enjoys” as much as it means “goes”, according to the dictionary. Hence, there is good reason to prefer the former sense as it fits in well with the context.

In the first line of the verse, the reader may note a few more difficulties of sense. It opens with saying that desires should be abandoned (विहाय कामान्). It ends with saying निःस्पृहः which means the same thing, “void of desires”. The use of these apparently redundant terms has to be justified or explained. Secondly, desires, it is said, should be renounced in totality, सर्वान्. Neither the necessities of life nor desires can be given up *in toto*. Life on earth is impossible if they be so given up. Nor is it necessary or desirable that every desire should be shunned. There are holy desires, for instance.

desire for more knowledge, greater devotion, or Divine grace, that should be sedulously cultivated or developed even be seers. What, then, does the Lord mean by speaking of wholesale renunciation?

Sankaracharya thinks that विहाय कामान् सर्वान् should be taken quite literally, that all desires and gratifications are really meant to be renounced. As to the redundancy of निःस्पृहः he confines the latter to "the desire for living" and says that the sage abandons even the desire to live on earth. The commentator sets his face against the view that even a sage must gratify appetites in order to live and that he has Karma even after God-vision which brings reward for him even in Mukti.

Sri Madhwa thinks that a renunciation *in toto* of all wants and gratifications is neither possible nor advocated. निःस्पृहः is to be adverbially understood. What is meant by abandoning all sense-objects is the abdication of all *sinful* desires. One who gives up *sinful* desires is said to be a renouncer of all desires. By abandoning all sinful desires, he is said to give up all sense-objects; निःस्पृहतया विहाय is the proper construction. By understanding thus, the difficulties noted are got over.

The expressions निर्मम and निरहंकार are of common occurrence in religious literature. Give up the notions of "I" and "mine" is an exhortation largely found in sacred books. But as for their true meaning, there is no uniformity of opinion. Writers of the Adwaitic

school say that निर्मम means that the sage does not pretend to own even the rags he carries about, and that निरहंकार means that the sage regards not his body as the soul. Sri Madhwa associates these expressions with a truly devotional spirit, and the connotation, according to him, is that the sage does not think he owns a single thing here below or that he does any act but under the prompting and guidance of God. The seer arrogates no independence to himself, either of ownership or of actorship.

According to Advaitic writers, there are four gradations of cause and effect set out in this verse. The first is the absence of अहंकार by reason of which one does not confuse his body with the soul. The second is निर्ममता, in which, the person regards nothing connected with the body as his, because he has already forsaken Ahankara. The third is निःस्पृहता, renunciation of desire consequent on the renunciation of ownership. The fourth step is विषयप्रहाण, abandoning all sense-objects following upon abdication of desire.

Neelakanta draws the attention of the reader to the language of several verses in this context, shaped on the use of यः and सः, "whoever" and "he", (*vide* verses 57-61-68-70-71) where, instead of saying "स्थितप्रज्ञ is so and so", the verses say, "Whoever is so and so, or does so and so, he is स्थितप्रज्ञ, or he attains *gnana* or Moksha". The language is suggestive. The Lord is anxious to speak more of the seeker than of the seer. By saying "Whoever follows a particular path reaches a particu-

lar result", the Lord means that the seeker should take that particular path. The theme, no doubt, is one of स्थितप्रज्ञ, the seeker. But what is an involuntary characteristic with the seer is the goal of the seeker attainable by mighty effort, and the Lord deals with both by language skilfully applicable to both.

72) एषा ब्राह्मी स्थितिः पार्थ नैनां प्राप्य विमुह्यति ।  
स्थित्वास्यामन्तकालेऽपि ब्रह्म निर्वाणमृच्छति ॥

|              |     |                         |
|--------------|-----|-------------------------|
| एषा          | ... | This                    |
| ब्राह्मी     | ... | of the Brahmic seer     |
| स्थितिः      | ... | is the description      |
| पार्थ        | ... | O, Arjuna!              |
| न            | ... | not                     |
| एनां         | ... | this                    |
| प्राप्य      | ... | attaining               |
| विमुह्यति    | ... | one faints              |
| स्थित्वा     | ... | fixed                   |
| अस्यां       | ... | herein                  |
| अन्तकाले अपि | ... | even at the last moment |
| ब्रह्म       | ... | Brahman                 |
| निर्वाणं     | ... | devoid of material form |
| ऋच्छति       | ... | he attains              |

"This, Arjuna, is the description of the Brahmic seer. After attaining it, one does not relapse into



delusion. Fixed in this, even *in extremis*, one reaches Brahman, the formless (having no Prakrita form)".

This is the last verse of the chapter. The real teaching of the Geeta began with verse No. 11. The immortality of the soul was the chief topic in the first section, with occasional reference to God and His greatness. Then Yoga was taught from verse, No 39, the second section dealing with duty performed without motive and selfishness. From verse No. 54 to the end of the chapter is the third section, and this dealt with the seer of fixed wisdom.

The verse under comment says "*This is the Brahmic state*". There is some difference of opinion about the antecedent of the pronoun "this". The doubt is whether it comprehends the entire teaching of the chapter or points only to the last of the three sections mentioned above. Ramanujacharya and Venkatanatha think that the entire chapter is comprehended. But the pronoun qualifying, as it does, the Brahmic state seems more appropriately to refer to the description just given of the Brahmic sage (स्थितप्रज्ञ). The verse does not sum up any lesson or collection of lessons. It simply closes the section about the sage. This is Sri Madhwa's view.

Out of the questions put by Arjuna in verse No. 54, this entire section dealt with the definition and description of the sage. At the very end, verse No. 69, etc., incidentally answered the query of Arjuna about the manner and motive of the sage's activities. Thus "the Brahmic state" now referred to (in verse No.72) is the descriptive definition of the sage asked

for by Arjuna in the first line of verse 54. There was no necessity to make any reference to the query or queries of the second line of verse 54 as these were merely subsidiary doubts and came to be incidentally answered in discussing the main topic by verse 69.

In explaining what is meant by the expression "Brahmic state", Adwaitic commentators say that the condition of becoming and being Brahman is what is referred to. Sri Madhwa construes स्थिति to mean "definition", so that the entire compound word speaks of the sage's attributes alone, just treated of and closed.

The distinctive virtue and merit of the Brahmic state is that there is no further possibility or fear of one lapsing from it into delusion and *samsara*. He is within sight of assured salvation. With him, it is no longer possible to waver in the tangles of atheism, agnosticism, and heresies. The doubting mind has gone, and its place has been taken by firm faith and unswerving devotion. The Sruti says "the knots of the heart are split, all his doubts are cut asunder and his Karma is destroyed, the moment he has visioned the Supreme".

It may then be asked, when does he actually enter the portals of Heaven? The second line answers this query. When his mind is fixed on God even at the last moment of life, his entry into Heaven is secured. In this connection, it has to be observed that no seer can help enjoying or suffering the fruits of what is known as his Prarabdha Karma. God-vision sets all his past karma save Prarabdha on fire, and consumes it all as if they were films of cotton. Like-

wise, it obstructs the seeds being sown for future karma. As for Prarabdha karma, i.e., past karma which has begun to bear fruit, even the seer must go through the same, whether it is exhausted in one birth or takes more births than one. God may graciously give him some remission; but subject to this, the seer takes as many births as may be necessary and clears off the unavoidable account.

Pasupatas and Vaiseshikas say that every seer is able to clear off all Prarabdha by taking more than one body, if need be, at the same time. But there surely are Prarabdhas and Prarabdhas. Some of them are such as necessarily require more births than one, taken in succession. Texts are abundant which disapprove of this dogma about the simultaneous multiplicity of bodies, and speak of various Gods and saints having taken more births than one, even after the achievement of Divine Vision.

To know whether the Prarabdha is exhausted or not, in other words, to find out whether the seer has any more birth to suffer, God has provided a sure test. The seer who has not to be born again, is able to think of God even with the dying breath. God gives him the mental grip to do so. On the other hand, to the seer whose Prarabdha karma is not yet exhausted, God does not vouchsafe the light *in extremis*. His vision is stupefied and dim at the crisis, and he passes away with thoughts pointed to some coveted object or other, which determines the next birth for him.

The second line of the Geeta verse insists that the seer should be in the state of Brahmic meditation

even at the last moment. It is not enough that he has been devotedly godly throughout life. It is necessary that he should think of God even at the last moment. Whatever its other merits, its one merit is that it is a safe test of the sage's future. This is Sri Madhwa's construction of the second line. He quotes authority, of course, to prove the importance and virtue of Divine Meditation *in extremis*. Ajamila is well-known example. (*vide* Bhagavata).

Sankaracharya thinks that अन्तकाले means only "in old age" and not "in the dying moment". He brings out the force of "even" अपि, by saying that even the man who becomes a recluse in the last quarter of his lifetime is saved. Much more, therefore, is that man blessed who becomes an ascetic from boyhood and lives in the Brahmic state from Brahmacharya without ever thinking of wedlock. Almost all the other commentators follow this line of interpretation except Sridhara who interprets अन्तकाले, like Sri Madhwa, to mean "the dying moment".

The reader may see that the context here has nothing to do with the question whether a man takes to *Holy orders* early in life or late in life. Nor can it be said that the context is concerned with the lesson that it is never too late in life to turn one's eyes heavenward.

Venkatanatha is ingenious in introducing the occasion for the second line of the Geeta verse. He fancies that Sri Krishna marked the face of Arjuna at the end of the first line: Arjuna was found crest-



fallen and sorrowful as if so say, "My Lord, so far, I am not saved, I am yet no sage or seer. What I have not been able to achieve so far, I cannot hereafter. Alas! What a fallen sinner I am!" The Lord hastens to cheer up the desponding pupil. He says to him, "never mind the past. Do not think of the life-time wasted away till now. Even late in life, if you repent and enter *Gnana Marga* your salvation is certain". I cannot help observing that there is a good deal of assumption and fancy in this exposition. There is no real warrant for the position that Arjuna was such an ignorant man as these writers imagine. If the second line was meant to be so personally applicable to Arjuna and to point out to him, as Venkatanatha says it does, that he was destined to enter on *Gnana Nishtha* late in life, one would have expected the language to be quite different and shaped pointedly in the second person.

The same writer further points out the force of 'even' and says that the Lord meant here to emphasize a distinction between *Karma Marga* and *Gnana Marga* – that whereas the former requires a lifelong course of sustained observance, the latter is far less exacting so that it is never too late to begin it. This exposition seems quite meaningless. If by *Karma Marga* is meant *selfish karma*, the comparison is out of place. The former has self, power, and swarga for its goal and the latter points to a totally different goal. If *karma Marga* means the selfish yoga treated of in this chapter, then too is comparison between the two irrelevant. The former is only a stepping stone to the latter, We were in fact told even as to *Karma yoga* in verse 40. that it was unfettered by any limitations as to time

or quantity, that it would never be too late to begin it, and that there was no sin in performing it irregularly or incompletely.

Thus, the only true rendering of अन्तकाले is to take it literally to mean, 'the last moment'. Deiskar denounces this as quite wrong; but why, it is difficult to see. Utkarsha Dipikā suggests that the comatose patient in the last throes of suffocating breath cannot think of anything. But this observation is true enough of the ordinary mortal, and may not apply to the extraordinary, almost superhuman, individual we are dealing with, *viz.*, the sage who lives largely in the sunshine of Divine presence. Moreover, it is God that sends the flash to the right man who is on the threshold of Heaven.

There remain the final words of the verse for a short comment. It says that the sage attains Brahma Nirvana. Monists jump up at the word Nirvana and say that the sage becomes Brahman and is merged in that unspeakable bliss. Neelakanta derives Nirvana to mean that conditions which comprises the unification of the soul with Brahman, neither of them moving out of his or its place and position in the least. वानम् is 'going' or 'movement'. निर् is a negative particle. What implies absence of 'movement' is the etymological sense. According to Monism, the sage who has attained unity becomes Brahman outright without any motion, change of motion, or cessation of motion. He has no need to go to Vaikunta or any particular abode or place. He reaches *Kaivalya* straight away like the Akasa of the pot merging into the great Akasa outside when the pot is broken.

All this is very ingenious indeed, and based, one might concede, on good grammar. But after straining hard for an etymological result, Neelakanta has had to draw copiously on Monistic dogma to make the grammatical sense fit into the context. Even after doing all this, the result is the meaning that the sage attains to *Videha Kaivalya* outright, and this, Utkarsha Dipika criticizes as unsound in this context. The Geeta verse, according to Monistic commentaries, speaks of old age *Sanyasa*, and the sage who realizes *Adwaita* in the last quarter of his *life* and continues to live on, is only a *Jeevanmukta* a living *mukta* and not a *Videha Mukta*. The description of Neelakanta, however, gives us a *Videha Mukta*—one who has kicked the bucket and joined Brahman like the Akasa of the pot unified with the outer Akasa *on the pot being broken*. Hence, Dipika thinks that Neelakanta's laboured rendering is incorrect.

Sri Madhwa takes *Nirvanam* to be an adjective qualifying Brahman the object being to exclude the four-faced Virincha God, who is known also as Brahman (in the masculine and neuter). निर्वाण means 'bodiless' or 'formless'. The sage's goal is not the four-faced God, but the supreme Brahman who is formless and bodiless. That the supreme God has no personal form is true only in the sense that he has no body of physical stuff like Virincha and all the other Jeevas. Here again, the controversy is hot whether the Supreme Being has any shape, form, or figure. Sri Madhwa, however, believes in a Personal God who has power to take any shape or form whenever he chooses. All his forms are however non-material,

consist of verity knowledge, and bliss, and are perfect. On this point, numerous texts of authority have been collected and quoted by Sri Madhwa in his Bhashya.

The second line of this Geeta verse, pointing out the value and efficacy of Divine thoughts in dying moments, reminds one, of the prevailing practice in the Madhwa community to cry out 'Narayana, Narayana' into the ears of a dying person when he is apparently in his last gasps. Whether such a practice prevails in other communities of Brahmins and Hindus or not, I do not know. But no orthodox Madhwa forgets or fails to do this duty to the departing member of his family. In fact, it is deemed part and parcel of the final ceremony which is continued after his death as obsequies. So far as I can judge, the observance is traceable to Sri Madhwa's view about the importance of calling God to memory with the expiring breath.

END OF CHAPTER II



# SUMMARY

## PART – I

This chapter opens with the continuation of Arjuna's protest against the war. With eyes suffused with tears, he appeals to Sri Krishna for counsel. In spite of a short telling reply by the Lord, he continues despondent, and renews his objections with increased vehemence. He is unable to make up his mind to give battle to his elders and preceptors. He could not see the value of a throne reached by wading through blood. Nor was he sure of the issue. He could not see the value of a victory under circumstances which necessarily deprived him of all that was near and dear to him. He saw, though somewhat vaguely and dimly, that his resolution to fight was possibly wrong. But he could not argue himself out of it. The emphatic attitude with which he began, gave way to some extent, and irresolution took its place. At last, he surrendered himself into the hands of the Preceptor, and, being open to conviction, implored Him for guidance. In one word, he was very sorry indeed and would not fight.

From verse No. 11, the Lord addresses himself to dispel Arjuna's grief and induce him to fight. 1) "Do not grieve", and (2) "Do you fight", appear frequently as the chorus of the Lord's exhortation. Verses 11, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 30 call upon Arjuna not to feel any sorrow. Verses 18 and 37 call upon him to start and conduct the battle.

To convince Arjuna of his folly, the Lord presents the subject in various aspects. He makes the obser-

vation that Arjuna's reasoning had been but plausible words of wisdom and were far from being sound, tenable, or wise. After this remark, the Lord proceeds at once to adduce reasons for convincing Arjuna.

The thesis of Sri Krishna in this chapter is divisible into two main parts: designated by him as *Sankhya* and *Yoga*. These two are, no doubt, the names of two Indian systems of thought that probably had considerable following in their time. But these are regarded as heretic schools by the Vedantin. Hence, the *Sankhya* and *Yoga* sections of this chapter should not be understood as reproducing the tenets of those systems.

### Section I: Verses 11 to 30.

*Sankhya* is knowledge and *Yoga* is its application. To know God and the Jeeva is *Sankhya*. To live a life of wisdom by shaping and regulating one's conduct and character so as to derive the benefit of *Sankhya* is *Yoga*. The former corresponds to Theory, and the latter, to Practice. They are complements of each other. Thus understood, they are both essential parts of a harmonious whole. They cannot, in their very nature, be hostile to each other. If this be clear, the assertion in Bhagavad Gheeta, Chapter V, verse 4 to the effect that "it is children, not sages, who speak of *Sankhya* and *Yoga* as different" becomes quite intelligible.

(a) From verses 12 to 30, the rationale of "no-grief" is set out by adverting to the nature of the Soul, the greatness of God, and the ephemeral character of animal bodies.

The Indian Atheist and Materialist, Charvaka, is first brushed aside. Bheeshma, Drona and other men whom Arjuna feared he was going to kill are not what they appear to naked eyes. Souls dwell within their bodies. Those souls are beginningless and endless. They endure, for ever, although their embodiments might come into birth and disappear on death. No soul is confined to a single birth and death; but it takes a series of incarnations. It is only a change of external state that the Soul undergoes in kicking away one Body and assuming another. The change resembles the progress of the body from childhood to manhood and manhood to old age. The change of body to body resembles the change of garments as to which, no one feels any grief when he parts with worn-out rags and puts on fresh clothing. It is the quality of *Bodies* that they should decay and die while the Soul is eternal.

Thus the Lord points out (1) that Souls are eternal, (2) that every Soul assumes and throws off bodies in succession in a course of prolonged transmigration, (3) that the eternality of Jeevas is rendered probable by the eternality of God, Prakriti, Varna, Avyakrita Akasa and whatever else is all-pervasive, (4) that God being the Infinite Original of which Jeevas are but reflected images, the eternality is conceivable, (5) and that every man should realize fully how dependent he is on God, how vastly superior to himself is God, and how God is infinite in Space, Time, and Attributes, not being subject to any flaw, failing, or disability.

Thus the Lord draws a vivid and minute picture of God and Man in respect to their characteristics,

their mutual relations, and their essential eternality, and distinguishes the Soul from material embodiments. He winds up by describing God as stupendous marvel, and man too as a marvel as he is an image of the Maker. The preceptor, the pupil and the study of God as well as man, are all marvels. For, we all know man only as he appears to the eye of flesh and not as he truly is, the Being resting in and dependent on God.

In these circumstances, no grief is justifiable, the reasons being that Souls are immortal and they rest on God.

Secondly, no amount of grief is of use, because bodies are necessarily perishable in character. Bheeshma and Drona cannot live for ever even if Arjuna chose to spare them. Change and decay is the characteristic of material products. None can help this being so. Birth must be followed by death and *vice versa* also. No wise man laments over an inevitable incident and an inexorable law of nature.

But if Arjuna should say that, although Souls are immortal and bodies must die at some time or other, his grief is unavoidable whenever he kills kinsmen and thereby loses the pleasure of living with them, the Lord replies by pointing out an antidote. Pleasure and pain depend on Abhimana which is the magnetic tie between man and man. (Verse 14).

Once the magnetic link is disconnected, no incident of life creates joy or grief. This truth is obvious, for no man goes into hysterics of joy or grief over



an event in Timbuctoo as he does in respect to a son or a foe, close at hand. Arjuna was told therefore that he was the architect of his own joy and grief, and that it was open to him to relinquish Abhimana (attachment) and prevent any event of life from disturbing his peace of mind.

Arjuna's grief being thus shown to be uncalled for, on the triple ground of (1) the soul being eternal, (2) God being the universal Dispenser and (3) of Abhimana being at the root of joy and grief, the Lord next tackles the reasoning of Arjuna based on moral and religious notions of casuistry. Arjuna had taken up nearly the whole of the first chapter and part of the second, advancing points of ethics and religion against slaying kinsmen, preceptors and elders. These were plausible words of wisdom. Sri Krishna addresses himself to these objections.

### *Section II: Verses 31 to 38.*

It is pointed out that one's own duty is always peculiarly sacred and sanctified to every individual. To Arjuna, a born-warrior, to fight was his duty and there should be no higher obligation for him than that. This war was further a righteous one, as his adversaries were enemies of God, religion, morality and civilization. It was a war to be conducted on righteous principles, so that it furnished the wager thereof an open door to heaven. On the other hand, to retire from the field meant abandonment of duty. It meant loss of reputation. It involved sin and penalties in after-life. It implied gross dishonor than which, nothing could be more bitter to a soldier. People were

sure to attribute Arjuna's conduct to cowardice. The resulting scandal would be appalling. With Swarga open to him, even if he should die, and with kingdom as well as Swarga open to him if he won, it was wrong for Arjuna to retreat from the field.

*Section III: Verses 39 to 53.*

This leads the topic to the next step of how duty should be performed. *Sankhya* truly understood fills our mind with correct notions of God's greatness and Man's littleness. It teaches us the eternality of both and the dependence of man upon God. To realize the great truth that, however much man may propose, the disposal rests with God always, prepares the mind for a disinterested and dispassionate performance of duty. In verse 39, the Lord says "Thus far, I have taught you *Sankhya*. Now, I shall teach you *Yoga*".

The point of the Yoga lies in the fact that Arjuna should do his duty and yet be disattached. The bane of work consists in men's desires before and after it is undertaken. The reward in prospect eagerly and devoutly wished for is the magnet agitating the mind of the doer. Endless worry is the result, and loss of energy. Love and hate come to rule his wishes, thoughts and actions. The Lord means that Arjuna should fight for the sake of duty and for the sake of God, and not for riches or dominion. It was Vishnu-Dharma to do his duty. In Vishnu-Dharma, there are no hard and fast rules that the work undertaken should be necessarily completed. An imperfect performance carries its reward as also even a mere pious resolve or wish. The man who is always hankering after some

reward in this life or in after-life, and ransacks for adoption such Vedas as seem to promise fruits to him is but a sordid bargainer who is in pursuit of a shadow. The Vedas allure men by their superficial sense couched in flowery words, so that, poor souls, they allow themselves to be deluded by the apparent meaning. But the true import is to be caught hold of by the wise man. God is the only purport of the Vedas. Moksha is the true reward of Vedic knowledge. This goal is reached by those who, having led a pure life of Karma Yoga, succeed, in obtaining God-vision.

Whoever wishes for God-vision will resort to Yoga which is the means of attaining purity of mind and, through it, God-vision.

The Bhagavad-Geeta is Yoga-Shastra, because it thoroughly deals with the ways and means by which Arjuna and all men situated like him may perform his or their duty, without grief and without concern, and proceed, by this means, to the goal without let or hindrance.

What then is Yoga? Sri Krishna says (48) that Yoga is समत्व which means *equality*, balance of mind or equanimity. In verse 50, the Lord defines Yoga to be skill in performance.

Thus, the chief notion in Yoga is that the performer of work is thoroughly balanced, possesses a well-balanced mind, is unruffled by pleasure or pain, is unconcerned about the result, and that he converts what would otherwise be a worrisome task into a means of spiritual progress. Work as it is ordinarily done

is associated with passion and prejudice. It is therefore of a binding and fettering character. But Yoga removes the sting, and converts the *binding* work into an *unbinding* task of piety. Here is its *skill*, and this *skill* is yoga.

The pupil is exhorted not to give way to conflicting schools of thinking, as these do not rest on truth and will bewilder his mind. He is asked to have faith, and push on with Yoga till his mind is well disciplined and purified. He is advised to overcome the initial attitude of being hostile to Vedas and soon obtain a firm conviction so that, the mind may be fixed and steady in contemplation. He is told to give every sordid fruit a wide berth, for if he but pursue the unselfish path, the goal in prospect is a veritable ocean of bliss compared to which, every other reward is no more than a petty pond.

#### Section IV: Verses 54 to 72.

The culminating point of Yoga being God-vision. Arjuna wishes to know something of this transcendental state. He asks for a descriptive definition of the sage of God-vision and of the springs and motives of his worldly life. The inquiry is quite natural and, very appropriately, follows the discourse on *Yoga*, for, without a knowledge of the end, a study of the means is hardly complete.

The sage of established God-vision is almost a superhuman individual. There are no desires in his heart. He rests in and on God, and depends on none else. His mind is fixed in God so thoroughly and absolutely that he wishes for nothing more. The internal



light he basks in, is so sweet and so serene, that it sheds on him an unceasing shower of ineffable bliss.

The descriptive definition of the sage of established God-vision consists of 2 parts: (1) that his mind is devoid of desires and (2) that he is fixed in, and satisfied with, God. These ingredients of the definition are explained to the end of the chapter.

It is of the highest importance that the *seeker* should keep his mind and the senses under the fullest control. He can do so only with a mighty effort. But when he becomes a *sage*, this becomes an automatic achievement. He does it as easily as he breathes air not of the nostril. No pleasure of the senses attracts him. He grieves not over any calamity. Anger he feels not. Attachment is alien to him. He hates nothing and shuns nothing, and withdraws his senses like a tortoise withdrawing its limbs without effort.

Let nobody think that to withdraw and control the senses is an easy task. Its stupendous power is only felt when the attempt is seriously made to resist it.

Men and women in India attempt fasting to kill the senses. But this remedy is powerless to kill the deepseated canker at the heart *viz.*, *relish or desire for pleasure*. The eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue and the organ of touch may be so far subdued as to lose their power of sensing. But the desire for the objects of pleasure lies deep and underneath. *Desire* is not reached by the remedy of starvation. Or, perhaps, in the case of some people, the strength as well as the desire to enjoy the pleasures, is vanquished by

means of starvation, so far as the four senses of *seeing, hearing, smelling, and* (touch), *feeling* go. But the power as well as the desire to taste (tongue) is not conquered by the remedy of starvation. God-vision alone enables one to conquer the underlying desire aforesaid.

Thus, slender efforts are utterly of no avail to subdue the mind and the senses. Every day of our life, and whichever side we turn, we light on men and women who nurse the objects of sense, get attached to them, desire the fruit, and hate any one who chances to oppose their wish, and slip down to ruin. What is the best remedy to prevent this downfall? If fast won't do, if exertion be not of much use, what is the *seeker* to do? The Lord here suggests that *Devotion to God* is an excellent means of subduing the mind and the senses. Nature abhors a vacuum. This is as true of the Mind as of the external world. If the mind is to be withdrawn from all-sense-objects, the purpose is best accomplished by filling it with God. The Yogin is therefore exhorted to give up "desire", and be devoted to God.

Of the sage of established God-vision, it is said that his night is our day and our day is his night. The world and its warring passions are unseen and uncared for, by him. That is his night. But we are wide awake therein, ever eager to join in the conflict and wage a war of passions to the detriment of our spiritual interests. The sage basks in the sunshine of the Divine Presence, sees God, and rejoices in that delightful state. That is his day. But this is night to us, for, God is in darkness to us and we care not

for introspection because it is a wearisome, profitless, task to the non-seer.

Is there any one who lives his life of sense-enjoyments like the vast ocean replenished by the rivers? The ocean does not seek the supply of the rivers. It shows no suffering, if the rivers fail to pour in. It is not seen to swell and overflow, by an excessive inflow. There it is, ever calm and unmoved, receiving the rivers quite unaffected by floods or no floods. Such is said to be the attitude of the seer towards the enjoyments of sense-experience.

Thus lives the sage of stable wisdom. He works and does his duties even after God-vision, till his Prarabdha is exhausted. His doings secure for him the grace of God and the fullness of bliss he is qualified for in Moksha.

As soon as his Prarabdha has run out, he leaves the Body and is not re-born. A test of his fitness to reach Moksha is furnished by the peculiar circumstance that when he is taking leave of his final body and while he is *in extremis*, he calls to mind the image of God and thinks of him. No seer is able to do this unless his Prarabdha is at an end and he is qualified not to be re-born in Samsara.

This is the outline of the chapter as Sri Madhwa interprets it. Many subsidiary points of importance and interest appear in the course of the commentary. But space forbids any notice of further details.

Sri Madhwa brings out the following points with emphasis:

1. God is great. He is the supreme Cause of all Causes, is the primary Doer of everything, and is absolutely excellent and flawless.
2. The Jeeva is atomic, rests on God, and is subordinate agent. He is eternal, but is liable to be born and re-born with mortal bodies.
3. Salvation is possible only to those who know the God Supreme and the dependence of man.
4. Yoga is helpful to mental purity and gnana. There is no hostility between Karma Yoga and Gnana.
5. Every one should work without desiring for fruit. All men have duties, including ascetics and *Gnana Yogins*. Even the sage of God-vision has his work to do for Divine Grace and the fullness of Mukti-Bliss.
6. Neither war nor any other duty is selfish Karma. Any duty may be performed unselfishly for pleasing God.
7. Vedas proclaim God in every alphapet, syllable, word and sentence. No part of Vedas is to be rejected. But the superficial sense is not to be taken, e.g, where it promises ordinary and petty rewards, it is not to be taken too literally. The main reward contemplated in the Vedas is Moksha.



8. It is not the privilege of the Ascetic alone (i.e., the man who has entered the Fourth Order of the Hindu Asramas alone) to practise Gnanayoga and reach Moksha.
9. Neither the theory of universal identify nor the theory of universal equality is supported by the Geeta.
10. Arjuna to whom the Geeta is primarily addressed is a gnanin, being the son and Avatar of Indra. He is not a stupid or an ignorant person.
11. Sri Krishna seriously meant that Arjuna should fight and that every man should do his duty and perform work. Any other interpretation jars with the purpose of the Geeta.
12. Sri Krishna meant that Sankhya and Yoga were both to be adopted by Arjuna.
13. Moksha means not the attainment of *identity* or *equality* with God, but freedom from material bondage, and dwelling without unhappiness and in bliss in an abode near God.

## Part II (a) The School of Advaita

Sri Madhwa is the latest of the three *Bhashya Karas*. In making a comparative study, it is important to note why he chose to differ from the rest and to construe the Bhagavad Geeta in his own way.

In the opinion of Sankaracharya and his followers this chapter contains the following teachings:-

Arjuna's grief is answered by the section relating to Sankhya:—

*Section I; Verses 11 to 30*

Brahman alone is real. He is the background of an illusion. On Him the universe rests superimposed by Maya. It is the story of a stupendous mirage or a huge silver in a mother-of-pearl or a snake-in-the-rope, that the universe presents to the seer. Brahman is eternal and changeless. It is above action and mutation of any kind. It is beyond proof, not being cognizable by any Perception, Inference, or Revelation.

The world of Jeevas and of Matter is neither real nor unreal. For, it is not real as Brahman is, and is not unreal like the hare's horn. Its state is one of unspeakable dubiousness. Hence it is अनिर्वचनीय. Virtually the universe is a myth akin to the silver in the mother-of-pearl.

An infinity of souls each of which is infinite in space is an impossibility. As there is but one soul in all bodies at the same time, and that is immortal, death is impossible. The soul being actionless, it is impossible that it can be affected by joy or grief. Minds are numberless, and it is these that account for the infinite variety of joys and sufferings.

For these reasons, Arjuna's grief was out of place and he was taught Sankhya for brushing aside his sorrow.

But Arjuna did not receive *adwaita* as he ought to have done. Hence, the next section: verses 26, 27, and 28.

In this section, it was conceded for argument's sake that *the Atman* does not exist or is perishable even if it exists. Even on the footing of the Atheist or the Materialist, Sri Krishna points out that Arjuna's grief is out of place because what cannot be helped should be endured.

### *Section II; Verses 31 to 38.*

Considerations of worldly wisdom were then presented to him, and an appeal was made to Arjuna's delicate sense of honour.

This argument too was found not convincing. Hence the Lord begins a new line of argument and starts Karmayoga.

### *Section III; Verses 39 to 53.*

Karma and Karmayoga are hostile to Gnana and Gnanayoga. The latter is the true path to salvation. The former is meant for the ignorant. Arjuna showed himself very ignorant and the Lord therefore abandoned *Sankhya* and taught him *Yoga*. The seer has no duties or obligations. It is the ignorant that has. The Vedas are sought by the ignorant. The wise discard them. The climax of wisdom is marked by rising superior to the Vedas and all rules of "Do and Refrain". Even on the lower plane of and Yogin, there are Vedic parts that should be shunned, because they deal with rites and rewards.

Arjuna being yet unqualified for gnanayoga should adopt Karmayoga for which alone he was fit. If it were otherwise, he ought, in fact, to renounce the world, and take to Gnanagyoga. His was indeed a low place even among the ignorant.

In repeatedly telling Arjuna to fight, the Lord did not mean seriously that Karma was meritorious. The Lord only meant to say that Arjuna had no good reason for not completing what he had started.

The ascetic alone is the true Gnanayogin. Members of the first three Asramas are not on the Path to Moksha. The Fourth Order is peculiarly sacred. At least in old age, should every man become an ascetic.

*Section IV; verses 54 to 72.*

This section describes the sage of Adwatic Realization. Arjuna wished to know of the sage who plunges into the trance of Meditation. The Lord has given a fairly long account of such a sage.

This is the Adwaitic picture in outline, as may be gathered from Sankaracharya's Bhashya. His followers have improved upon the main ideas by chalking out original lines of thought wherever they thought any verse or verses afforded an etymological loop-hole.

Sankaraananda is the leader of the school which is prepared and determined to find *Adwaita*, almost in every section or sub-section of the work, whether the theme discussed by the text and the context be Sankhya, yoga, or anything else. Madhusoodana is a commentator of acknowledged ability though he often



disagrees with Sankaracharya and is sharply attacked for it by the valiant author of Utakarsha Deepika.

Neelakanta is both original and ingenious. The author of Utakarsha Deepika remarks about him that he is one determined to differ from Sankaracharya for the mere pleasure of doing so.

Venkatanatha is a recent writer. He is an ardent follower of Madhusoodana in disguise, and while copying from him wholesale, occasionally indulges in a fling to keep up appearances. This writer takes a pleasure in attacking Sri Madhwa's commentary in violent terms.

Of the points brought out in this chapter, the reader will judge for himself whether Sri Krishna has taught Dwaita or Adwaita here, and whether the various tenets insisted on by the school of Sankaracharya can be traced to the language of the Geeta. To help a decision, the following *resume* is attempted.

(i) It seems to be believed by the School of Sankaracharya that Arjuna was a very ignorant man indeed. Under verse 26, Venkatanatha notes that Arjuna lacked Divine Grace. Under verse 31, it is pointed out that, as he did not understand Adwaita, the Lord began on a lower key. Under verse 47, ते "to you" is laid stress on to furnish the inference that as he was very ignorant, to him nothing better than Karma could be advised. Under verse 50, Madhusoodana has a sharp fling at Arjuna to the effect that he was worse than inanimate objects. In that verse, according to Madhusoodana, *Karmayoga* is shown to

be a killer of *Punya* and *Papa* which are the foes of man. The inanimate *Karmayoga* being thus prepared to war with foes, Arjuna, a man endowed with reason, is not prepared to follow its good example and fight his enemies. Hence, his stupidity takes him below inanimate objects. Under verse 52 Sankarananda reads a censure of Arjuna in the word ते similar to the one pointed out in verse 47. More instances need not be referred to, as the line of thought is clear.

One wonders why Sri Krishna, *the Omniscient*, taught Arjuna the Sankhya-section at all, if he was so thoroughly unfit for it. It is derogatory to his God-head that He failed to guess His pupil's incompetency.

Although it is said that Sri Krishna progressed a few paces in Sankhya and soon dropped it like hot potatoes after discovering his pupil's incompetency, commentators of the Advaitic School still vie with one another in reading many a verse in the Karmayoga section too as a pronouncement of Advaita Vedanta. For example, Sankarananda indulges largely in this feat. *Vide* verses 45,48,49,50, 52 for example. In fact, *Yoga* itself is, by him, understood as the Realization of Brahman. Verse 48 (समत्वं=ब्रह्मत्वं). Venkatanatha differs from his brethren on this point and points out that the view taken of Arjuna is quite wrong. Under verses 39 and 52 his view appears. He thinks that Arjuna is a man of *high spirituality* and *Vairagya*, and that he was only short of the full-blown Seer.

Sri Madhwa points out on the authority of Bhagavata, II<sup>nd</sup> Skandha, Chapter VII, Verse 45, that Arjuna is a seer like Prahlada, Dhruva, and Narada, with whom he

has been there reckoned. He is a Deva being the son of Indra, and Nara by *amsa*. That Sri Krishna chose him as a pupil is sufficient proof of his competency.

(ii) *Hostility between Gnana and Karma*

This is a point of sharp divergence between Sankaracharya and Sri Madhwa. In a very long introduction at the beginning of this chapter and under verse 21, as also elsewhere, Sankaracharya has said a great deal about the comparative insignificance of Karma. He makes out that Karma is more a clog than a help to the Mumukshu, that renunciation is the true course for him, and that the *Asectic's* life is the proper thing to be adopted by him.

At the beginning of Geeta Tatparya, Sri Madhwa has dealt with this point at length wherein he has collected most of the passages in Bhagavad Geeta laying down the obligation of Karma. In this opinion, Sri Krishna seriously meant Arjuna to do Karma, when He told him *to do* so. He could see no ground whateve to twittle away the exhortation to fight and make it signify something different from what the plain language imports. It is abundantly clear that Sankhya and Yoga are in no sense hostile, that they are both addressed to Arjuna so that he may profit by both, that the two things are complements of each other, and that they are intended to combine harmoniously in the religious life of every Mumukshu. It is wrong to say that any one is exempt from obligation to work, unless he is actually plunged in meditative unconsciousness. The recluse and the ascetic has his duties as also the sage of established God-vision. To the last named person, his work brings him reward in the shape of enhanced bliss in Vykunta.

(iii) As to the description of *Brahman*, the *Jeeva*, and the *world*, Advaitic commentators have vied with one another in discovering the largest number of verses setting forth the Monistic positions. Some of them, especially, Sankarananda and Madhusoodana, have gone far beyond Sankaracharya himself.

That there is but one soul in all bodies is supposed to be stated in verse 13 (*vide* Madhusoodana). That the soul is actionless is supposed to be seated in verses 19,21,23 and 24. That the *Jeeva* is identical with *Brahman* is said to be stated in verse 21 (*Vide* Madhusoodana). That the *Jeeva* is not atomic is supposed to be stated in verse 24. That *Brahman* is beyond proof is traced to verse 18.

That the world is सदसद्विलक्षण is brought out by some under verse 16. Neelakanta, this vital tenet of Advaita is allotted to verse 29. Whereas, in verse 29, everyone thinks that the *Atman* is the wonder of wonders alluded to, Neelakanta says that it is the *world* that is so referred to as a marvel. Everything is unreal but *seems* real. This is the wonder, according to him. He thinks that the Monist, who takes what *seems* real to be unreal is also a wonder. The world is a strange something wedged between, and other than, the true and the false. Hence the Monistic conception of the world is said to be a tissue of apparent inconsistencies and absurdities that elude reason and experience and *herein* lies the marvel.

The scholar of Sanskrit may look again and again at the verses and will find little or nothing in them to convey these doctrines, unless he is born and brought up in Advaitic faith. The circumstance that no two commentators of the school are agreed as to where a particular tenet of theirs is really to be found is



sufficient testimony to prove the part that imagination has played in the matter.

(iv) The way in which the "Vedas" have been treated by the commentators of the Adwaita and Vishitadwaita School is simply astonishing. These regard with complacency the idea of the Vedas being discarded wholly or in part. Ramanujacharya thinks that the *Karmakanda* should be discarded, addressed, as it is said to be, to men of the Rajasa and Tamasa class. Sankaracharya follows the same line of argument (verses 42 to 46). In verses 52 and 53, the exhortation is supposed to be made that the *Summum Bonum* is reached when a person has become thoroughly disgusted with Vedas and all Revelations. No follower of the Vedic system can regard such a position with complacency. Sri Madhwa has ably vindicated Vedanta by exposing the untenability of these views and construing verses 42 to 46 and 52, 53 in a rational and consistent manner.

In the section 54 to 72, dealing with sages of established wisdom, there is controversy as to whether it treats of Seers in general or the Seer-in-trance only. Various views have been taken among the commentators of the Adwaita school itself. Apart from this controversy, it may be noted that the Ascetic Order is supposed to be the thing emphasized for eulogy and adoption. In verses 56, 65, 70, 71 and 72 allusion is traced to the "ascetic". In verse 72, it is thought, every one is advised to become a "boy-Sanyasin" if possible. It is considered that no man of the first three Asramas can reach the goal without becoming an ascetic. In the case of women evidently, they must be born men, become ascetics, and then attain to salvation. Sri Madhwa is of opinion that these re-

strictions are not well-founded and that any person of whatever sex or Order may attain Moksha by means of Devotion and God-vision.

### Critic Venkatanatha

I cannot take leave of the Adwaitic commentators here without a few words about this particular critic. He has indulged in violent criticism of Sri Madhwa, and I find that his reasoning is throughout unsound. Under verse 45 will be found his sharpest darts, his distemper going so far as to bemoan the fate of the Bhagavad Geeta, itself in falling into the hands of a person like Sri Madhwa. He charges Sri Madhwa with inventing Srutis and Smritis. Under verse 54, Venkatanatha imagines that Sri Madhwa allows a Karmayogin to wish for Brahma Loka and the Siddhis as rewards of Yoga, and furiously attacks this position as tolerating *kamya*. His imagination has obviously played him a trick. Nowhere has Sri Madhwa said that anything short of Divine Grace or Moksha may be wished for by the true Karmayogin.

Other items of criticism could easily be spotted out and exposed in this manner. For example, Venkatanatha thinks that the realization by a man that he is dependent on God cannot dispel grief (verse 24). But the realization that every thing is a mirage can, it would appear, console the sorrows of man! In verse 52, it is said that Arjuna is a wise man who was possessed of the highest *Vyragya*, short only of Adwaitic Relization. It was pointed out that he had no मोह or ignorance whatever, except the भावाज्ञान which is the root of Samsara. This is a description of the very highest seer. Yet, in the next breath, under verse 53 itself, Venkatanatha says that Arjuna had been spoiled by the teaching of Sankhya addressed to him,

and that the sooner he dislodged those lessons from his mind, the better it was for him.

## Part II (b)

### The school of Visishtadwaita

Between Sri Madhwa and Ramanujacharya, the points of difference in this chapter are not numerous. There are however a few of importance.

(i) Sri Madhwa bases his theology on the fundamental position that all Shastras are intended to glorify God. He thinks that the Sankhya section of this chapter (viz., 11 to 30) makes an abundant reference to God, and that parts thereof simply make no sense unless they apply to God. Verses wholly or partly treating of God are Nos. 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24, 25, and 30.

But Ramanujacharya finds no allusion to God in any of these passages. It is, throughout, the Jeeva that is spoken of, according to him. Even words such as तत् and अप्रमेय are construed by him to be applicable only to Jeeva. Not alone in this chapter, but in all the first six chapters, Ramanujacharya thinks that Self-Realization is the goal aimed at, as distinguished from God-Realization.

Just as Monists rely on *Universal Identity*, Ramanujacharya dwells on "*Universal Equality*". He thinks that all Jeevas are equal to one another and are on a par with God in essence. Under verse 30, occasion has been found to introduce this tenet. Sri Madhwa strongly opposes this doctrine.

It is a tenet of Ramanujacharya that all causes and effects are unborn and undying (सत्कार्यवाद). This

is referred to under verse 27. Sri Madhwa concedes that nothing is born out of nothing and that Matter is indestructible. He is not prepared to say however that no effect can be born out of a cause and that the effect *is the cause itself* out and out. When mud is turned into a pot, something is born such as the shape of the pot. When a man dies and becomes ashes, something is dead, although ashes are born. An effect lie latent in a cause, but it is *born* in a sense, when it becomes patent.

In dealing with स्थितप्रज्ञ, and the section relating to it (verses 54 to 72), Ramanujacharya and Desikar have borrowed from Patanjali. It is said that verses 55, 56, 57, and 58 mark four different stages in the career of the *Virakta*. But Sri Madhwa and Sankaracharya understand that section to refer to the *sage of accomplished God-vision*. Arjuna wanted to know only of such a seer. But Ramanujacharya makes out the seer to be one far below परवैराग्य. According to him, four grades of what is called अपरवैराग्य in Patanjali's Yoga shastra, are treated of in Sri Krishna's reply.

I must stop here lest the summary should outgrow reasonable limits. This chapter is the groundwork of the Geeta. Its importance cannot be over-estimated. Voluminous are the commentaries written on many of the verses. The reader will look at them and judge for himself whether Sri Madhwa had not a most conclusive reason to dissent from his predecessors (Bhashyakaras) and write a Bhashya of his own to vindicate God, the Vedas, and the value of Karmayoga.

Thus ends Chapter II Designated Sankhya-Yoga.



॥ श्रीः ॥

## Chapter - 3

### तृतीयोऽध्यायः ।

1) ज्यायसी चेत्कर्मणस्ते मता बुद्धिर्जनार्दन ।  
तत्किं कर्मणि घोरे मां नियोजयसि केशव ॥

|              |     |                         |
|--------------|-----|-------------------------|
| ज्यायसी चेत् | ... | if more meritorious     |
| कर्मणः       | ... | than Karma              |
| ते           | ... | to you, in your opinion |
| मता          | ... | be esteemed             |
| बुद्धिः      | ... | knowledge               |
| जनार्दन      | ... | O! Janardana            |
| तत्          | ... | then                    |
| किं          | ... | why                     |
| कर्मणि       | ... | towards Karma           |
| घोरे         | ... | fearful                 |

|          |     |               |
|----------|-----|---------------|
| मां      | ... | Me            |
| नियोजयसि | ... | do you prompt |
| केशव     | ... | O! Kesava     |

Arjuna said:- "If, O! Janardana, in your opinion, knowledge be esteemed more meritorious than Karma, why then do you prompt me towards Karma that is fearful?"

In beginning the study of new chapter, let us recapitulate a bit. In the last chapter, the topics discussed related to *Sankhya Yoga* and *Sthithaprajna*. By *Sankhya* was meant the knowledge of the Soul and of God. By *Yoga*, we understood the means or the path by which that knowledge could be reached. The topic of *Sthithaprajna* arose incidentally as Arjuna wished to know something of the extraordinary individual known as a Seer.

The present chapter is a further elucidation of *Karmayoga* which, as we have already have been told, is a path to knowledge. Sri Krishna told Arjuna to commence battle in a holy spirit and as a performance of unselfish, disinterested service and duty. For impressing the same lesson, the Lord treats the subject in fresh aspects.

Before taking up the interpretation of the verse, I cannot help adverting to a long note of introduction in which Madhusoodana maps out the entire theme of the Geeta into three main sections and evolves them out of the saying तत्त्वमसि and some chief verses in chapter II. He thinks that the three parts, तत्, त्वं

and असि, represent each the prevailing thought in a Section of Six Chapters, more or less. Chapter I is introductory, chapters III to VI dilate upon त्वं or the "Jeeva-soul" immersed in ignorance and action. Chapters VII to XII, both inclusive, deal with तत्, "Brahman", because they treat of Bhakti. Chapter XIII to the end deal with असि, or the unity of the soul with *Brahman*. Chapter II is, in his opinion, an epitome of these ideas, there being found, in this chapter, verses that are the texts of which, the rest of the work is but an elaborate commentary.

In discussing this theory, Madhusoodana points out that chapters III and IV discuss Karmayoga which leads to mental purity. The text hereof is said to be verse 48, chapter II, योगस्थ etc. "Perform action, fixed in yoga, renouncing attachments, and balanced evenly in respect to success and failure." Chapters V and VI treat of renunciation and the text of this is quoted as No. 71, – विहायकामान् etc. "Whosoever forsakes desires and goes about, free from yearnings &c." Thus far, he says, is the topic of त्वं in the Vedic sentence तत्त्वमसि.

Devotion to God, भक्ति, is the main theme of chapters VII to XII. *Bhakti* implies a Divinity towards whom devotion has to be felt and developed. In chapter II, Verse 61 says, "Having restrained all the senses, sit down with mind fixed in Me". This is the text of *Bhaktiyoga*. The section thus deals with तत् or Brahman of the Vedic sentence. तत्त्वमसि.

The last section of the Geeta comprising chapters XIII to XVIII teaches us, according to Madhusoodana, the unity of soul and God. The text hereof is sought in verse 21 of chapter II, "Whoever knows him indestructible, perpetual, unborn, un diminishing, how can that man slay, or cause to be slain?" This, evidently, is supposed to be the clearest of all verses in chapter II for teaching Monism. Taking stand on this, he says that Unity is taught in chapter XIII by pointing out the distinction between *Prakriti* and *Purusha*. Chapter XIV tells us how the three gunas should be transcended. This is *Jeevan Mukti*, a condition of living emancipation, the realization of *Unity* while still in flesh and blood. For the text hereof *vide* 45 of chapter II, त्रैगुण्य etc. "The Vedas deal with the three gunas; do you transcend them, O! Arjuna". Chapter XV describes a condition of utter indifference to the world when the tree of Samasara is cut by the root, and the Seer is desireless of, and callous to, external sensation. Verse 56, दुःखेषु etc. "He whose mind is free from anxiety and pain, indifferent amid pleasures, loosed from passion, fear and anger, is called a sage". This is the text of the "godly wealth" treated of in chapter XVI. Chapter XVII treats of the ungodly wealth condemned by verses 42 and 44. "Flowery speech is uttered by the foolish etc". Chapter XVIII sums up the treatise.

Firstly, it is difficult to see why त्वं, the ignorant Jeeva, is supposed to be the theme of chapters III to VI. The idea, probably, is that *Karmayoga* is something chiefly associated with Jeeva in his condition of enveloped ignorance and that the chapters of *Karmayoga*



are chapters relating to त्वं. This is far-fetched, to say the least. To say that the command to one's duty is, necessarily and *ipso facto*, an exposition of the doctrine that the Jeeva is but an illusory and unreal product of Maya or Avidya is far from intelligible.

Moreover, if Karmayoga is an exposition of त्वं, Bhaktiyoga of chapters VII to XII must be equally so, because Monism holds *Bhakti* to be equally a condition on the wrong side of Realizaion, an emotional state while yet the Seeker is in ignorance. Therefore, the second set of six chapters may be deemed, with equal reason, to be an exposition of त्वं.

It is, however, with the supposed theme of the third section Chapters XIII to XVIII, that the view of Madhusoodana looks most fallacious. It is here, he thinks, that the attainment of unity is brought home to the pupil. Chapter XIII distinguishes *Prakriti* (matter) from Purusha, the spirit. Where is the Adwaita here? The supposed text of this is sought in verse 21 of chapter II. But this last verse treats of the immortality of the soul. If no better verse can be found to hang Monism upon, the task must, indeed, be given up as hopeless.

Verses 45 speaking of the three gunas and their conquest, is the subject of much controversy in-as-much as its superficial sense leads us to discard Vedas as Budhists and all non-Hindus do.

Verses 52, "तदा गन्तासि निर्वेदं", is another paradox if understood literally. As already pointed out, Pro-

fessor Rangachariar and others render it: "Then do you get disgusted with what you have heard and will hear". The disgust of Vedic teachings is obviously wrong, coming from the mouth of Sri Krishna who bases his teachings on Vedic supremacy.

It is needless to labour this point any further. There is no explicit reference to "Unity" in any of the six closing chapters of the Geeta, nor in verses 21, 45 and 52 of Chapter II. Other verses of Chapter II, such as 71, 56, 42, 61 and the second half line of 45, have been quoted at random as texts of various topics discussed in the course of the work. There is feeble foundation for the theory sought to be worked out. The reader can easily see how feeble is the argument and how difficult it is to establish the relation of text and annotation between the verses 21, 42, 45, 48, 52, 56, 61 and 71 of Chapter II particularly relied on and the chapters XIII to XVIII of the Geeta.

No doubt, chapter II is the basis of the work and sets out, at the outset, the essence of what is going to be more exhaustively and elaborately discussed later on. But to detach phrases and clauses here and there from their setting and context, and rely on them for pet theories evolved out of तत्त्वमसि, is highly artificial, and does not, in this instance, possess the merit even of high ingenuity.

Now, to the verse under comment; Arjuna asks, "If knowledge be considered by you to be superior to action, why do you, Sir, command me to action rather than to knowledge?". The exact doubt in Arjuna's mind and his object in putting such a question

has been largely commented upon. Bhaskaras explain the question thus:- As action is inferior to *gnana* because the former is the path to the latter, Arjuna objected to action being recommended to him. The Lord replies that action is, in some cases, a direct path to Mukti itself. (*Vide* verse 3). According to Bhaskaras, action is as much a direct means of salvation in some cases as knowledge is. With a view to elicit this, the query is started and framed by Arjuna as we see.

Sankaracharya, Ramanujacharya and Sri Madhwa, are all agreed on the point that knowledge is the only means to the final goal and that action is only a preliminary step leading the seeker to knowledge. Texts have been abundantly quoted for this position in various places. Some schools other than Bhaskaras hold that emancipation is not brought about by *gnana* alone or *Karma* alone, but is the result of both combined (समुच्चय). A very long note of Sankaracharya on this verse criticizes this view of "combined product". As our Acharya does not uphold the theory of समुच्चय, he records no dissent from Sankaracharya in this particular.

"If action be inferior to *gnana*" is the supposition on which the query is based. Arjuna does not mean that he disputes the proposition and expects an answer negating the inferiority of *Karma*. The supposition headed by "If" simply means that Arjuna has understood the Lord to have taught him so in chapter II.

In this connection, reference has to be made to a controversy between Sri Madhwa and all the other

commentators. It is said "Action is inferior to *gnana*". What is the kind of *Karma* thus set down as inferior? Is it unselfish *Karma* or mercenary *Karma* that is alluded to? I may state at once that the schools of Sankaracharya and Ramanujacharya adopt the former position and Sri Madhwa the latter.

There are obvious difficulties in adopting the view that the action referred to is unselfish action abundantly recommended to Arjuna as *Yoga* in chapter II. They may be briefly stated:- (1) "If unselfish action be deemed by you, O, Janardana, to be inferior to *gnana*", is the query. It presupposes that the Lord has somewhere taught this relative inferiority. Where has He done so? Every one is bound to lay his finger on the particular verse or verses that say so. Neelakanata undertakes to point this out and quotes verse No. 41, Ch.II, which speaks of well-reasoned systems of thought as being uniform in conclusions. He thinks that this verse 41 impliedly praised *Sankhya* as incapable of leading into pitfalls while *Yoga* was so capable. This far-fetched interpretation hardly merits further criticism as it stands self-condemned.

Sankarananda Madhusoodana rely on verse 49, Ch.II, 'दूरेण' etc. "Far lower than *gnana* is action; take refuge in *gnana*; pitiable are they who work for fruit". Undoubtely, here we find *gnana* extolled as superior to *Karma*. But let us pause. What is the sort of action that is set down as inferior? It is mercenary action. This is clear from the last clause "Pitiable are they who work for fruit."

Ramanujacharya and Desikar give up the task in despair and say that the inferiority of unselfish action



to *gnana* is a lesson not directly and specifically taught yet, but only deducible from the drift of the past teaching.

It is admitted by Venkatanatha (an Adwaitic commentator) that it is impossible to point out any verse in chapter II where unselfish action has been mentioned as inferior. He admits that verse No.49 deals with mercenary work only.

This is the difficulty. If unselfish *Karma* has not yet been taught to be inferior to *gnana*, how does Arjuna frame his question on that supposition?

They reply that as *gnana* is the direct means to *Moksha*, and *Karmayoga* but an indirect means (through *gnana*), the relative inferiority is clear. But then, if *Karmayoga* is, as is admitted, a means to *gnana*, how is it admissible to compare, as inferior and superior, the merits of a mere cause and its effect? Two independent things may thus be compared, but not a mere cause and its effect. Assuming, however, that these admit of such a comparison, we see another difficulty. Arjuna proceeds, in the course of his questioning, to ask, "Recommend to me one or the other, not both" (verse 2, Chapter III). If he be a seeker of *gnana*, he cannot consistently discard unselfish *Karma* which is a means to *gnana*. How can he seek the effect and discard its cause? Hence, it follows that Arjuna cannot have had *Karmayoga* in mind; because firstly, the Lord had nowhere condemned it as inferior, but, on the other hand, eulogized it in verses 30, 40 etc.; secondly, the request to tell him one or the other in the alternative shows that the *Karma* he wanted to discard could not be of the selfless kind, for, this

is a means, rather than an impediment, to *gnana*. For these reasons, it seems preferable to think of "mercenary *Karma*" as the one contemplated by Arjuna's question.

In this position, too, there seem to be some difficulties that have to be got over. Venkatanatha mentions them, discards the interpretation as hopeless, and adopts the view, along with his brethren, that *Karmayoga* or selfless action is what is meant. He thinks that Arjuna does not mean to say that he has been actually taught that *Karma* (unselfish) is inferior. According to him, Arjuna's question is based on alternative possible suppositions framed by a doubting mind. Is unselfish *Karma* inferior or equal to *gnana*? If the former, why should I adopt it, being inferior; if equal, why should I adopt it, being a terrible act, while there are mild courses available, such as duties done in *Sanyasa*". Thus, Venkatanatha thinks that, as mere matters of alternative speculation, the suppositions in Arjuna's question are but random queries and contain no implication that Arjuna had already been taught such a lesson. The critic has left virtually unanswered the other difficulty as to why Arjuna should seek, as between cause and effect, to discard the former and seek the latter. It is idle to suppose that he did not yet know that *Karmayoga* is a means to *gnana*, because the very term *yoga* (*means*) has already conveyed to him this meaning. Knowing that *Karmayoga* is a means to *gnana*, Arjuna must be incapable of asking whether one is inferior or equal to the other, such a comparison and contrast being out of place. Venkatanatha's solution, based on this notion, is, therefore, unsound.

Next, we have to see what the real difficulties are in Sri Madhwa's view that what is referred to as inferior is mercenary *Karma*. In this interpretation, the obvious advantage is that verses 49 and 46 of chapter II could be quoted as direct and specific verses that taught the lesson.

Venkatanatha thinks that this construction jars with the second line of the Geeta verse under notice. For, it says, "Why then do you command me to horrible action?". The critic asks, where has the Lord ever commanded or prompted Arjuna to do mercenary work? The whole teaching, so far, has been that he should work without desire for fruit. To this, the reply is that, though, no doubt, work, without desire of fruit has been largely taught, still, in verse No.37 "Slain, you will obtain Heaven; victorious, you will enjoy the Earth" — rewards were set before his eyes as an incentive to fight.

The word, "कर्मणः" in the first line obviously refers to mercenary work. In the second line कर्मणि is, however, not to be restricted solely to mercenary action. There are several shades of underlying thought in the query of the second line. They may be thus summed up:—

It consists of two separate questions:—

1. Why do you prompt me to action?
2. Even if *Karma* is my duty, why do you goad me to *Karma* such as this fearful war in which passions play a most important part?

Taking mercenary *Karma* to be inferior, as you have taught me in verse 49, Chapter II, why do you yet say, "If you die, you get to Heaven; if victorious, you get the Earth"? Why do you hold forth fruits? If you reply "the main purport of my teaching is that you should undertake war without desire for fruit," then I see some inconsistency between the two teachings, *viz.*, verse 37, as against verse 48. If you say that युद्ध or war is mercenary to *him* who craves for reward, and *Karmayoga* to him who engages in it as a mere duty, I say, why prescribe for me a course of action that is thus dubious and ambiguous, — mercenary to one and *Karmayoga* to another? Why not suggest to me a life of *Sanyasa*, where the duties are absolutely and unambiguously unselfish and where there is no possibility of hankering after fruits? As to the second question, — "why goad me to action like this, *viz.*, war, which is terrible? — Arjuna formulates it on the following implied reasoning: — "war pre-eminently provokes passion. Without fury, without wrath, to fight is scarcely possible. You have dilated much on the advisability of dispassionate work. War is calculated to bestir the worst blood. Why enter on such a course? Why not adopt the duties of *Sanyasa* where the mind is least likely to be agitated?" In this interpretation, the word *Karma* in the second line of the Geeta alludes to Yuddha (battle) being mercenary and being non-mercenary too. Arjuna objects to such a dubious *Karma* being his lot.

Venkatanatha's chief criticism against Sri Madhwa is that, if mercenary *Karma* be the *Karma* alluded to in the first line and the second line of the



Geeta, the second line makes an unfounded assumption that Sri Krishna had, in fact, called upon Arjuna to engage in mercenary action. The answer to this criticism is that, though in the first line *Karma* is selfish *Karma*, in the second line, the word has a comprehensive meaning. No doubt, it does include selfish work; but, it also connotes other ideas. It points to *Karma* of the kind to which Yuddha belongs; selfish, if fruit is aimed at, and unselfish, if the motive is unmercenary.

The next criticism of Venkatanatha is that, if selfish work (काम्य) is the *Karma* alluded to and Arjuna put the question on a wrong assumption, what the Lord would have said in reply should be, "No, my dear pupil, I never told you to engage in *Kamya*". Instead of this, the reply is couched in very different language and is based on a classification of seekers into *Karmayogins* and *Gnanayogins*; so that, the true meaning of Arjuna's question can be judged from the nature of the reply which, otherwise, becomes meaningless. To this criticism, the answer is that the second line of the Geeta verse, under comment, contemplates not *Kamya* alone but *Karma* which is वैलम्बिक, — ambiguous according to the motive of the doer, and not निष्काम out and out, pure and simple, as the duties in the Fourht Asram of life. With this point in mind, the Lord says, in His reply, that certain persons like Arjuna and Janaka are specially qualified to engage in ambiguous and passion-stirring work and yet accomplish this kind of work in a truly lofty spirit unmindful of fruit. It is a peculiar merit of Arjuna that he alone could conduct a war without passions

dominating him and rewards looming as temptation. Every one is not capable of such a mental conquest. Therefore, Arjuna is enjoined to engage in *Karma* of the *Vaikalpika* class.

Before dismissing Venkatanatha's criticism, it may be pointed out that he has fallen into an error in assuming that Sri Madhwa has interpreted *Karmani* कर्मणि in the second line of the Geeta as meaning nothing but काम्य. The critic has either not read or not understood the passage in Prameya Deepika which well summarises the points dealt with by the verse.

The school of Sankaracharya seems to regard *Karma* of every kind, be it of the mercenary class or of the non-mercenary kind, to be an enemy of knowledge. Ramanujacharya seems to be, also, of a similar opinion. He says that knowledge of the soul means the cessation of sense-activity, and that action, on the other hand, means the play and operation of sense-activity. Therefore, he argues, *karma* is a foe to *gnana*. This notion is not correct. Selfish or fruit-prompted work may be an enemy of *gnana*. But, surely, non-selfish work i.e., work which is not actuated by desire of fruit, and by which mental purity and knowledge are attained, and God's grace secured, cannot be deemed an enemy of *gnana*. To speak of the cause being an enemy of its own effect is illogical, to say the least. Sri Krishna, it may be observed, began chapter II with सांख्य or *gnana*, and proceeded to teach *Yoga* as its means. Why should the Lord speak of *yoga* at all if it was such a sworn enemy of and obstruction to *gnana*. as these learned commentators

seem to think. No doubt, we do come upon passages in which *Karma* is condemned and attacked as the foe of *gnana*.

But *Karma* referred to therein is invariably *Kamya*. Much confusion, inconsistency and fallacy, has resulted by not always remembering the distinction which is the basic thought of the Geeta, that *Kamya* is low and *Akamya* is noble, and that the former is an enemy, while the latter is a friend and ally, of *gnana*.

Professor Rangachariar renders the verse thus: -“If *the disposition of the mind* is considered by you superior to work, then why do you order me, O! Krishna, to do work which is cruel”? He translates बुद्धि, not, as all the commentators have unanimously done, in the sense of Divine knowledge, but to mean the motive underlying actions. “If work be nothing, and *motive* be everything, why not let me choose some mild task rather than this cruel one of slaughtering kith and kin and do that work without desire of fruit?”. The reply of the Lord is, “You are not a free agent to choose your work. Your likes and dislikes are not to determine this.

There is an inviolable rule of choice in regard to the work that men have to do in life. Therefore, you are obliged to get through this, be it ever so cruel or unpleasant”. This rendering brings out the verse in a new light, and steers clear of the controversy whether *karma* alluded to is *Kamya* or *Akamya*. But, it is a view not shared in by any commentator. Moreover, in the next verse Arjuna asks, “Therefore tell

me, after ascertaining well, that one of the two – which will bring me bliss”. If the life of action and the life of knowledge be the two things of which, one is to be chosen, the meaning is clear. If, however, work and its motive be taken as the two things contemplated, the request to choose one of them is not intelligible.

2) व्यामिश्रेणैव वाक्येन बुद्धिं मोहयसीव मे ।  
तदेकं वद निश्चित्य येन श्रेयोऽहमाप्नुयाम् ॥

|             |     |                     |
|-------------|-----|---------------------|
| व्यामिश्रेण | ... | mixed up            |
| एव          | ... | only                |
| वाक्येन     | ... | by language         |
| बुद्धिं     | ... | mind                |
| मोहयसि इव   | ... | you seem to confuse |
| मे          | ... | my                  |
| तत्         | ... | therefore           |
| एकं         | ... | one                 |
| वद          | ... | tell me             |
| निश्चित्य   | ... | with certainly      |
| येन         | ... | by which            |
| श्रेयः      | ... | good; – bliss       |
| अहं         | ... | I                   |
| आप्नुयां    | ... | shall attain        |

“You seem to confuse my mind by means of language which is only mixed up. Therefore, tell me



*that one* alone by which I may attain to good with certainty”.

Arjuna exhibits perplexity of mind. He does not throw the blame on the Master, but attributes the confusion to his own imperfect powers of understanding. He makes this clear by using the particle ‘इव’ which conveys the idea denoted by “seem” in English.

वद निश्चित्य admits of being translated into, “Tell me after ascertaining well”, as Professor Rangachariar does. But this rendering detracts from the omniscience of Sri Krishna, for it implies that He did not yet possess an ascertained conviction and conclusion. Hence, it will be more appropriate to connect it with Arjuna’s conviction; so that, the meaning is:— “Tell me in such a way that I may attain to good by means of certainty in conviction”.

Arjuna complains that the language of the Master was so mixed up as to cause doubt and confusion. Sankaracharya and his followers account for the doubt and confusion by pointing out various passages in chapter II dealing with *gnana and karma*. One quotes verse 25, where it is said, “Therefore, knowing me as such, thou shouldst not grieve” and points out that Arjuna has been told herein to adopt *gnanamarga*. Another quotes verses 45, 46, and 69 as positive teachings urging *gnanamarga* on Arjuna. As against these teachings, they draw attention to the teachings of *Yoga* commenced from verse 39 and discussed throughout the chapter. The famous verse No. 47, “Thy business is with action only,” is pointed out with marked emphasis as an unmistakable

description of what Arjuna is qualified for, as indicating his level, contrasted with *gnanamarga*. It being taken for granted that *Karma*, be it *Kamyā* or be it ever so much. *Akamyā* (otherwise known as *Karmayoga*), is a sworn antagonist of *gnana*, the teaching of *Karma* and *gnana*, addressed to one and the same individual (Arjuna), must be confusing, being self-contradictory. This exposition of the doubt-creating inconsistency is based, as already observed, on a crumbling foundation of sand. The hostility of *Akamyā* and *gnana* exists only in imagination. If Sri Krishna did not intend that Arjuna should adopt and follow the lessons of *gnana*, taught in chapter II, He could well have spared Arjuna the infliction, and Himself the trouble, of a vain, prolonged exposition. No doubt, *Karmayogin*, *Gnanayogin* and *Bhaktiyogin* are well-known terms denoting a clearly marked classification of devotees. To distinguish between these three classes is, however, very different from saying that *gnana* or *gnanayoga* is hostile to *Karma*. It should be remembered that *Karma* is not *Karmayoga*. The former term includes *Kamyā* and *Akamyā* while the latter denotes *Akamyā* alone. A *Karmayogin* is not one who has no *gnana* or *Bhakti*. A *gnanayogin* is not devoid of *Karma* and *Bhakti*. A *Bhaktiyogin* is not devoid of *Karma* and *gnana*. It is imagined that Arjuna meant by his question to elicit the reply that the section of Chapter II that dealt with *gnana* was, in fact, not addressed to him but to some one else more qualified than he. How can an interpretation which overthrows the greater part of Chapter II as irrelevant, be sound or sensible? Supposing it is possible to hold that the entire lesson of *gnana* and *karmayoga* is really applicable to Arjuna, such a construction

would have an obvious claim for preference over the one adopted by the school of Sankaracharya. And, why is it not possible so to hold? Discarding *Kamya* as out of court and taking *Akamya* as a means to knowledge, there is no difficulty in Arjuna being taught *Karmayoga* and called on to reach *gnana* thereby. Whence then is his confusion? It arises thus:- Sri Krishna placed *Swarga* and kingdom before Arjuna's eyes as incentives to war. He also told Arjuna to fight irrespective of fruit. Herein the contradiction was patent. It was possible for Arjuna to have cleared up this difficulty for himself by means of the teaching that *Yuddha* was *Kamya* in one sense and might be *Akamya* if undertaken in a pure spirit. But then, this would put *Yuddha* under the category of *Vaikalpika Karma* a kind of *Karma* that was two-fold in character according to the varying motives of the soldier. Why should not Arjuna prefer the peaceful duties of a *Sanyasin* to this kind of double-faced action? The doubt is thus quite logical. Arjuna wants to have a choice made for him with definite certainty between *Kamya* and *Akamya* in the first place, and then, if the latter, between the pure *Akamya* of the ascetic and *Vaikalpika Karma* like *Yuddha*. Anticipating a bit, the Lord's reply is this, - "You are a *Karmayogin* You must do *Karma* in a disinterested spirit and without desire of fruit, and, by that means, reach and live a life of *gnana*. The ascetic's duties are not meant for you. You will be saved by *gnana* obtained through a life of pure work. Others not qualified like you will have to take up the milder and less distracting duties of the ascetic, but your position is higher, like that of Janaka, &c., &c." This reply of the Lord does not exclude any part of chapter II as not being intended for Arjuna.

श्रीभगवानुवाच —

3) लोकेऽस्मिन्द्विविधा निष्ठा पुरा प्रोक्ता मयानघ ।  
ज्ञानयोगेन सांख्यानां कर्मयोगेन योगिनाम् ॥

|               |     |                          |
|---------------|-----|--------------------------|
| श्रीभगवान्    | ... | The Lord                 |
| उवाच          | ... | said                     |
| लोके, अस्मिन् | ... | in this world            |
| द्विविधा      | ... | two-fold                 |
| निष्ठा        | ... | is heavenly path         |
| पुरा          | ... | before                   |
| प्रोक्ता      | ... | taught                   |
| मया           | ... | by me                    |
| अनघ           | ... | O! you, sinless          |
| ज्ञानयोगेन    | ... | by the path of knowledge |
| सांख्यानां    | ... | to Sankhyas              |
| कर्मयोगेन     | ... | by the path of Karma     |
| योगिनां       | ... | To Yogins                |

“The Lord said:— By Me has been taught before, a two-fold Heavenly path for men of this world, O! you sinless one. By the path of gnanayoga, Sankhyas are saved; and by Karmayoga are Yogins”.

The word पुरा “before” has been variously construed. Sankaracharya thinks that the allusion is to the teachings of God at the beginning of the world



when a new Kalpa is started and a Divine Avatar instructs the first men in religious and moral duties. Sankarananda improves upon this idea and says that what is referred to as "old teachings" is the Vedas themselves in which form, God has taught men their duties. In the Vedas are both the paths taught, the path of the seer (gnanamarga) and the path of the seeker (karmamarga). According to Sankarananda, it is not any kalpic Avatar that is alluded to, but the eternal Vedas which are said to be but another name for God. Sridhara, Madhusoodana, Neelakanta, and Venkatanatha, do not go so far as the world's beginning or the Vedas, but understand the reference to be to the second Adhyaya of the Geeta. The author of the Deepika attacks this interpretation, being opposed, as it is, to Sankaracharya's commentary. He thinks that the first verse of chapter IV, इमं विवस्वते योगं "This imperishable yoga I declared to Vivaswan" lends weight and support to his master's view. He says also that, if it were the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of the Geeta that is intended, the words "in this world" 'अस्मिन्लोके' and the word 'पुरा' "before" would be superfluous, the sense being sufficiently intelligible with the word प्रोक्ता itself, meaning "has been well taught." In reply to all this, it is to be observed that the reference to the world's beginning or to the Vedas is obviously far-fetched. Arjuna's complaint related to the second chapter in which he fancied there had been inconsistency and confusion of language. It was therefore only right that the Lord should say that there had been no fault in that chapter and that it was Arjuna that had misunderstood the intent and scope of the

teachings therein. The opening verse of Chapter IV has nothing to do with the present context. The division of *gnanayoga* and *karmayoga* applies chiefly to the Human world which is known as कर्मभूमि, and the expression. "in this world" is not therefore meaningless. पुरा is not redundant, for it simply refers to the lessons last taught. To my mind, Madhusoodana, Sridhara, Neelakanta, and Venkatanatha have deviated from their master Sankaracharya in this respect on very good grounds. It was pointed out, under the last verse, that commentators differed as to the true purport of Arjuna's question. In suiting the reply to the question, it follows that there should be difference of opinion necessarily.

All the commentators but Sri Madhwa take their stand on this footing that *Karmayoga* is meant for the ignorant man whose mind is still impure and *gnanayoga* is meant for one who is pure in thought. They all agree that Arjuna is in the former condition and *Karmayoga* is the stage suited to him. They cry him down as unqualified and inefficient. Sri Madhwa, on the other hand, takes up a position radically distinct. No doubt, *karmayoga* is addressed to Arjuna; but the reason for it is not his ignorance or inefficiency but something totally different. Priyavrata and Janaka are other instances of seers who engaged in *karmayoga* for the same reason as Arjuna. Some people who are seers are competent to accomplish their won salvation, though engaged in work as householders. Their mind is so efficient and of such high-tuned purity that they can lead the householder's life, do its distracting duties, fight in battle, expose themselves

to the play of passions and distractions, and yet remain calm and unaffected. They could brush aside the influence of all temptations and do duty in the proper spirit, Priyavrata was an acknowledged seer (*gnanin*). But his father Swamyambhuva Manu called on him to be a king. He refused and preferred renunciation. Brahma stepped in to exhort Priyavrata and pointed out to him that he was an आधिकारिकपुरुष "one possessed of special merit", who might reach salvation though wedded to kingdom and work. The fifth skandha of Bhagavata tells us this story and its moral. Arjuna was an आधिकारिकपुरुष in this sense like Priyavrata. It was a matter of special merit with him that he could adopt कर्मयोग and be saved withal. Sanaka and other Munis could not do so; for they required the aid of *Sanyasa* (renunciation) and its calmer duties to progress in the spiritual path. Thus, we see the purport of the Lord's reply,—"I enjoin the distracting and cruel duties of war, a *Vaikapaka Karma*, on you, because you are competent and qualified for the great feat".

In this connection, a commonly prevailing delusion has to be mentioned. It is imagined that *Karmayoga* excludes knowledge and *gnanayoga* excludes action. But this is incorrect. No *karmayogin* is without Divine wisdom. No *gnanayogin* is without Karma. But the expressions *Karmayogin* and *gnanayogin* are used to distinguish the preponderating element in each case. In *karmayoga*, work receives special attention. In *gnanayoga* the tender duties of an ascetic have precedence. Both are seers; both have work and duties; both attain Heaven; but the preponderating element differs in degree and intensity.

To revert for a moment to the Geeta verse, निष्ठा means Moksha here. The verse speaks of निष्ठा being two-fold. It is not emancipation that is two-fold, but the paths leading thereto and the men that adopt them. The word ज्ञानयोग does not mean the equipment consisting of *gnana* but the equipment in which the preponderating element is *gnana* coupled, of course, with *karma*. Similarly कर्मयोग is not the equipment consisting of work but is one in which the preponderating element is work coupled, of course, with *gnana*. "Sankhyas" in the 2<sup>nd</sup> line are persons like Sanaka who became ascetics, and progressed in *gnana* through the duties of renunciation. Yogins in the 2<sup>nd</sup> line are persons like Arjuna, Priyavrata and Janaka, who were seers and progressed in *gnanamarga* through and with the aid of worldly duties and work.

In passing, the term अनघ, "O! Sinless," used in addressing Arjuna, is not without significance. It is something of a reply to those who throw much dust at him as an impure sinner. Desikar notes this expression and says that, as Arjuna was sinless, he was qualified for कर्मयोग, but, if he were *more* so, he would have been fit for *gnanayoga*. Freedom from, or absence of, sin herein mentioned seems a negative condition which does not necessarily imply of comparison.

4) न कर्मणामनारंभान्नैष्कर्म्यं पुरुषोऽश्रुते ।  
न च संन्यसनादेव सिद्धिं समधिगच्छति ॥



|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| न             | ... no                                 |
| कर्मणां       | ... of work                            |
| अनारंभात्     | ... by non-performance                 |
| नैष्कर्म्यं   | ... Heaven: Moksha;                    |
| पुरुषः        | ... man (the embodied individual)      |
| अश्नुते       | ... attains                            |
| न च           | ... nor                                |
| संन्यसनात् एव | ... by mere renunciation or asceticism |
| सिद्धिं       | ... redemption: Moksha                 |
| समधिगच्छति    | ... does he attain                     |

“No man attains Moksha by non-performance of work. Nor does he attain salvation by mere Sanyasa”.

The full force of what is taught here may be brought out by a few questions and answers. The apologist of inaction asks:-

1. Q. – The very term नैष्कर्म्य, which is a synonym for Moksha, means *inaction* etymologically. Hence, inaction must be laudable.

A – नैष्कर्म्य is Moksha, not because all work is abandoned by its votary, but only, all *mercenary* work. The derivation is equally intelligible in this sense.

2. Q – Moksha is possible only if the cause of *Samsara* is prevented. Karma (work) is the seed of *Samsara*. Therefore, let me adopt inaction.

A. – Not so. Mere inaction can never be our saviour. If so, we should not be embodied individuals at all (पुरुष) just now. In the infinite births every Purusha has had in the past, it is conceivable that at some time or other he passed through animal and vegetable kingdoms too. When he was a tree or an animal, he was incapable of Karma in the true sense. If inaction were the cause of Moksha, this should have been attained at that moment. The fact that he is still an embodied creature shows that Moksha was not attained in the past by inaction.

After entering on the human stage, no person can possibly avoid *karma* germinating in future births. After the 14<sup>th</sup> year, every man does, every moment, acts whose natural product is at least 10 future births, as the texts indicate. Thus, seeds of future incarnations being virtually inexhaustible, there is no hope of preventing births by so-called inaction which is an impossibility.

3. Q. – My Lord, Karma is necessarily a bond-maker. Old texts of Manu declare that man is tied down by Karma. Why not let me therefore resist what is virtually my fetter? A. – It is only fruit-prompted work that operates as fetters. Work of the unselfish kind done in the true spirit does not forge fetters. *Vide: Manu निष्कामं &c.*

4. Q. – Whether inaction prevents seeds of birth or not, whether it helps the destruction of fetters or not, let me adopt it for the simple reason that it is convenient and harmless. Thereby, so much bother and trouble is saved, such as hard work entails. It

is only mercenary work that ties us down. Inaction cannot do what काम्य alone can do. On account of this negative virtue, let me prefer it.

A. – You shall not do so, because omission or failure to do your duty is sinful. The Isavasya Upanishad declares at the very commencement, that every one shall get on only through work in the hundred years of mortal life he may live, and that, otherwise, he incurs sin. So are other texts also.

5. Q. – Sankaracharya says that inaction, being negative and therefore unreal, cannot produce sin which is a positive something. Is it therefore right to say that mere non-performance causes sin, as the Srutis say, “How can सत् arise out of असत्?”

A. – It should be observed that Bhaskara criticizes Sankaracharya's view and explains the Sruti, by saying that Dravyas could be produced from Dravyas only, but that *gunas*, attributes or qualities, might be created by unreal causes. Both Sankaracharya and Bhaskara appear to be wrong. Inaction is not an unreality. अभाव is counted among the category of fundamental things just as भाव is. It may be negative in character, but, still, it may be a cause of certain, effects. There is nothing illogical in अभाव producing sin as Srutis and Smritis declare.

6. Q- We see that निष्कामकर्म leads to Heaven. Let us see whence arises its greatness. The answer is bound to be “because it aims at no fruit”. For exactly the

same reason, inaction must be laudable, for, necessarily, no fruit is involved therein.

A. – The analogy of निष्काम is fallacious, and misleading. निष्काम which is another name for *Sanyasa* does not lead to Heaven *ipso facto*. It leads only to *Bhakti, Vairagya and Gnana*. Inaction cannot produce these. If Moksha could result from the mere fact that no fruit is aimed at, the analogy might be of weight. It is not so.

7. Q. – We know that the holy order of *Sanyasa* leads to Heaven. The reason should be that the duties thereof keep “fruit” entirely out of view. Does not *inaction* necessarily exclude desire of fruit, for the simple reason that there is no action at all, and, much less, desire; and why should inaction be not blessed for the same reason as ascetic duties are?

A- This analogy too is unsound. The *sanyasa* order is, no doubt, holy, but it is so, not simply because no fruit is involved therein, but because it is the Divine ordinance that it should be deemed Holy, and it is the special object of Divine Grace. The order has its merits; but to say that the absence of ‘fruit’ is the sole or chief cause of its greatness is not correct. Hence, inaction cannot be put on a level with the Order of asceticism.

8. Q. If it be admitted that the Order of *Sanyasa* is held sacred for special reasons, as God has willed it, why then should I not adopt such a sanctified life?

A—Yours is an equally sanctified life, you being an अधिकारिकपुरुष. Unlike an ordinary house-holder, you



occupy a special position of sanctity. You alone are competent to lead a house-holder's life, to do its distracting work, and yet rise above its temptations. Hence, your आधिकारिक life, circumstanced as it is, is as holy as Sanyasa. You, as an avatar of Indra, need not adopt the Sanyasic order in quest of Sanctity and Divine Grace.

Thus is the out-line of the many shades of thought that the verse conveys, according to Sri Madhwa. The object is to make out that the apologist of inaction and indolence has no plausible grounds at all for his position. To run away from temptation has neither a disciplinary value nor an ethical virtue about it. It is important to note that hard and strenuous work undertaken and carried out with altruism is a great education in discipline. It gives tone to the mind and mettle to character. To be in the world and yet be not of it, is indeed a great merit. Inaction may have some virtue for commendation. But it is incapable of producing that mental purity which paves the way to Divine knowledge and vision. Hence it cannot qualify its votary for Heaven.

Sankaracharya and Ramanujacharya render the verse so as to mean that inaction is not our redeemer, because it does not confer on us dispassion, devotion, mental purity and all the rest of the equipments needed for the Divine vision. They construe नैष्कर्म्य to mean ज्ञानयोग. As Karmayoga, leads to Gnanayoga, absence of *karma* cannot lead to it. Sankarananda has digressed into some original flashes in the course of his exposition. Commenting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> line he says,

“Look here, my dear Arjuna, what can you achieve by assuming the ascetic’s robes? (1) You will worship दहर as ordained in the Vedas, or (2) you will take to the worship of Vaiswanara, or (3) You will do Siva Pooja or (4) adopt a life of Keertana, uttering or singing the Divine names. What will all this avail you? दहर may grant you every object of desire and endow you with capacity to wish for anything and get it. Vaiswanara may enable you to feed on the world by entering into and becoming identified with every eating creature. Siva’s worship may translate you to Siva’s regions. By uttering and singing the Divine names, your sins alone may get destroyed. What are all these results? Not only poor, but intangible and unreal. All of them fall within the zone of the Mythical. Hence no object is gained by Sanyasa”.

One is astonished at this furious attack of Sanyasa. It is difficult to understand the force of attacking *Dahara* worship and other actions in which the ascetic is, by duty, engaged. Nor is the argument in hand very much improved by reminding Arjuna of cosmic unreality just now. He is protesting against work. He argues in favour of inaction. Sri Krishna combats this position with a view to convince him that he must plunge into work. It was necessary for the purpose to keep, far out of his sight, theories about *karma* being valueless and unreal, lest the pupil should clutch at them and doggedly retire from work.

A word about the merits of the long argument relating to *Dahara* worship and other matters; it is nothing but a dream that anyone would become an

absolute Satyakama and Satyasankalpa, by any means, for these are attributes of God. It is building castles in the air to imagine that a Vaiswanara worship would enable us to taste and enjoy all the food eaten by all creatures in the world. Sankarananda talks contemptuously about the efficacy of संकीर्तन. "It merely kills sin" he says as is this were but a trifle! If sins be destroyed, why, it is indeed a very long step towards the goal. Keertana would, it may be added, bring on punya too. Sin gone, merit attained, the way is fairly clear for wisdom.

Leaving alone this digression of Sankarananda, there is not much in the comments of the Sankara school or of Ramanujacharya that Sri madhwa differs from. All are agreed that non-action is condemned. But there is one point of difference worthy of special mention. We have to see how the substance of the first line differs from that of the second. अनारंभ is non-performance. Sanyasana संन्यसन is the same thing, as it means renunciation or abandonment. One might struggle a bit to distinguish between the two by saying that Sanyasa is the technical Holy Order and not mere renunciation irrespective of who does it. But Neelakanta thinks that the old dogma, so partial to the Hold order, is unreasonably rigid because instances of true renunciation and holiness among householders are found numerous in authoritative works. Thus, non-performance and renunciation being virtually synonymous, and नैष्कर्म्य and सिद्धि being synonymous too, the first line is not in any true sense different from the second. Desikar feels the force of this and

tries to get over it by saying that the first line deals with the failure or omission to begin any work, while the second deals with withdrawals from tasks already undertaken and commenced. After all, this distinction is devoid of much real difference, and two lines of Geeta verse are unnecessary where one would have sufficed. The word अनारंभ is held by the great majority of annotators to mean non-performance rather than non-commencement. If so, the redundancy is clear. Sri Madhwa alone steers clear of this difficulty. According to him, the second line is meant to answer an objection based on the first line. Inaction was said to be useless. Why should it not be as useful as unselfish performance or *ascetic life* on the analogy of 'no fruit'? Sri Krishna attacks the analogy as fallacious, and this He had to do to strengthen the lesson taught in the first line.

5) न हि कश्चित्क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत् ।  
कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः ॥

|            |     |                      |
|------------|-----|----------------------|
| न हि       | ... | No indeed            |
| कश्चित्    | ... | any one              |
| क्षणम् अपि | ... | even a moment        |
| जातु       | ... | at any time or state |
| तिष्ठति    | ... | remains              |
| अकर्मकृत्  | ... | a non-doer           |
| कार्यते हि | ... | is indeed made to do |
| अवशः       | ... | being powerless      |



|            |     |                             |
|------------|-----|-----------------------------|
| कर्म       | ... | work                        |
| सर्वः      | ... | every one                   |
| प्रकृतिजैः | ... | born of nature              |
| गुणैः      | ... | by qualities or disposition |

“None, indeed, remains a non-doer even for a moment at any time or condition. Every one is forced to do work by inborn qualities of nature, being powerless to resist”.

We were told in the last verse that inaction could not save us. We tried to find out the full meaning of the verse by means of a few questions and answers. Of them, Nos. 5,6,7,&8 dealt with the second line of the verse. The first four related to the first line. Let us very briefly refer to these in a few words. Query No. 1 related to the etymology of नैष्कर्म्य as meaning both indolence and Mukti. Query No. 2 objected to work on the ground that it was the seed and breeder of bondage. These two doubts were answered by pointing out the full meaning of the word पुरुष. Query No.3 asked why any one should engage in work, reputed as it is, to be an obstruction to Mukti. No word or expression in the last verse supplied an express reply to this objection. There is a Sruti text to the effect that “work binds and knowledge releases”. But work in this text must mean mercenary work. Otherwise, the saying seems to make no sense. No man, be he a seer or otherwise, can help doing certain actions necessary for life. If action be a fetter, whether it be voluntary or involuntary, it will fetter, not alone the ignorant person, but even the seer, because the

latter must get through some work and functions, at least to sustain life.

If involuntary functions and actions necessary for life, tend to bind down the doer, the result will be that no one can ever hope for redemption. Hence, Karma that binds ought not to include every vibratory activity or function of man. In order to impress this lesson, Sri Krishna had, first of all, to prepare the major premise that no one can possibly avoid certain functions and work, in the course of his life. This is the point emphasized by the verse under notice. What follows from this is that where, the Smriti talks of *Karma* being a fetter, that should be restricted in meaning to selfish Karma, so that other Karma may be excluded from the purview of binding Karmas. That is what Sri Krishna is going to teach in a future verse No.9. According to Sri Madhwa, the action contemplated in the present verse as unavoidable, which every man is compelled by God and nature to go through, is the group of involuntary functions and such other actions as are necessary to sustain life, besides some more. That is what every one has to submit to, be he a seer or not. There are other kinds of activities which every one has the option of engaging in or not. Verses 6 and 7 deal with these and point out that, as to them, the mental purity is much more important than the external activity or indolence. The argument stands thus:— "Inaction is not your redeemer. Assuming however that it is, to be inactive, is first of all, a physical impossibility, as for instance, in the case of involuntary functions and actions necessary for life; secondly, in the case of voluntary work, physical indolence is unnecessary as the fetter is really and truly forged

for us by the mind rather than the body, (verses Nos. 6 & 7); and the great importance lies in checking the mind rather than restraining the outer senses”.

Sankaracharya and his followers make out the sense of this verse in a very different way. According to them, the last foregoing verse spoke of renunciation bereft of knowledge, as useless. The objector asks, ‘why’? The answer is the present verse, which according to them, points out that the non-seer engages in work constantly and helplessly, being egged on by his inborn nature. The conclusion to be deduced is that knowledge alone is of supreme value.

The reasoning seems obviously erroneous. Firstly, there is not a syllable in the verse under comment about the supremacy of knowledge. Secondly, these annotators limit the literal meaning of almost all the important expressions in the verse. They say, कश्चित् “any one” means any one who is a non-seer. Similarly सर्वः, “everyone or all”, is limited to the ignorant. In keeping with this limited sense, *Karma* that is spoken of has to be, as it has, in fact, been, *applied* and restricted to voluntary work — such as याग, — Sacrifice. If thus rendered, it jars with the expression जातु = ‘at any moment or state’, and क्षणमपि = ‘even for a moment’. For nobody is engaged always, voluntarily or involuntarily, in rites, such as the sacrifices set fourth in the Vedas. Hence, these expressions which literally comprehend every conceivable condition and point of time must be forced into some limited sense. It thus follows that almost every word is twisted out of its ordinary signification.

It is not every one of the Adwaitic commentators that is prepared to go these indefensible lengths. While some restrict *Karma*, herein contemplated, to Vedic Karma such as *Yagna*, Madhusoodana enlarges the scope of the term so as to embrace all the occupations of men comprising the layman's profession as well as the pieties of the religious. Sankarananda makes a further enlargement by saying that *Karma* here means all the functions and activities of men in their wakeful condition and in dreams. Venkatanatha goes further still, and says, that even सुषुप्ति "the dreamless sleep" is not to be excepted, because the sleeper exhales and inhales air in the course of the respiration then going on. What does this come to? The *karma* here spoken of refers even to the involuntary functions of life, and the person referred to as the doer thereof is the performer of those functions.

This performer is evidently not the non-seer alone, but the seer also. Hence, the verse applies to the indispensable activity of the seer and non-seer. Sridhara is evidently convinced, having regard to the comprehensive expressions कश्चित्, सर्वः, जातु, क्षणमपि and कर्म, and the untenability of the violent limitations placed on this literal meaning, that the verse speaks both of the seer and the non-seer. He does not agree with his brethren who confine the verse to the non-seer alone and to the actions which a non-seer alone engages in, as distinguished from the seer. He feels the absurdity of Vedic sacrifices being talked of as if they were involuntary functions and indispensable actions which every non-seer is perpetually engaged in performing. The author of Utkarsha Deepika is



however wild with Sridhara for thus daring to differ from Sankaracharya and adopting the meaning of Sri Madhwa.

Reading literally, the first line says, "Total abstention from work is simply impossible, because there is absolutely no one who is not perpetually engaged in some kind of work."

The second line explains the proposition. The fact is that every man is helpless more or less, अवश. He is not a free agent to do or omit. अ is God. The Divine Will rules him and his work. Ordained by the Divine Will, the *gunas* natural to him shape his character and conduct. The instincts inherited from his own previous births, or from his parents, govern his tendencies and force him into grooves of work, from which there is no escape.

6) कर्मोन्द्रियाणि संयम्य य आस्ते मनसा स्मरन् ।  
इन्द्रियार्थान्विमूढात्मा मिथ्याचारस्स उच्यते ॥

|                 |     |                      |
|-----------------|-----|----------------------|
| कर्मोन्द्रियाणि | ... | the organs of action |
| संयम्य          | ... | having restrained    |
| यः              | ... | whoever              |
| आस्ते           | ... | is                   |
| मनसा            | ... | with mind            |
| स्मरन्          | ... | thinking of          |
| इन्द्रियार्थान् | ... | objects of senses    |

|               |     |                           |
|---------------|-----|---------------------------|
| विमूढात्मा    | ... | of ignorant understanding |
| मिथ्याचारः सः | ... | impostor; he              |
| उच्यते        | ... | is said to be             |

“The ignorant person who restrains the eternal senses and is thinking, the while, of sense-objects with his mind uncurbed, is known as an impostor.”

The point here and in the last verse is, what is the *karma* that is referred to in the Smriti text as the cause of bondage (कर्मणा बध्यते जन्तुः)? . It was suggested that *Karma* of every kind most literally and comprehensively understood was meant. To this, Sri Krishna replied that some functions and actions were absolutely indispensable for sustaining life, and the Smriti text would be absurd if it should include them also in its purview. Hence, it follows that the term *Karma* in the said text should be limited in sense, in some way or other. It ought, certainly, to exclude involuntary functions and indispensable actions. The objector then urges, “So be it. But the restriction ought to be confined to what is strictly necessary. Yagna and similar acts are voluntary actions which a man may do or refrain from at his option. These surely should be of a binding character and ought to be abstained from. Hence, I will not fight.” Sri Krishna replies that, while involuntary functions are unavoidable, *Yagna*, battle and the like, are actions that may be but *need not be*, avoided. The reason is that the power to fetter us is not in the work we do, but in the mind that prompts the doer. Mind is the potent factor that makes or mars our spiritual destinies. The man who restrains his senses of action and senses of

knowledge too, but allows his mind, all the while, to run riot among the sense-objects, thinking, meditating and dreaming thereof, is a humbug and an impostor. If the mind be restrained, the organs of action need not be restrained. If the mind be not restrained, there is then no use or purpose in restraining the organs.

There is no room for controversy in the present verse as to whether it applies to the non-seer alone, or to both the seer and the non-seer. The last verse contained comprehensive language and referred to involuntary functions and indispensable actions. The present verse is explicit in referring to the ignorant man whose mind is not controlled and who acts like an impostor. Without noticing the obvious difference in the language employed, the school of Sankaracharya thinks that both verses apply to the non-seer alone.

It is to be noted that the verse speaks of 'cogitation with the mind.' No cogitation is possible except with the mind, just as no seeing is possible except with the eyes. Hence, to think *with the mind* is a redundant expression like the phrase 'seeing with eyes.' This objection is met by the answer that Sri Krishna did not mean to point out the organ by which the function of cogitation is performed, but that He meant only to emphasize the importance, of the mind as the sense which makes or mars our destinies.

(1) If "Mind" be not restrained, there is bondage:  
 (2) If "Mind" be not restrained, there is no Mukti.  
 These are the two ideas sought to be prominently presented by this present verse and the next one,

No.7. The expression "thinking with the mind" is only used with a view to draw prominent attention to this aspect, *viz.*, that the mind makes for us a heaven of hell or a hell of heaven.

Apostles of mere rites and ceremonies ought to mark the strong censure passed here upon persons who lead a double life. Many a so-called man of piety observes fasts and abstains from wrong-doing, while his mind is busy with schemes of avarice and sin. All these men whose mind *believes* their exterior are but impostors and frauds, and Sri Krishna thinks that their outward self-restraint does not count for merit.

A passage from Vishnu Rahasys quoted in the Sanskrit notes may be briefly referred to in this connection.

"Piety" it says, "is of two kinds, internal and external. Internal piety consists in the pure mind which truly believes in God and His Supremacy. External piety consists of outward symbols which mark the religious man. The ignorant man indulges in these only, while the wise adopt both".

7) यस्त्विन्द्रियाणि मनसा नियम्यारभतेऽर्जुन ।  
कर्मैन्द्रियैः कर्मयोगमसक्तस्स विशिष्यते ॥

|             |     |                         |
|-------------|-----|-------------------------|
| यः तु       | ... | But he                  |
| इन्द्रियाणि | ... | the organs of knowledge |
| मनसा        | ... | with the mind           |



|                |     |                           |
|----------------|-----|---------------------------|
| नियम्य         | ... | having controlled         |
| आरभते          | ... | performs                  |
| अर्जुन         | ... | O! Arjuna                 |
| कर्मेन्द्रियैः | ... | with the organs of action |
| कर्मयोगं       | ... | the yoga of Karma         |
| असक्तः         | ... | unattached                |
| सः             | ... | he                        |
| विशिष्यते      | ... | is worthy                 |

“But he who engages in karmayoga by the organs of action, unattached, having controlled the organs of knowledge with his mind, is worthy, O! Arjuna.”

This verse presents the converse of the last. It was pointed out in the last verse that the person whose mind dwells on the objects of sense, though his external organs are withdrawn, is a hypocrite. The converse relates to one who has controlled the mind and the organs of knowledge, and who lets an organs of action to service in obedience thereto. If the mind is uncontrolled, hypocrisy is the result. If the mind be restrained, Karmayoga follows—which consists in the consecration of bodily energy on the altar of duty. Though इन्द्रियाणि in the first line is general, it refers to the organs of knowledge (nose, taste, eyes, ears and touch), because the second line speaks of karmayoga with the organs of action allowed free play. The control of the former consists in subduing their relish for, and hankering after, their respective objects.

The first line speaks of ‘Controlling *with the mind*’. No doubt, no restraint is possible without the

mind. But, in the last verse and in the present, 'the mind' is prominently mentioned in order to accentuate the point that the mind is the chief instrument of our ruin or salvation, as the case may be. If the words "with the mind" mean "by the mind" the use of the expression is justified as stated. But the words "with the mind" may also mean 'along with the mind', in which case, reference is expressly got to the control of the mind as well as the organs of knowledge. The control of the mind which is the chief point of the lesson becomes thus spoken of explicitly.

One commentator lays stress on the vocative terms, 'O ! Arujna,' and reads in it an exclamation of surprise. He makes it convey the following sense—"See, Arjuna, how surprising it is that the man who restrains the organs of knowledge and lets loose the organs of action becomes worthy (verse 7)" (Madhusoodana and Venkatanatha). Herein, the contrast is pointed out between the operation and the withdrawal of one set of organs as against another set. It is doubtful if this is the true intent. The last verse spoke, in fact, of all the organs (those of action as well as knowledge) being withdrawn, while the mind was roaming freely among cherished objects. It is this rendering that brings out the idea prominently, that is the mind alone that is the most important thing to guard and take care of. The meaning of the two verses should be so explained as to mark the contrast between the mind let loose and the mind under control. Once the mind is held in restraint, the organs of knowledge follow suit, and then, Sri Krishna points out, there is no harm in the organs of action being allowed free play, as they are then

mere slaves of the mind. The vocative expression—'O! Arjuna', can hardly bear the strain of the exclamatory surprise which is sought to be forced upon it. Nor does it appear that the contrast is, as pointed out by Madhusoodana whom Venkatanatha simply copies, between one set of organs and another.

Though the word used is आरभते which literally means 'begins', yet no emphasis is to be laid on its literal meaning. It only means "does", "engages in", or "goes through". On the analogy of verse 40, chapter II "In this course, there is no loss, although an action is commenced and abandoned etc.", some fancy that the object here, too, is to lay stress on mere *commencement* as a great merit. Such, however, is not the present context. On the other hand, it is the performance of *karma* in the proper spirit that is being discussed, and not merely the commencement of it. In the second line, the seeker is told to engage in *karmayoga*. In verse 3 of this chapter, *karmayoga* was used in the sense of duties relating to the first three orders (Brahmacharya, Gruhastha, and Vanaprastha), while the order of ascetics was referred to by a distinct word सांख्यानम्. In the present verse, however, *karmayoga* need not be thus restricted. It denotes the proper performance of the right duties of any order. The term is naturally of general application, and, in the absence of any distinct indication as in verse 3, there is no reason to restrict *karma* to the duties of the first three orders so as to exclude those of the fourth, (Sanyasa).

The verse ends by praising the *karmayogin* as 'worthy'. Literally विशिष्यते is a term of comparison,

meaning 'better than'. Than whom, is the *karmayogin* better? The contrast spoken of by the last verse and the present one, shows that the *karmayogin* praised here is said to be better than the hypocrite of the last verse. This is a plain and simple explanation which has been adopted by almost every commentator. But, Ramanujacharya starts an ingenious deviation. He argues that the word कर्मेन्द्रियैः (with the organs of action) connotes the idea that men are by nature and habit prone to actions, and that, consequently, *karmayogins* are less liable than *gnanayogins* to go astray. To be a *karmayogin* is to sail along with the current, while *gnanayoga* implies sailing against the stream. The latter is therefore fraught with possibilities of disaster, while the former is safe. The deduction is drawn from these premises that *karmayoga* is superior to *gnanayoga*. It seems to me that this deduction is startling. We are dealing here with the controlled mind and the uncontrolled mind. There is no occasion to take up *gnanayoga* here and condemn it as inferior to *karmayoga*. The reason on which the conclusion is based, namely, that men are prone to action and are comparatively safe in adopting this course, is not traceable to the Geeta verses, but seems to be the commentator's own idea.

As verses 4 to 7 have given rise to much doubt and controversy as to their true intent and purport, it may be useful to sum up what Venkatanatha says about the subject, as representing the point of view of Adwaitic annotators. It is as follows: "From mere Sanyasa the goal is not attained, is the chief text.



The doubt is, what is *Sanyasa*? Its definition is sought and the divisions it admits of. There are two kinds of *Sanyasa* : - (i) One is absolute renunciation of action. (ii). The other is renunciation of *Karma*'s fruit. The ignorant man assumes that the former means withdrawal from and cessation of every vital activity. This is wrong. Sri Krishna says in verse No. 4, that this is impossible so long as the man lives. What then is the true state of total renunciation? This is described in verse No. 8 of chapter V. 'I do nothing', should he think; 'seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving, sleeping and breathing;' It is the condition born of the conviction that actions are all *material* and have nothing to do with the soul. For this life of total renunciation, ascetics alone are qualified. The second division of *Sanyasa* which consists of renunciation of fruit is one for which house-holders and all non-ascetics are also qualified, and this kind of *Sanyasa* is explained in the present verses 6 and 7, chapter III, which respectively condemn the desiring mind and praise the controlled and non-desiring mind".

In this long exposition, Venkatanatha makes the mistake that verse 8 of chapter V speaks of all actions being material and being super-imposed by delusion on the soul. This is an *Adwaitic* position. On the other hand, what the true devotee is asked to do in that verse is to attribute all action to Divine authorship and to believe that whatever man does is done by him under the will and guidance of God.

It is said that ascetics are alone competent for the *sanyasa* described in verse 8 of chapter V. There

meaning 'better than'. Than whom, is the *karmayogin* better? The contrast spoken of by the last verse and the present one, shows that the *karmayogin* praised here is said to be better than the hypocrite of the last verse. This is a plain and simple explanation which has been adopted by almost every commentator. But, Ramanujacharya starts an ingenious deviation. He argues that the word कर्मेन्द्रियैः (with the organs of action) connotes the idea that men are by nature and habit prone to actions, and that, consequently, *karmayogins* are less liable than *gnanayogins* to go astray. To be a *karmayogin* is to sail along with the current, while *gnanayoga* implies sailing against the stream. The latter is therefore fraught with possibilities of disaster, while the former is safe. The deduction is drawn from these premises that *karmayoga* is superior to *gnanayoga*. It seems to me that this deduction is startling. We are dealing here with the controlled mind and the uncontrolled mind. There is no occasion to take up *gnanayoga* here and condemn it as inferior to *karmayoga*. The reason on which the conclusion is based, namely, that men are prone to action and are comparatively safe in adopting this course, is not traceable to the Geeta verses, but seems to be the commentator's own idea.

As verses 4 to 7 have given rise to much doubt and controversy as to their true intent and purport, it may be useful to sum up what Venkatanatha says about the subject, as representing the point of view of Adwaitic annotators. It is as follows: "From mere Sanyasa the goal is not attained, is the chief text.

The doubt is, what is *Sanyasa*? Its definition is sought and the divisions it admits of. There are two kinds of *Sanyasa* : - (i) One is absolute renunciation of action. (ii). The other is renunciation of *Karma*'s fruit. The ignorant man assumes that the former means withdrawal from and cessation of every vital activity. This is wrong. Sri Krishna says in verse No. 4, that this is impossible so long as the man lives. What then is the true state of total renunciation? This is described in verse No. 8 of chapter V. 'I do nothing', should he think; 'seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving, sleeping and breathing;' It is the condition born of the conviction that actions are all *material* and have nothing to do with the soul. For this life of total renunciation, ascetics alone are qualified. The second division of *Sanyasa* which consists of renunciation of fruit is one for which house-holders and all non-ascetics are also qualified, and this kind of *Sanyasa* is explained in the present verses 6 and 7, chapter III, which respectively condemn the desiring mind and praise the controlled and non-desiring mind".

In this long exposition, Venkatanatha makes the mistake that verse 8 of chapter V speaks of all actions being material and being super-imposed by delusion on the soul. This is an *Adwaitic* position. On the other hand, what the true devotee is asked to do in that verse is to attribute all action to Divine authorship and to believe that whatever man does is done by him under the will and guidance of God.

It is said that ascetics are alone competent for the *sanyasa* described in verse 8 of chapter V. There

is no reason for saying so. Every Yogin, be he a karma yogin or gnana yogin, ought to believe firmly in his own dependence on God. To mark out this elementary and fundamental belief that is, in fact, the foundation of all religious philosophy, as lying within the province of the technical *ascetic* alone, is hardly right or correct.

Sri Madhwa's explanation of these verses 4 to 7 is very simple. The objector urges, first, 'Inaction is our Redeemer.' The Lord says, 'No; total inaction is impossible.' Objector; 'Let me then renounce whatever action is capable of being abandoned; 'Don't,' says the Lord; 'it is enough if the mind be restrained, that alone being the true source of bondage. By restraining the mind, actions will be performed in the true spirit and this is the proper path to the goal.'

8) नियतं कुरु कर्म त्वं कर्म ज्याय्यो ह्यकर्मणः ।

शरीरयात्रापि च ते न प्रसिद्ध्येदकर्मणः ॥

|          |     |   |
|----------|-----|---|
| नियतं    | ... | what is ordained and proper according to Varna and Asrama |
| कुरु     | ... | do  |
| कर्म     | ... | the duties; actions                                       |
| त्वं     | ... | you   |
| कर्म     | ... | doing   |
| ज्याय्यः | ... | is superior   |
| हि       | ... | indeed  |



अकर्मणः ... to non-doing  
 शरीरयात्रा ... keeping the body alive  
 अपि च ... and even  
 ते ... to you  
 न प्रसिद्ध्येत्... will not be possible  
 अकर्मणः ... not doing anything.

“Do the duties ordained and proper ; to do is better than inaction; and, event to keep the body alive will be impossible to you, plunged in non-doing.”

The language of the verse is pretty plain; and the argument, by no means complicated. Yet, most of the words herein have received varied interpretations.

Ramanujacharya has a somewhat startling rendering. The chief predicate of the verse, according to him, is that Karmayoga is superior to Gnanayoga. (कर्मज्याय्योहकर्मणः). He takes कर्म to mean Karmayoga and अकर्म to mean Gnanayoga. The query follows, why? Three reasons are mentioned in his commentary. They are :—

(i) Because karma suits our nature and is more easy and less risky than Gnanayoga. This sense is derived from the word नियतं which means concomitant with nature;

(ii) because, religious life is impossible without action. Every one is expected to live on consecrated

food, and consecration is impossible without ceremonies. (N.B. This is the rendering of the second line);

(iii) because, *karmayoga* implies *gnana* in some measure, but *gnanayoga* implies not *karma*.

Let me take the conclusion first, that Karmayoga is superior to Gnanayoga. This is unsound. अकर्म ordinarily means 'non-doing' and not *gnana* except by undue strain. It stands to reason that अकर्म, used in the first line, bears the same meaning as the said word used in the second line. If, in both places, it stands for *gnanayoga*, the proposition in the second line that life or religious life is impossible in *Gnanayoga* is far from intelligible. Desikar explains the position by saying that the context commenced with the inquiry whether Gnanayoga was superior or inferior to Karmayoga and that, hence, the reply of the Lord should be construed agreeably to the nature of the question put.

But this assumption is wrong. Arjuna did not wish to be informed as to the relative merits of *karmayoga* and *gnanayoga*. He had understood that selfish *karma* was inferior to *gnana* and wished to know why he should not elect duties more mild and less cruel than war. In the reply, Sri Krishna pointed out the division of devotees into Gnanayogins and Karmayogins without asserting the superiority of either, and meant that Arjuna's obligation to be a Karmayogin was due to a special cause that he was an अधिकारिकपुरुष. Thus it is incorrect to argue on an

assumption, and conclude that अकर्म, *gnanayoga*, is inferior to कर्म action.

The conclusion having been arrived at on a wrong basis, reasons have been sought for the same inside the Geeta verse and outside.

It is said that Karma is नियतं, i.e., that it is concomitant with our nature, that it, therefore, follows the bent and course of our natural leanings and that it is less risky than Gnanayoga and more easy of adoption. The term नियतं means 'ordained' or, 'proper'. How does it lend itself to this long exposition that men are prone to action rather than to knowledge? Where is the basis for the supposition that *karma-yoga* is easy? How is it less fraught with possible pitfalls than *gnanayoga*? None but Ramanujacharya puts such a forced meaning on नियतं which, every one takes in its ordinary sense, as denoting the *daily* and the *occasional* rites that Hindu Shashtra's have laid down for the casets and orders of life.

The second of the reasons set out above is based apparently on the second line of the verse. From inaction or Gnanayoga, it is said, living is impossible. But why? The explanation given is that by life is meant religious life. Religious life implies consecrated food. Consecration implies religious rites, as in Vedic sacrifices. Inaction and Gnanayoga give no room for rites. Hence, it follows that religious life is impossible.

It is difficult to see why religious life is impossible from *Gnanayoga*. Total abstention from action is no doubt incompatible with religious life, but *that*, we have already been told, is a physical impossibility. In order to emphasize the importance of religious rites and consecrations, why should Sri Krishna use the word शरीरयात्रा which literally means "Keeping body and soul together." If शरीरयात्रा denotes a religious life, it virtually means *Karmayoga*, and the sentence resolves itself into saying that *Karmayoga* is impossible without *Gnanayoga*. Because *Gnanayoga* excludes *Karmayoga*, how does it follow that the former is inferior to the latter? The sentence is "and even *Karmayoga* is not possible." The words "*And even Karmayoga is not possible.*" The words "*And even*" seem to bear no significance.

The third of the reasons given is that *Karmayoga* does, in a measure, imply *gnana*, because no *Karmayoga* is possible unless one realizes the self. This implies that the person understands the true nature of the soul and God. with this line of thought we have no quarrel, as we hold that *Karmayoga* implies knowledge and *Gnanayoga* implies *karma*. But the relevancy of this point to the topic under discussion is far from clear. It seems to be brought in, for conveying, a sort of consolation that, in adopting *Karmayoga*, we are not hopelessly lost, because some gleam of *gnana* is available to us still. Let me compare in a tabular form the meanings of the various words.



| Sri Madhwa  | Ramanujachariar  |
|---|--|
| 1. नियतं =what is proper or ordained                  | What accords with our nature.<br>What is not difficult and risky.  |
| 2. त्वं= You and every karmayogin                     | you Arjuna should do Karma.<br>Stress is laid on "you," to show that even if you were fit for Gnanayoga, you should do karma. If, as I fear, you are not fit, much more there fore does it follow that you should adopt Karmayoga. |
| 3. कर्मज्यायोह्यकर्मणः= Doing is better than inaction | Karmayoga is superior to Gnanayoya   |
| 4. शरीरयात्रा =bodily sustenance.                     | Religious life consisting of Vedic rites duly done   |
| 5. अकर्मणः= from non-doing; or, to you inactive.      | From Gnanayoga, that are   |

In the second line, the words अपि च "*and even*" are significant and important. Having stated that doing was better than non-doing, Sri Krishna proceeds to attack the theory of non-doing from another crushing stand-point. It is necessary to live before we acquire merit. The body requires nourishment and some activity, to be alive. Absolute non-doing soon results in cessation of life. The words '*and even*' make out this sense forcibly. Dutiful *Karma* leads to a pure mind. To give up dutiful *Karma* leads to sin. Here

below, *Akarma* leads to death. This is the substance, briefly put, of the teaching. Hereby, the objection is set at rest that one may do just as much as is necessary for the bare sustenance of life and no more. For, non-performance of obligatory duties entails sin and obstructs the mental purity which flows from the discipline of honest work.

The commentators of the school of Sankaracharya lay stress on त्वं in the sentence कुरु कर्म त्वं 'you do karma.' They think that it is a special injunction to Arjuna, plunged as he was in ignorance (compare the Adwaitic exposition of ते in कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते chapter II, verse No, 47). According to Sri Madhwa, no special emphasis on the said word is meant. त्वं = 'you' is addressed to Arjuna and to people in general, in a sort of impersonal way. Assuming that त्वं points only to Arjuna, it still admits of an easy explanation. Being an आधिकारिकपुरुष, he is called on to do *karma* though a *gnanin*.

In the second line, the word in the second person, ते 'to you,' is also emphasized by Neelakanta and Madhusoodana who think that the reference is to the circumstance that Arjuna is a Kshatriya. Neelakanta's explanation is that, being a Kshatriya, he could not be a mendicant (भिक्षु). As *Sanyasa* is thus out of the question (Kshatriyas being qualified, in Neelakanta's opinion, for the first three orders alone, and Vaisyas, for the first two alone), Arjuna could not, *consistently with Dharma*, sustain his body if he adopted a life of inaction. The error seems to lie in assuming that

Sri Krishna makes here an implied allusion to Dharmashastra. The Lord wishes to crush the argument as to non-action by pointing out that even to live would be impossible. It is purely a physiological reason that He brings out.

If ते does, in fact, refer to Arjuna's being a Kshatriya, the line admits of sense in another way. Being a soldier, if he did not fight, he could not manage to live; for, while running away unarmed, the enemy would make short work of him.

9) यज्ञार्थात्कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः ।

तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय मुक्तसंगस्समाचर ॥

यज्ञार्थात् ... for the sake of Vishnu

कर्मणः ... of work

अन्यत्र ... in respect of something other than

लोकः ... man

अयं ... here

कर्मबन्धनः... is karma-tied

तदर्थं ... for His sake

कर्म ... work

कौन्तेय ... O ! Arjuna

मुक्तसंगः ... free from attachment

समाचर ... perform

“Man here is a karma-tied being in respect of work other than that for the sake of Vishnu. For His sake, O ! Arjuna, perform work free from attachment.”

*There is controversy in the purport of this verse.*

The Smriti text is couched in general words that *karma* binds and knowledge releases. If *karma* of every sort does bind, it affords a ground for Arjuna declining to fight. It cannot be that *karma* is binding absolutely. For, bodily functions will then be impossible. Hence, the *karma* referred to should be limited in sense in some manner. Should it be limited only to the necessary and indispensable functions of life? Sri Krishna says that whatever is undertaken as a worship and service of God is also exempted.

There are two ideals that may be noted, a religious ideal and an ethical ideal. It is stated that, whatever we do, we should dedicate it to God and do it as a piece of worship and service. This is the religious ideal. The second line contains the expressive word मुक्तसंगः "free from attachment" which is the key-note of *Karmayoga*. Whatever we do, we should undertake in an altruistic spirit, allowing no sordid considerations of profit to enter our minds as a motive. This is a high ethical ideal constituting the philosophy of conduct to which the Geeta gives great prominence.

Ramanujacharya does not construe यज्ञ to mean Vishnu as every other commentator does. There is a Sruti text यज्ञो वै विष्णुः 'Vishnu is indeed *yagna*'. While all are agreed that in the Geeta verse यज्ञार्थात् means "for the sake of Vishnu", and तदर्थ means "for His Sake", Ramanujacharya takes यज्ञ to mean Vedic Sacrifices, and he renders the purport to be that



whatever occupation or profession is adopted, money is earned, or work is done, as helpful or auxiliary to Vedic rites, that is not binding. If, on the other hand, money is earned or work is done for one's own pleasures, it operates as a fetter. Therefore, Arjuna is told to work for whatever is enjoined by the Shastras, and, in doing so, not to wish for fruit.

As far as the ethical ideal above pointed out is concerned, Ramanujacharya's rendering lays stress on it like the others. But the religious ideal is missed; and this latter, to my mind, is the more important of the two. It is, indeed, a very important point that we go through life in the full belief that whatever we do is a piece of Divine Worship. He who realizes it, is a true devotee and seer. It is but right that work done in that belief and dedicated unto Him should not operate to fetter the doer to Samsara.

Ramanujacharya prefers to construe यज्ञ to mean every *karma* enjoined by the Shastras. Sacrifices are abundantly enjoined in the Vedas, and rewards held forth for each, such as Swarga and the rest. It is said, for instance, "The desirer of Swarga shall do Jyotishtoma." Some hold that Jyotishtoma is out of the question when there is no desire for Swarga, and say that two things are really enjoined here as, obligatory, namely, (i). desire of Swarga, and (ii). performance of Jyotishtoma. If so, this Shastric Karma must be fettering work, as it is incapable of being done without desire of Swarga.

Assuming that Ramanujacharya is one of those who hold that any and every Vedic rite admits of

disinterested performance, (I fear he does not, in fact, hold so), as the Geeta verse in the second line insists on 'disattachment' (मुक्तसंग), Jyotishtoma may be performed in this spirit and may not be a fettering act.

On the whole, it seems needless to drop the obvious reference to God and strain the expressions in other channels of thought. More especially so, because Sri Karishna is going to lay very special emphasis on this point of view, over and over again, later on. In Bhagavata, this is the universal refrain that, whatever we do, proceeds from God's will, and that we ought to dedicate it unto Him for His pleasure: (*Vide* some verses quoted in the Sanskrit notes).

10) सहयज्ञाः प्रजास्सृष्ट्वा पुरोवाच प्रजापतिः ।  
अनेन प्रसविष्यध्वमेष वोऽस्त्विष्टकामधुक् ॥

|               |     |                         |
|---------------|-----|-------------------------|
| सहयज्ञाः      | ... | wedded to sacrifice     |
| प्रजाः        | ... | the human world         |
| सृष्ट्वा      | ... | having created          |
| पुरा          | ... | of old, at the creation |
| उवाच          | ... | said                    |
| प्रजापतिः     | ... | The patriarch           |
| अनेन          | ... | by this                 |
| प्रसविष्यध्वं | ... | you shall beget         |
| एषः           | ... | this                    |
| वः            | ... | to you                  |

अस्तु ... let be  
 इष्टकामधुक् ... a milch (cow) of coveted pleasures.

“Having created human beings associated with sacrifice, the Father said of old, ‘By this you shall beget and let this be to you a milch (cow) of coveted pleasures’.

This verse and the three following are closely connected. They deal with a new train of thought.

It is not unusual in religious literature to resort to what is known as अर्थवाद for impressing a lesson of importance. The assertion has an underlying object and should not be understood too literally. For instance, it is said that one who dies in Benares reaches Mukti. But what is meant to be asserted is that Kasi is a great Kshetra and to die there is associated with piety. Artha Vada consists sometimes of praise and sometimes of censure. Very often, it is anecdotal, instancing the action of some specific person of old, or it may narrate some general traditional experience. (‘‘स्तुतिर्निदापरकृतिः पुराकल्पइत्यर्थवादः’’-गौतमसूत्रं).

In the present instance, Sri Krishna resorts to अर्थवाद. He praises *yagna* by pointing out prosperity and pleasure as its reward. He censures *Ayagna* (in verse 12) by saying that one who does not repay the debt due to *Devas* is a thief. He quotes Prajapati to show how man is inextricably bound up with sacrifice. He speaks of *Devas* bestowing desired enjoyments and of sacrificers being free from sins (verse 13). What is the object ? The assertions are not meant to be

absolutely literal. The purport is that action is better than inaction, that it is our duty to work as ordained for us, that sacrifice is the very law of life, and that the scheme of creation, order, and progress, in the world is based on work and sacrifice.

*Prajapati*, referred to here, may be the four-faced Brahma or it may denote God himself, the Supreme Father. Ramanujacharya adopts the latter meaning and Desikar devotes a long note to it, pointing out the appropriateness of taking Sri Narayana as the deity here alluded to.

There is a slight difference of 'reading' between Ramanujacharya and others in the second word of the verse. He adopts the reading सहयज्ञैः while others read सहयज्ञाः. There is some difference in the sense derived; सहयज्ञैः gives us the sense that God created men and sacrifices together. सहयज्ञाः denotes that God created the beings wedded to sacrifice. While the former expression denotes no more than a simultaneous origin to both, the latter indicates that the two were already welded together. The epithet सहयज्ञाः, coupled with and qualifying प्रजाः, has been understood by Sankaracharya to refer to Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaisyas alone, as only these are qualified for religious rites. It does not however seem necessary to adopt this limitation. प्रजाः is a general term, and may be of universal application. There is no human being who has not got duties allotted to him according to his station, position, and occupation. Yagna is the entire group of work prescribed for every one according to



his competency and qualification. Yagna is as old as creation. It is the milch-cow of every pleasure, and the basic principle of reproduction, development, and progress. This may be illustrated by instances from the world of inert matter, of vegetables, of animals, and of man. Forms of lower life are incessantly sacrificed for creating and developing higher life. Throughout nature, it is one universal story of some lower form being eaten up for creating a higher and more powerful form. When we reach the human kingdom, sacrifice assumes a refinement permeated by ethics and religion. Man has learnt to rebel against cannibalism and cruelty. He has developed conscience and sympathy, set a limit on his own demands, and increased his own sacrifices for the weal of others. Thus the law of propagation (प्रसविष्यध्वं), individual as well as national, implies sacrifice which is another term for love and service.

Srutis and Smritis enjoin sacrifice by holding out to the simple man of the world, future gain—such as wealth, and worldly prosperity, as the reward for parting with present wealth or comforts. They then lift him higher by holding forth after-life rewards, more distant in prospect. They say that angels lead the sacrificer after death through sunbeams to Swarga with greetings and honeyed words, (Mundak). The next step is to enjoin sacrifice, not for temporal fruit, not for Swargic rewards, but in selfless spirit, Karmayoga. Higher than this, is the religious element of dedicating all work unto God.

It is not far-fetched to understand, from the Geeta verse under comment, a reference to this law in all

its aspects, physical, ethical, and religious. It seems unnecessary to restrict *yagna* so as to mean only sacrificial rites usually associated with fire, and performed with Mantras. It may well comprehend duties of every caste and every order. In chapter XVII the Lord speaks of Yagnas—Sathwic, Rajasic and Tamasic : He speaks elsewhere of Yagnas by gifts of money, Yagnas of penance, Yagnas of Yoga or devotion, Yagnas of study, of knowledge, etc.

Manu and other Smritis (Garuda) lay down that Brahma Yagna consists in teaching pupils; Pitru Yagna, in offering libations; Deva Yagna, in pouring of ghee and the like into the fire with Mantras; Bhauta Yagna, in offers of edibles; and Manushya Yagna in hospitality to guests.

Some doubt has been expressed among the commentators, whether Yagna in the present verse refers to *Akamyā* work alone, or to *Kamyā* alone, or to both; for the second line of the verse speaks of Yagna being a cow of plenty and apparently refers to rewards here and here-after (other than Mukti, of course). If this be so, the sense is, they say, out of tune with the drift of the teaching which is to the effect that Yagna should not be performed for the sake of fruits. Madhusoodana holds that 'Yagna' here is nothing but obligatory duties whose non-performance entails sin and which ought to be done without desire of fruit. As for rewards apparently held forth, (इष्टकामधुक्), he says that the reference is to incidental and inevitable consequences that do not affect the motive of the Sacrificer. He quotes Apastamba who says; "If a mango tree is grown for the sake of fruits,

incidentally, other comforts, such as shade, fragrant breeze, and so forth, follow, but none the less the grower's motive is mango fruits alone." So, the Sacrificer may undertake the rite to please God and in discharge of his own duty, but if incidental rewards which he could not help, follow, he is not to blame. The expression इष्टकामधुक् points to this particular aspect that incidental comforts are also derived.

Madhusoodana's explanation is ingenious and is copied *verbatim* by Venkatanatha who is his admirer. But it is not easy to see why इष्टकामधुक् should necessarily mean only sordid rewards. Taking Yagna to mean Akamyā as well as Kamyā, the results that follow may be Mukti or something lower, according as the aim is the one or the other. It is not easy to see why Mukti should not be an इष्टकाम of the Mumukshu. Possibly some Advaitic dogma sticks in the throat and chokes the statement. Who knows?

It remains to say a word as to why Kamyā and its fruit should at all be referred to here. The reason is not far to seek. Primarily, the object of the context may be to hold forth Akamyā Yagna as obligatory. But Kamyā too is performed by men with hopes of reward, and the scriptures have pointed out how those rewards could be obtained. Prajapati refers very rightly to both the classes of men. He depicts the scheme prevailing and obtaining in the actual world of work, and cannot help referring to the existence of both, in comprehensively speaking of प्रजाः, human beings in general, and their varied motives and work.

11) देवान्भावयतानेन ते देवा भावयन्तु वः ।  
परस्परं भावयन्तः श्रेयः परमवाप्स्यस्यथ ॥

|           |     |                             |
|-----------|-----|-----------------------------|
| देवान्    | ... | the Gods (the Shining Ones) |
| भावयत     | ... | serve                       |
| अनेन      | ... | with this                   |
| ते        | ... | those                       |
| देवाः     | ... | Gods                        |
| भावयन्तु  | ... | oblige                      |
| वः        | ... | you                         |
| परस्परं   | ... | mutually                    |
| भावयन्तः  | ... | obliging                    |
| श्रेयः    | ... | good                        |
| परं       | ... | the great                   |
| अवाप्स्यथ | ... | you will obtain             |

"With *this*, serve the Gods; and let those Gods oblige you. Mutually obliging, you shall obtain the highest good."

This verse explains how Yagna can be a source of coveted blessings. It shows the relation between the Earth and Heaven (Swarga & c.). Yagna consists in the worship of Gods by means of offerings and oblations. These are accepted with pleasure, if duly offered. They nourish and please the Heavenly Beings. Presiding over the elements, they send down rain and gladden mankind. The obligations are thus reciprocal and great is the good that is bound to result.



Two doubts occur, in thinking over the purport of this verse.

I. The verse ends with the predicate that “ the greatest good is obtained.” Moksha, the final beatitude, is the greatest good aimed at. If so, how can the exchange of greetings and obligations just mentioned, result in Mukti?

II. “Great good” is predicated. Whatever that may mean, who are the persons about whom it is said that they obtain it? Is it the earthly beings, alone, addressed by Prajapati, or does it include the Gods also?

I. Ramanujacharya argues that the Supreme God is the true enjoyer and acceptor of every offering and worship. It may be that man addresses some lower Deity such as Indra. But the true acceptor is Vishnu. So says Sri Krishna later on, अहं हि सर्वयज्ञानां भोक्ता च प्रभुरेव च = “Indeed I am the enjoyer of all Yagnas and their Lord.” The Gods are only instruments of the Supreme Being, so many vehicles and idols of the Divine Immanence. To worship the Gods amounts to a worship of Vishnu. Therefore, all Yagnas lead to Mukti.

There seems to be a flaw in this reasoning. No doubt, the Supreme God is the only true acceptor of every offering and the only true bestower of every blessing; for, He alone is the Independent Source and Master of the Universe. But from the stand-point of the worshipper, if he does not realise this and offer worship to the Gods not as Sri Narayana’s servants,

agents and Bhaktas, but in ignorance of Sri Narayana and irrespective of Him, then surely, that worship is not an instrument of Mukti but only of lower fruits. The Geeta verse is comprehensive by including worshippers of the lower class as well as the higher. This being so, the explanation does not account for Mukti being attained by mercenary worshippers of Indra and the rest. The mere fact that God is the true acceptor and giver is not very relevant, if the worshipper acts without realizing this truth. How then does the Geeta verse end with the words "You obtain the greatest good"? This may be answered in two ways. The greatest good herein referred to may not be Mukti but every blessing short of it. After all, the context is one of अर्थवाद. Assuming, however, that the expression should be understood literally, and must mean Mukti, as most commentators take it, still the sense is easy enough. A life of 'purposeful' worship addressed to the lower Deities has, still, a great moral and religious efficacy and value. It recognizes a life after death. It admits Powers on High which rain down blessings. It believes in gifts and sacrifices to please the Heavenly Powers. Such a life duly disciplined and chastened will, in due time, develop into one of purer sacrifice. It will learn to sacrifice without a desire for gain. The mental purity thus attained leads to *gnana* and Mukti. The Geeta verse speaks of Mukti, the final goal though intermediate steps have to be understood and implied.

The second doubt above mentioned, *viz.*, whether the 'Greatest Good' predicated is meant for mankind alone, or for the Gods also, is answered by

Sankarananda, who holds that Prajapati is not thinking of 'the Gods' here. He argues that the persons addressed are *men*, and that the teaching could not possibly apply to the Gods; because they are above Dharma, are self-shining seers out and out, and have no blessing to seek for or acquire. In this exposition, the error is in the assumption that Gods have no art or part in cosmogony. It is assumed that they are not interested in Dharma and have naught to wish for. In fact, however, Seers as they are, they have parts allotted to them in working the great wheel of life. They preside over the senses. They vitalize the elements and work the laws of nature. They are yet unemancipated *i.e.*, those who thus preside, govern or rule. They act in response to the human worshipper, receiving gifts and bestowing boons. Until they reach Mukti, they are completing their equipment for reaching that goal. It is Divine will that they should fulfill certain functions and they do it as their duty, to please Him. Doing their appointed task, they worship the Supreme God and become qualified for Moksha. Hence, Sankarananda's view that the Deities are above every teaching and are past the stage of any duty and any seeking, is not correct. Hence, Raghavendra Swamin construes the second person "You" of the verb अवाप्स्यथ to include Gods and men. Sankarananda admits that this is the natural and appropriate construction of the sentence as it runs, but feels constrained to qualify the natural sense, by reason of supposed difficulties. But the difficulties are not real.

A commentator known as Abhinava Guptacharya reads much of an esoteric meaning in this verse.

According to him, Devas means the senses. To worship the Gods is therefore to indulge the senses by giving them free play. If senses be allowed scope and play, they, in turn, give rest and peace to the man, by remaining quiescent, at least for a time. Thus, a life of action and quiescence is established in alternation and this takes the man towards Brahman in whom all distinction between work and rest is extinct.

This is the esoteric exposition. It is ingenious. It is assumed here that the period of rest or quiescence is a time of Divine approach and contemplation. In the case of स्थितप्रज्ञ 'a Seer of established God-vision', Samadhi may be a period of undisturbed, concentrated, God-vision. The wakeful hours of such a Seer may be hours of a needed change from Samadhi. But the rest or sleep of an ordinary man does not mean God-vision or self-realization. His sleep and wakefulness are not to be compared to the Samadhi and wakefulness of the Yogin. How then can our mundane toil and sleep bring about Mukti?

12) इष्टान्भोगान् हि वो देवा दास्यन्ते यज्ञभाविताः ।  
तैर्दत्तान्प्रदायैभ्यो यो भुङ्क्ते स्तेन एव सः ॥

|         |     |            |
|---------|-----|------------|
| इष्टान् | ... | coveted    |
| भोगान्  | ... | enjoyments |
| हि      | ... | verily     |
| वः      | ... | on you     |
| देवाः   | ... | the Gods   |



|             |     |                      |
|-------------|-----|----------------------|
| दास्यन्ते   | ... | bestow               |
| यज्ञभाविताः | ... | served by sacrifices |
| तैः         | ... | by them              |
| दत्तान्     | ... | what are gifted      |
| एभ्यः       | ... | to them              |
| अप्रदाय     | ... | not returning        |
| यः          | ... | whoever              |
| भुङ्क्ते    | ... | misappropriates      |
| स्तेन       | ... | is a thief           |
| एव          | ... | certainly            |
| सः          | ... | he                   |

“Served by Yagnas, the Gods bestow coveted enjoyments on you. Whoever does not repay their gifts, but misappropriates them to himself, is certainly a thief.”

One who fails to perform Yagnas is condemned here in strong language. We are told that the good things we happen to possess are gifts from the Gods. By sacrificial offerings we earn them.

The Gods are nourished in some way by what we offer. They thrive and are pleased. In turn, they rain down blessings and fill the earth with plenty.

Being thus indebted to them, it is but common honesty to repay the debt in some appropriate form. He who thinks that what he possesses or enjoys are his own unaided acquisitions is in error. He fails to realize his own true weakness and the Powers of

Heaven. When he directs all his wealth and possessions to selfish ends, without in any way acknowledging the true donors thereof, he misappropriates and steals what legitimately should go to repay the debt.

It is a high ethical idea that no man should regard his wealth as purely his own, but should take it as a trust. Civilization recognizes this truth in a way. The ever-widening horizon of philanthropy and charity is the result of this notion. Duties to relations, to friends, to society, to the country, and so on, are instances where it is abundantly realized that what we own is not purely our own, but is simply trust property. Religion carries the notion a step higher. It connects life below with the Powers on High. It traces our blessings on Heavenly Donors and Benefactor. It insists on the law of reciprocity, and commands men not to commit breach of trust but to repay obligations in a becoming manner.

That is the highest religion which recognizes the Supreme God as the only true bestower of blessings. The Heavenly Powers may be powerful, but their power is derived from God and exercised by His leave.

He who appropriates his wealth for sensuous ends is censured as a thief. Mahabharata, Udyoga, 42-35, censures in the same language—'One who forgets God and arrogates to oneself His absolute Greatness'—(*Vide Sanskrit quotation*).

I have already noticed the esoteric interpretation of the last verse by Abhinava Guptacharya. The present verse is also rendered by him in the same

strain. He argues on the footing that action produces reaction, and says that one who has enjoyed the objects of sense is alone qualified for mental peace and concentration. Hence, if the senses are allowed full play, they bestow pleasures. One who restrains the senses is a मिथ्याचार 'a hypocrite,' his mind being in a ferment with desires. The moral of the verse, according to him, is that every man should indulge in enjoyments as they come, just to kill the heyday in the blood and subdue the innate longing of the senses.

In this metaphorical rendering, it is difficult to understand what is meant by repaying debts to the Gods. If senses are meant by the word "Gods", it is intelligible that we offer coveted objects to them and obtain pleasures in return. But how do we refund the gifts? Moreover, the advice to subdue senses by gratifying them does not seem to be sound. Fire is not extinguished by ghee. King Yayati's famous exclamation (in Mahabharata), "No desire is extinguished by allowing it scope or gratification, just as fire is never put out by pouring of ghee," is far truer than this commentator's advice on the point.

After all, what is the beauty of this so-called esoteric interpretation? The context does not support it at all. Sri Krishna is pointing out here the relation between men and Gods, how they act for each other's benefit and how it is the duty of every man to recognize his benefactor and repay obligations. There is an ethical and a religious beauty in this lesson which, the common place annotation of Abhinava Guptacharaya, seems totally to efface.

13) यज्ञशिष्टाशिनस्सन्तो मुच्यन्ते सर्वकिल्बिषैः ।  
भुञ्जते ते त्वघं पापा ये पचन्त्यात्मकारणात् ॥

यज्ञशिष्टाशिनः ... who eat the remains of the  
sacrifice

सन्तः ... the righteous

मुच्यन्ते ... are freed

सर्वकिल्बिषैः ... from all sins

भुञ्जते ... eat

ते तु ... But they

अघं ... sin

पापाः ... sinners

ये ... who

पचन्ति ... cook

आत्मकारणात् ... for their own benefit

“The righteous who eat the remains of the sacrifice are freed from all sins. But those sinners who dress food for their own benefit eat sin.”

With this verse, Prajapati's words come to an end. The word इति which marks the end of the quotation in Sanskrit is understood. Raghavendra Swamin points out this and Venkatanatha adopts it. No other commentator has however noticed it. The first half-line of the verse explains the observation already made in verse II, that sacrificers reap the supplements good. The second half-line explains the remark in verse 12 that they who return not debts are thieves.



I have translated the word 'सन्तः' into "The righteous." It may be construed also to be the participle 'being'. In this case, the sense is that, being eaters of sacrificial remains, they are freed from sins, and not otherwise. The only remedy for sins is to sacrifice and live on its remnants.

The word यज्ञ is here also comprehensive. It includes every kind of sacrifice, in favour of Gods, Rishis, Pitrus, men and Spirits. It may also be that, instead of any technical rites known as sacrifices, mere worship is meant by the word — worship of Vishnu and of the Gods.

The remnants of a sacrifice are known as Amritam or nectar. After Vaiswa Deva, the remnants of rice, etc., are Amrita, and special efficacy is attached to them as holy food.

*"Is freed from all sins"*. The sins referred to are taken by Ramanujacharya in a comprehensive sense and are said to mean whatever is an impediment to *gnana* or self-realization. But it is quite possible that the word 'sins' is here specially used to denote the five kinds of sins that Vaiswa Deva or the five great Yagnas are said to destroy. We destroy animal life unconsciously and innocently, when little things such as ants die as we prepare vegetables over the knife for the kitchen. The grindstone, especially if the kitchen is not over-ventilated, does havoc to them very often. So does the hearth, where the cook pours and kindles the coals without paying heed to these unwary tenants. The water pot is not infrequently left open so that animalculae get access to it and find their way soon into the drinker's abdomen. The broom

accounts for a large number of ants and insects when it sweeps the floor roughly and forcibly. To get cleansed of these sins, Smriti texts say that we should do Vaiswa Deva and other Yagnas.

The reader may see the basic idea of the present lesson that eating is a Sacrament. Atheists and materialists will, of course, demur. For, with them, to eat is only for sustaining the body, and there is no other end in view. Marriage too is but a contract according to them. The religious Hindu, however, has made sacraments of many a function and institution which others treat as mere requirements of physical nature. Among others, eating is one. Hence is the elaborate code of rules and regulations observed by all Hindus, and by the Brahmins in particular, in preserving the sanctity of the food eaten everyday. The sacramental supper is not unknown to other faiths also. But elaborate and minute is the code of rules that the orthodox Brahmin observes in respect to the rice he offers to the Gods and partakes of as a sacrificial remnant. He is particular about who prepares the food, who serves it and how it is prepared. He is anxious that it is kept beyond impure gaze, that it does not get cold and that it is dedicated to God with suitable *mantras*. With him, it is a most solemn duty that he spurns no beggar from the door and that no guest is sent away unfed and unhonoured. Sri Krishna says in this Geeta verse that one who cooks or orders the preparation of food for the sake of his own appetite is a great sinner. According to Him, the kitchen, as an institution, is meant primarily for sacrificial purposes for the benefit of Gods and guests. The teaching forms the keystone of Hindu charity and is typically characteristic.

- 14) अन्नाद्भवन्ति भूतानि पर्जन्यादन्नसंभवः ।  
यज्ञाद्भवति पर्जन्यो यज्ञः कर्मसमुद्भवः ॥
- 15) कर्म ब्रह्मोद्भवं विद्धि ब्रह्माऽक्षरसमुद्भवं ।  
तस्मात्सर्वगतं ब्रह्म नित्यं यज्ञे प्रतिष्ठितम् ॥
- 16) एवं प्रवर्तितं चक्रं नानुवर्तयतीह यः ।  
अघायुरिन्द्रियारामो मोघं पार्थ स जीवति ॥

|              |     |                                   |
|--------------|-----|-----------------------------------|
| अन्नात्      | ... | from food                         |
| भसन्ति       | ... | arise                             |
| भूतानि       | ... | creatures                         |
| पर्जन्यात्   | ... | from the Sun (or clouds, or rain) |
| अन्नसंभवः    | ... | is the origin of food             |
| यज्ञात्      | ... | from sacrifice                    |
| भवति         | ... | becomes or prospers               |
| पर्जन्यः     | ... | the sun or clouds                 |
| यज्ञः        | ... | the sacrifice                     |
| कर्मसमुद्भवः | ... | is born of work                   |
| कर्म         | ... | work                              |
| ब्रह्मोद्भवं | ... | is born of Brahman                |
| विद्धि       | ... | know                              |
| ब्रह्म       | ... | Brahman                           |

|               |     |                                |
|---------------|-----|--------------------------------|
| अक्षरसमुद्भवं | ... | is born of (revealed by) Vedas |
| तस्मात्       | ... | Therefore                      |
| सर्वगतं       | ... | all-pervading                  |
| ब्रह्म        | ... | Brahman                        |
| नित्यं        | ... | ever                           |
| यज्ञे         | ... | in sacrifice                   |
| प्रतिष्ठितं   | ... | is rooted                      |
| एवं           | ... | Thus                           |
| प्रवर्तितं    | ... | Set in action                  |
| चक्रं         | ... | the wheel                      |
| न अनुवर्तयति  | ... | does not follow                |
| इह            | ... | here                           |
| यः            | ... | whosoever                      |
| अघायुः        | ... | is of sinful life              |
| इन्द्रियारामः | ... | addicted to senses             |
| मोघं          | ... | vain                           |
| पार्थ         | ... | O ! Arjuna                     |
| सः, जीवति     | ... | does he live.                  |

“Out of food are creatures made. From the Sun (through cloud and rain) is food created. From sacrifice, prospers the Sun (and its creations); and sacrifice is the result of work.”

“Work (or duty) is born of Brahman and Brahman is revealed by Vedas. Therefore, the Omnipresent Brahman is rooted in sacrifice.”



“Whoever does not follow the wheel thus at work is of sinful life addicted to the senses; and he lives in vain, O! Partha.”

Prajapati was quoted, in the verses immediately preceding, to the effect that men and gods were obliged to one another, that wealth is more a trust in our hands than a gift unto us, and that our duty is to repay it in a suitable form to the gods from whom we derive our blessings. It follows, then, that to refrain from work is a gross dereliction of duty. We are bound ever to work and fulfill obligations. The same lesson is now emphasized from another standpoint in the three verses under notice. The world turns like a wheel, the various limbs of which act and react from inter-related force and impulses. We live on the food available in the world. That food is dependent on rain. Rain depends on sacrifice and work. The latter depends on and is determined by God, and *He* is a Vedic revelation. The Vedas are published and revealed in a sense by men who recite and study them. Thus is the wheel revolving. Every one must play his part in the turning of the great wheel. Work and service are important spokes of this wheel. Whoever fails to contribute his share, fails in his duty, and his life is a vain existence. The Lord thus accentuates the human obligation to work and serve and sacrifice.

Abhinava Guptacharya construes the present verses too (14-15-16) in an esoteric sense. He takes अन्न to be the illusory cosmos or chaos out of which creatures are born. Parjanya, is according to him, the Atman, ‘the Enjoyer’ as distinguished from अन्न

the food, "the enjoyed." यज्ञ he takes to mean the act or process of 'enjoying'. Its parent कर्म he construes as the capacity to enjoy. From Brahman the ultimate, is born the शक्ति or 'capacity' called here by the word कर्म, and that Brahman is the result of अक्षर, the overpowering *light* of knowledge. Thus he makes out that यज्ञ "the enjoyment" supports a wheel so six spokes. There is the Maya, the creatures, and the enjoying Atman, on the one hand: there is *karma*, the enjoying faculty or capacity, Brahman, and the Monistic knowledge, on the other. In the center is यज्ञ the 'enjoyment'. Let it loose, the former three turn the person in the wheel of Samsara. Restrain it, the latter three lead him towards salvation. One who does not accept this theory of bondage and emancipation is sinful and leads a vain life.

This esoteric interpretation is pretty ingenious; it seems, however, difficult to evolve it out of the expressions in the text.

While the topic in hand is the obligation of work and sacrifice, it is hardly right to dash away at a tangent from the context into digressions about Maya and Monism. Here, work has to be insisted on and not abstinence therefrom.

The words of the verses भूत, अन्न, पर्जन्य, यज्ञ, कर्म and अक्षर seem to be frail vehicles to convey the meanings forced into them. How Parjanya can mean the Enjoyer, and *karma*, the enjoying faculty, it is hard to see.

Then again, the reader has to see how the seven things mentioned in the verses constitute a wheel. It is the characteristic of a circle that its circumference starts nowhere and ends nowhere, and that its arcs or segments are dove-tailed into one another. To make out a wheel of the things under notice, it is necessary that भूतानि (creatures) with which we start should be connected with अक्षर the last of the series, as both its cause and its effect in a sense. But for this, the analogy of the wheel is out of place. According to Guptacharya, we do not see how भूतानि is the cause as well as the effect of अक्षर by which is meant the pure serene light of Realized Monism.

The conclusion drawn by Sri Krishna is contained in the second half-line of verse No.15. Importance is given to Yagna, and in it, Brahman is spoken of as rooted. It is difficult to see how, in the interpretation of Guptacharya, derives any special importance. It is only the fourth in the chain of seven links. For this reason, however, it can claim no special merit. Why should Brahman be said to be rooted in यज्ञ, the process of 'enjoyment', rather than in any of the other things mentioned before or after. On the other hand, in the commentary of others, यज्ञ has good reason for prominence. It is, in fact, the pivot of the lesson. 'Do work' being the gist of the topic, Sri Krishna points out how यज्ञ is connected with the heavenly powers and worldly prosperity and how it is bound up with God Himself and the Vedas. If 'doing work' is not the leading idea, as Guptacharya seems to make out, the prominence of यज्ञ disappears.

Turning to the other commentators, there is little of controversy about the meaning and drift of the verses. On a few of the words, however, there is some difference which has to be noticed.

The theory that the sun causes evaporation of water and produces clouds by a process of condensation does not seem unknown to ancient India as a truth of physics. Manu distinctly attributes clouds to the Sun. In the Geeta verse, food, whereby vegetation is obviously meant, is attributed to पर्जन्य which ordinarily means the cloud and may also mean the Sun. The context admits of both the meanings as being appropriate.

The Geeta verse says that यज्ञ is the parent of Parjanya. This is a purely Hindu theological idea. The sun is believed to derive vigour and vitality from the offerings of worshippers. Thus nourished and invigorated, he creates clouds which shower blessings on the world. It may be that the Sun (meaning thereby the presiding deity of the orbit) attained his position by sacrifices previously performed by Him. But the sacrifice referred to in the Geeta is not this sacrifice of the deity himself but one performed by men on Earth for the propitiation of the Sun. It is this latter sacrifice that appropriately takes a place among the segments of the wheel.

By Yagna is meant the offering of the worshipper. Sankaracharya and his followers take the word to mean some subtle effect called अपूर्व, which results from Dharma and brings on reward in future. There seems, however, no good reason Jayateertha and



Vedanta Desikar point out, to abandon the plain meaning of the word. It is the offerings and gifts of sacrificers that constitute the vitalizing food of the sun. यज्ञ is then said to be born of Karma. Sacrifice is one kind of work and, unless a man exerts himself, he is not capable of sacrifice or anything else. Hence, sacrifice is the offspring of an active life.

The Geeta verse speaks of Karma, the life of action, as born of Brahman. What is meant is that no sacrifice or holy work is possible if God be put out of account. God ought to be the motive spring of every dutiful action. His gratification should be the goal of every well-directed effort. Of Brahman, it is said in the Geeta, that He is born of Akshara, i.e., Vedas. Deriving knowledge of God from Vedas, one has to engage in work for His Grace. By Yagna, sacrifice duly done, the sacrificer contributes his *quota* for the upkeep of the world. By undertaking Vedic sacrifices, he becomes an instrument for the dissemination of Vedic truths and Divine knowledge.

Sankaracharya construes ब्रह्म to mean Vedas and अक्षर to mean the Supreme God (Brahman). He explains the meaning by pointing out that Vedas emanate from God like breath out of nostrils, and thinks that the clause ब्रह्माक्षरसमुद्भवम् is peculiarly and literally accurate upon this view. Let us, for one moment, pause and note the difference between Sankaracharya and Sri Madhawa on this point. The ordinary and more natural meaning of ब्रह्म is God and अक्षर is Veda. Sri Madhwa adopts these. How God is the offspring of

the Vedas is intelligible enough, because God is known only by the Revealed Word (Vedas). Sankaracharya prefers the notion of Vedas being the offspring of God, to the converse. Brahma Sutra No.3., “शास्त्रयोनित्वात्” is similarly expounded by him. Brahman is the cause of all causes, because, according to this commentator, He is the author of Shastras (Vedas). He rests God’s greatness on the reasoning that He is the father of the Vedas. Even as to Vedic authorship, it is said that the Vedas simply issue from the Divine mouth as an involuntary emanation like breath from nostrils or smoke out of a chimney. But this kind of authorship hardly seems a merit.

Apart from this point, the question is whether there is any good ground for transposing the meanings of ब्रह्म and अक्षर as Sankaracharya does. If Sri Krishna meant Brahman by the word अक्षर, why does he give up that word and use the word ब्रह्म to denote God in the concluding line, verse 15, “therefore the all pervading *Brahman* is ever rooted in sacrifice.” Why does not the Lord repeat the word अक्षर itself? Then again, if Akshara is Brahman, the relation of the segments in the cycle is not properly brought out.

Ramanujacharya expels from the verses any allusion either to Brahman or to the Vedas. The word ब्रह्म denotes, according to him, the human body and the अक्षर Jeevatma or soul within. The cycle then is this – Beings, food, rain, sacrifice, work, body and soul—each of the preceding ones being the result or issue of the succeeding one. The conclusion is that

the body of every man is rooted in sacrifice and cannot exist without it.

The first objection that suggests itself to this rendering is why the human body should be called by the unusual word ब्रह्म and the Jeeva or Atman by the expression अक्षर.

Next, what is the importance of the lesson taught by the conclusion as understood by Ramanujacharya? "To live implies work. We can't live unless we exert ourselves." This point was already taught in far clearer language in verse No. 8, chapter III. "If you be inactive, even the maintenance of your body will be impossible."

Then again, what is the force of saying that ब्रह्म (=the Body) is all-pervading, सर्वगत. It is not so in fact.

Out of the seven things mentioned, why are Yagna and ब्रह्म picked out in the conclusion for special mention? For example, why not say that अक्षर, the soul, is rooted in Yagna or any of the six things aforementioned, instead of ब्रह्म the human body?

The language of the conclusion is obviously meant to give the place of honour to *Yagna and God*. Yagna as the chief lesson of the Thesis and God as the Supreme and primary cause of everything, have been rightly chosen for special emphasis. Any other meaning put on these words renders the sense and the gist of the context discordant.

The reader may note that यज्ञ spoken of here is not necessarily limited to oblations poured into fire. It is a comprehensive word that embraces the duty of every man, be he a Brahmacharin, Grihasta, Vanaprastha or Sanyasi. The duties of the householder may lie in the direction of *Agnihotra*, but men of the other orders have their duties and sacrifices, and they are all known as Yagnas. For instance, the bachelor-student has his studies, the Grihasta has to study and to teach, and the Vanaprastha has similar duties too. The Sanyasin has to teach and to contemplate. There are sacrifices, mental, verbal and physical, common to all orders. Sacrifice on this extensive scale keeps the earthly world in the good graces of the Heavenly Powers and upholds it, and, so far as the individual sacrificer is concerned, brings him merit as a follower, revealer, and proclaimer of God and the Vedas.

17) यस्त्वात्मरतिरेव स्यादात्मतृप्तश्च मानवः ।  
आत्मन्येव च सन्तुष्टस्तस्य कार्यं न विद्यते ॥

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| यः          | ... whoever  |
| तु          | ... but  |
| आत्मरतिः एव | ... a person that rejoices in God alone            |
| स्यात्      | ... shall be                                       |
| आत्मतृप्तः  | ... one who is satiated with everything<br>but God |
| च           | ... also   |



|           |                       |
|-----------|-----------------------|
| मानवः     | ... the Seer          |
| आत्मनि    | ... fixed in God      |
| एव        | ... alone             |
| च         | ... and               |
| संतुष्टः  | ... ecstasied         |
| तस्य      | ... to him            |
| कार्यं    | ... work : obligation |
| न विद्यते | ... does not exist.   |

“But whoever, being a Seer, rejoices in God alone, is also satiated with everything but God, and, being fixed in Divine contemplation, is merged in ecstasy, — to him there is no obligation of work.”

The lessons taught thus far insisted on the obligation of work from various stand-points. Inaction was condemned. The relation between man and the gods was explained and their mutual service and obligations were pointed out. The cosmic wheel and the duty of every man to contribute his *quota* of energy and labour towards its rotation, were set forth, lest the idle man who fails to do so should incur sin, and waste his precious life. Thus, the predication was that every one should work and render service. The obligation being expressed as universal, Arjuna doubts if any exception could be thought of and Sri Krishna proceeds to point out the exception.

Men of spiritual culture fall under various heads. Most of them are full of theoretic and bookish lore. Some transcend this stage and attain to God-vision—

a personal, ocular, communion with the Great Light. Of this class, some again remain entranced in Divine contemplation. These meditating seers, unconscious of the external world and plunged in the trance absolute, face to face with God alone, thinking of nothing else, and simply absorbed by the ecstasy of Divine meditation, form the exception to the rule of universal work. They are under no obligations to observe the rites and routine of a religious life. They need not awake at any stated hour of the day or night to fulfill any tasks imposed by religion. No sin attaches to them for the omission.

The reader will please note the word मानव which ordinarily means a man. Here however, it cannot bear that meaning, for, higher beings than Man, Rishis, and others, come equally with human seers under the exception, as they too are not governed by the rule of work if plunged in the meditation-trance. The word मानव is used in the etymological sense of the "knower" मन् - to know It denotes the Seer who has visioned God. The object is to teach us that whoever falls within the exception is first of all a Seer and being such goes into trance. No one is fit for this असंप्रज्ञातसमाधि unless he is first a Seer. Sri Madhwa construes मानव to denote the Seer. Sankarananda's interpretation of the word is similar. Madhusoodana takes the ordinary meaning "man". The generic expression "man" is meant, according to him, to exclude all sectarian ideas—such as that the Seer should be a Brahmin, or a Dwija or of such and such a lineage, or such and such antecedents. It means that whoever

is a Seer is exempt from work, irrespective of caste, creed or colour.

“तस्य कार्यं न विद्यते” = “To *him* there is no work”. Who is the person that has no work, and what kind of work is it that he is exempt from, are the two doubts we have to get clear of. Desikar starts an objection that कार्यं here might mean “the body” and negatives the suggestion, for good reasons. Then he proceeds to say that, as even Muktas (Redeemed souls) are engaged in doing something or other, — e.g., (sports and enjoyments created and gratified at will) — ‘to be exempt from work’ must be limited in sense so as to denote “work leading to Divine knowledge”. As the Seers in question are already in possession of Divine knowledge, they have no work to do for attaining it. Sri Madhwa does not adopt this restriction in sense, because, he confines the verse to apply not to seers in general but to those seers who are in meditation absolute. It has to be added that the verse may be construed so as to apply to redeemed souls (मुक्त). The description applies very appropriately to them. They rejoice in God alone and are absolutely centred in Him. To them there is no work as a matter of duty or compulsion. If they do at all, it is only a spontaneous act, purely voluntary, governed by no rule of law, and done or refrained from at their sweet will. Sri Madhwa has adopted this meaning too.

Sankaracharya and his followers have long notes here about the transcendent character of one who has realized unity with God. Sankarananda in particular

has waxed eloquent on his favorite theme. He points out that, having realized oneness with God, he can possibly have nothing in the shape of either work or obligation. The *Summum Bonum* being reached, there is nothing more to gain or desire for, either for the sake of himself or others. He regards himself as redeemed and the entire universe too along with him.

What more has he to gain and wherefore? It is conceivable, he says, that the purification of one's soul may be the object of work and duties; but the notion is quite wrong, because he says Rudra and Vishnu remained pure in spite of many millions of misdeeds, sinful and unrighteous, which they perpetrated. This commentator then discusses the Geeta lesson that every one ought to work as an example to the rest of the world and to keep the world going. He excepts every seer from this obligation, both the person who has reached the goal and the one who is on the path thereto.

The reasoning of this annotator is fallacious. How profane and contemptuous is the reference to Vishnu, the God Supreme, perpetrating millions of misdeeds, the reader will not fail to note. Vishnu is however credited with being at least a Seer of Brahman. So, he regards himself and the entire cosmos as redeemed, the illusion of Duality being either absent or gone. Why and how, does he, a realized Monist, commit misdeeds or any deeds whatever? The inconsistency is patent.

Sri Krishna says that He himself does work to set an example to the world and keep it going. Is Sri Krishna a Seer or only a Seeker?



The Seer does not believe in the reality of the world, is not a desirer, does not believe in any work, fears no sin and fears not the Shastras, and hence cannot and does not engage in work. Indeed, the Seer is thus a very audacious and reckless person. Why does he not fear God and the Shastras? Why does he not purify his body, mind and soul, more and more, and increasingly desire for Divine Grace and Blessings? Why should he not please God by further studies and teaching. It is indeed a large order that even the seeker (साधक) is on the exemption list. According to Sri Madhwa, the wakeful seer has his duty to perform, and his work hath its reward in the shape of increased and fully-evolved happiness in Vaikunta. Suka, Narada, and many others, were seers, and yet, they engaged in work and service. On the whole, therefore, to exempt the seer-in-trance alone, seems the soundest view.

For one moment, let us turn to the language of the verse. "He who rejoices in God alone, is also satiated with everything but God, and who is in ecstasy, being fixed in God alone"— is the description of the Seer in question. Mark, please, the emphasis on "God alone" repeated three times. It excludes every one who pays the faintest attention to the things of the world. The wakeful seer cannot help paying some thought and attention to worldly wants. Hence, he too is beyond the purview of the Geetic pronouncement under notice.

Taking it then, that the verse speaks of the "seer-in-trance", the reader may see that the "seer-in-trance" should be taken to mean not one who has been in

trance at some time or other but the 'seer *while* in trance'. There are two kinds of expressions in common parlance. Examples: (1) "What falls is heavy"— The quality of weight is indicated by the fall but weighty things may not be always 'falling'. On the other hand, in the statement (2) "Whoever eats shall not speak", the religious import is that the man shall not talk while eating. In the present case, exemption from duties attaches to the seer-in-trance. Therefore the trance and the exemption go together as in the second example above given.

Some people are fond of translating the word आत्मन् into 'self'. It is no doubt very literal. Rendered too literally, the description may well apply to an extremely self-centered and an absolutely selfish individual who knows no being but himself and no wants or pleasures but his own. But the fact is that the person described is not a selfish person but one who loves God with all his heart and all his soul. आत्मन् stands for God.

The ideas are that the seer derives pleasure in God, from God, and by His Grace. The Sanskrit compounds are so flexible as to give room for these various shades of thought.

There are three words रति, तृप्ति and सन्तोष which may seem to be synonymous. The easiest explanation is that they denote various shades of happiness and mental elation. For a more detailed examination of their import and distinction, the reader has to be referred to the Sanskrit notes.

That these three words (रति, तृप्ति and सन्तोष) express degrees of joy seems clear enough. Madhusoodana adds a gloss that the seer does not really feel or enjoy any positive happiness, but what is meant is only a negation of unhappiness – of the converse of रति, तृप्ति and सन्तोष. The Advaitic dogma is that the Atman is incapable of attributes or qualities, that सत्य, ज्ञान and आनन्द predicated in the Vedas of the Atman mean only an absence of असत्य, अज्ञान and अनानन्द. Consistently with this tenet, the notions of the Geeta-verse under comment are construed as denoting merely negatives aspects. The violence done hereby to the plain language of the text is obvious.

Whether Arjuna is to be reckoned as a *gnanin* or otherwise is a moot point between us and the school of Sankaracharya. It has been discussed more than once in chapter II. Arjuna being an incarnation of Indra and नरांश, and being reckoned a *gnanin* in Bhagavata, Skandha II, along with Dhruva and others, it is only reasonable to regard him as a Deva and a Seer. If so, it would be disastrous for Sri Krishna to tell him that a seer has no art or part in the work-a-day life. It would afford Arjuna a most excellent pretext to retire from the battle-field. According to Sri Madhwa's rendering, Arjuna has no such excuse, because the exemption applies only to the seer-in-trance or to redeemed souls, and Arjuna is obviously not in that condition.

18) नैव तस्य कृतेनार्थो नाकृतेनेह कश्चन ।  
न चास्य सर्वभूतेषु कश्चिदर्थव्यपाश्रयः ॥

|                |     |                             |
|----------------|-----|-----------------------------|
| न एव           | ... | not at all                  |
| तस्य           | ... | to him                      |
| कृतेन          | ... | from work                   |
| अर्थः          | ... | benefit                     |
| न              | ... | not                         |
| अकृतेन         | ... | by not doing; or by misdeed |
| इह             | ... | here                        |
| कश्चन          | ... | whatever                    |
| न च            | ... | nor                         |
| अस्य           | ... | to him                      |
| सर्वभूतेषु     | ... | among all beings            |
| कश्चित्        | ... | whatsoever                  |
| अर्थव्यपाश्रयः | ... | any source of boon          |

"To him there is no benefit at all by work, nor evil from no work (or misdeed). Nor is there among all beings any one who is a source of good to him."

If this verse and the last verse relate only to those who have attained the salvation absolute, the sense is fairly clear. Such a person is governed by no rules of duty. He is absorbed in God and merged in Divine ecstasies. There is no purpose to be served by his indulging in work, and no sin to be averted by observances. He depends on none, for, nobody confers any blessing on him, except God.



If the verses do not refer to redeemed souls, i.e., *the actual tenants of Vaikunta*, they refer in the alternative to seers who have visioned God. Reasons have been given for the view that among them, it is the 'seers-in-trance', to whom the description applies.

The query now arises how the verse under comment can apply to the *seer-in-trance*. He is incapable of external experience, and, therefore, it is out of place to talk of benefit, advantage, sin, or dependence, with reference to him.

The doubt however disappears upon a little scrutiny. If work has any attractions for him, if there be any pleasure he can derive by means of work and observances, if any sin would attach to him for not observing scriptural rules, he would arrange to awake from trance at proper times for that purpose. The Yoga Sastra provides devices for waking up seers from their trance. He would instruct a friend or relation as to what should be done for waking him, before going into trance, so that he would wake up, say, at 6 A.M., or 6 P.M., for Sandhyavandanam, and such other times or hours as may be necessary. The exquisite bliss while in trance is not equalled or surpassed by any joy of the wakeful state, however great. Nor is there any rule as to Sandhya or other duty applicable to this seer. Every one owes duties to elders, preceptors, guests, and so on. But there is none to whom homage or service is due by a *seer-in-trance*. We may revert once more to consider why the verse should not apply to the seer, in general, as distinguished from the *seer-in-trance*. Even the seer who is moving about in the world, participating in worldly concerns,

and acting and behaving like other men, incurs no sin by inaction. If he is guilty, however, of palpable misdeeds, they would not fail to affect him a bit by diminishing his ultimate Heavenly bliss. Deeds of virtue and piety done by him after God-vision are not absolutely barren of fruit. In Heaven, they would add to his happiness just as the reverse of it would affect his bliss. This is a peculiar tenet of Sri Madhwa and is discussed in a somewhat long exposition in the Sanskrit notes.

As the verse speaks of no benefit and no sin, it must therefore apply only to the *seer-in-trance* who alone enjoys such an absolute immunity.

Madhusoodana quotes *Vasishta* and elaborately sets forth seven stages of the Holy Path beginning with the student turning his attention to holy studies and ending with the *yogin* who is plunged absolutely in the realization of Divine Unity. He then observes that the last and the present verses apply to any one in the said 7 stages. (योगभूमिकामरूढः).

*Utkarsha Deepika* criticizes madhusoodana on the ground that there is no word in the text which explicitly refers to any technical Yogin. Madhusoodana and his critic seem to be both partially wrong and partially right. It is wrong to apply the Geetic description to a mere student, as Madhusoodana does. It is equally wrong to take the description as applicable to seers in general, for reasons it is needless to repeat. If Madhusoodana had, after setting forth the seven stages, confined the text to stages Nos. 5, 6 and 7, he would have been right.

In another particular too, Madhusoodana, it seems to me, has erred. He understands कृतेन which means literally 'action' to denote 'knowledge' also, so that, according to him, the meaning is that the seer has no benefit to derive from work or from *knowledge*. The inclusion of knowledge is of very doubtful soundness; for, the seer has, forsooth, every blessing to attain by means knowledge, Divine Concentration and Divine Grace.

According to Neelakanta, अकृतेन should not denote 'non action', - though etymology has no objection to that meaning. He argues that a positive thing like sin cannot result from a mere negation, such as absence of work or performance. The idea is based on the physical principle that nothing can come out of nothing. But the fallacy is obvious. In respect to objects whose physical stuff is made up of physical causes, the principle of 'nothing out of nothing' is sound enough. But there are causes and causes. A goldsmith or a potter is not the physical cause of a bangle or a pot as gold or mud is. Just as commission leads to sin, so omission also leads to sin. In such a plain proposition the physical truth relied on by Neelakanta is out of place. Venture to think that he needlessly criticizes Madhusoodana. It therefore follows that अकृतं in the text means non-work as well as misdeed.

The second line of the text is meant to predicate absence of benefit or evil from a cause not covered by the first line. It may also, as Madhusoodana thinks, be construed to furnish merely a reason for the proposition in the first line.

The school of Sankaracharya take it that the reference in सर्वभूतेषु is to the hierarchy of gods who can no longer, according to Suits, prevent the Seer from reaching his goal. from this moment, the Seer is free of the gods, as these are powerless to throw impediments in his path.

Ramanujacharya takes सर्वभूतेषु to denote the world of matter, the material elements around us that minister to our wants. The Seer is free from them and is no longer under any necessity to resort to them for his existence or comfort.

Sri Madhwa reads the line as a general proposition to the effect that he depends upon no being (but God), and there is none for whose sake he need trouble himself to wake up from the bliss of the Seer's trance.

19) तस्मादसक्तस्सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर ।  
असक्तो ह्याचरन्कर्म परमाप्नोति पूरुषः ॥

|           |     |                               |
|-----------|-----|-------------------------------|
| तस्मात्   | ... | Therefore                     |
| असक्तः    | ... | unattached; desireless        |
| सततं      | ... | always                        |
| कार्यं    | ... | dutiful                       |
| कर्म      | ... | work                          |
| समाचर     | ... | perform                       |
| असक्तः हि | ... | one who is desireless, indeed |



|         |     |                                  |
|---------|-----|----------------------------------|
| आचरन्   | ... | doing                            |
| कर्म    | ... | work                             |
| परं     | ... | the Supreme; or the highest goal |
| आप्नोति | ... | attains                          |
| पुरुषः  | ... | the person                       |

“Therefore, perform ordained work without desire (of fruit). Indeed, it is the person who does work without desire that reaches God(or Mukti.)”

The verse begins with ‘Therefore’. It refers us to the reasons already set forth. Commentaries have pointed out various grounds according to the school they lead, and the force of the word ‘Therefore’ varies, accordingly, on the lines severally adopted.

If Arjuna be an ignorant person, low on the rungs of spiritual culture, as the Monist-school has it, ‘Therefore’ points to that as the reason why he is not yet fit for *gnanamarga* and should confine himself to work. Sankaracharya and most of his followers explain तस्मात् on this basis. Neelakanta goes far into the 2nd chapter for the antecedent of ‘Therefore’. A ‘desireless’ work brings on bondage, *therefore*, says he “engage in such work”. The allusion is apparently to the whole body of lessons in chapter II, relating to unmercenary performance of duty.

Sri Madhwa understands ‘Therefore’ to be a reference to what has just been said in verses 17 and 18. “As immunity from dutiful work applies only to two sets of people, namely: (i) The redeemed souls,

and (ii) those who are sears-in-trance, and as you, Arjuna, are not in either of the two conditions, you are bound to engage in work.”

Ramanujacharya thinks that the text here is meant to point out the efficacy of *karmayoga* as the only proper and practical path for all seekers and as quite superior to *gnanayoga*, the reasons being that *karmayoga* is easy, is not attended with risks and does, in fact, involve *Gnana*. For these reasons, he thinks that every one, whatever his qualification or aptitude, even if he be fit for *gnanayoga*, ought rather to adopt *karmayoga*, invariably and always. Attention is drawn to the word सततं in the text meaning ‘always’ as confirming his view about the sole efficacy and superiority of *karmayoga*. The word ‘Therefore’ तस्मात् and हि (in the second line) of the same significance are made to serve the same explanation.

It is doubtful if the Lord meant to compare the relative merits of *gnanayoga* and *karmayoga* here and hold up the former as inferior to the latter. Nowhere in the text, do we find the reasons adverted to by the commentator, viz., that *karmayoga* is easy and involves no risks. If *karmayoga* is the only safe path for everyone, then, why has *gnanayoga* been pointed out at all as a path by itself? Seers are, in fact, classed as Bhaktiyogins *Gnanayogins*, and *Karmayogins*, according to the preponderating element of Bhakti, Gnana and Karma in each. Devas are Bhaktiyogins; Rishis, *Gnanayogins*; and men are *Karmayogins*. Each of these classes adopts the means respectively suited to them.

Arjuna is, no doubt, a Bhaktiyogin, according to this classification. But, while on earth, he has to do *karma*, being an आधिकारिकपुरुष like Priyavrata and others.

The reader's attention is invited to the fourth clause of the verse. Therein, it is said that the doer of unselfish work attains परं which means either the Supreme God or Mukti. This is the meaning assigned to it by Sri Madhwa and by the school of Sankaracharya. But Ramanujacharya takes परं to mean the जीव (the individual soul). The clause then means that the performer of non-selfish work attains the soul. What is the attainment hereby contemplated? It may mean that he understands the true nature of the Soul viz., that it is Spirit transcending matter, or that he throws off the material shackles, the spirit emerging in its true light of unalloyed *sat, chit and ananda*. Virtually, the meaning will be that he attains Mukti. If so, the word पर (Supreme) might be rendered into Mukti straightaway without the circuitous process of making it denote the Jeeva in the first instance.

20) कर्मणैव हि संसिद्धिमास्थिता जनकादयः ।

लोकसंग्रहमेवापि संपश्यन्कर्तुमर्हसि ॥

कर्मणा ... with the aid of karma

एव ... only

हि ... indeed

संसिद्धिं ... the goal; perfection; salvation

आस्थिताः ... obtained

|            |     |                      |
|------------|-----|----------------------|
| जनकादयः    | ... | Janaka and others    |
| लोकसंग्रहं | ... | welfare of the world |
| एव         | ... | at least             |
| अपि        | ... | and                  |
| संपश्यन्   | ... | having regard to     |
| कर्तुं     | ... | engage in work       |
| अर्हसि     | ... | you shall            |

"With the aid of karma, indeed, Janaka and other attained perfection. And, having regard to the welfare of the world at least, you shall engage in work."

The Lord quotes precedent for bringing the lesson home. Janaka and others did not renounce the world but lived the life of strenuous duty and attained salvation.

In Mahabharata, Santi Parva, Janaka is mentioned many a time discoursing on high themes of philosophy. "Janaka" may be a generic title of Mithila's monarchs, transmitted in a long line.

In chapter 18 of Santi Parva, Arjuna tells his brother Yudhishtira how Janaka once intended seriously to renounce the world and how his wife dissuaded him by pointing out that instead of taking to mendicancy, he should rule the kingdom without any self-love or egotism, thereby pleasing God and doing his duty. This incident is one that Arjuna was well aware of, as it was he that was going to relate the dialogue to his brother later on. It is not impossible that the Lord quotes 'Janaka' to Arjuna as if saying to him by the particle हि, 'verily', "you know it very well, my dear friend."



Later on, in Santi Parva, there is a learned dialogue between Janaka and Asma.

Again, in chapters 220, 221, and 222, Panchaka delivers a long discourse on philosophy to Janaka:— 'God Agni takes human form and enters into the kingdom of Janaka for testing him. He commits a misdemeanour, and is taken to the king. In the royal presence, he puts a shrewd question to Janaka, asking him what he considered *his* territory and requesting him to define its limit. The king pondered over the question and felt perplexed. He answered that he was either the owner of the Universe or the owner of nothing, and sent the Brahmin away without further parley. The Brahmin left Janaka and set fire to a portion of the city. Some one told the king of it, and the reply he made was that if the whole city were burnt down, nothing belonging to him would have suffered damage. The calm philosopher was thinking of his own littleness and helplessness from a religious point of view, and showed, by his stoic indifference, an utter disattachment and dispassion to things *worldly*. The God of fire was highly pleased with the philosophic wisdom of Janaka and conferred boons on him.' One who reads this story as an example of culpable indifference to suffering would misread the moral. Its true import is to emphasize the greatness of the seer in subduing self-love and selfishness out and out, and resigning himself into the hands of the All-wise Providence.

In chapters 296-304, there is a long dialogue between Parasara and Janaka. Herein, the golden rule of 'Do unto others what you would wish done unto you'

is forcibly set out. To live in the world without being entangled in its turmoil is the gist of the teaching.

Whether Janaka referred to is one individual or more than one of the same name, it is evident that a monarch or monarchs of that name commanded esteem for divine insight, and constituted a name to be conjured with. Hence Sri Krishna instances Janaka. With him, the name of Priyavrata (of Skandha V, Bhagavata) may also be mentioned. There are heaps of others who could also be thought of. They were all seers; but none of them forsook the world and betook to the forest.

The Geeta verse says that these seers reached the goal with the aid of *karma*. Unselfish work enabled them, when on the wrong side of divine light, to attain that light, and, after Divine vision, it enabled them to perfect their perfection, as it were, and have the full measure and capacity of spiritual bliss unfolded to them in Mukti.

Some hold that *Karma*(work) leads the worker unto Heaven as a direct cause of the effect. This is the theory of Meemamsakas. The school of Sankaracharya combats this view and holds that the only efficacy of *karma* is to bring on mental purity, and that Mukti is the result of *gnana*, and *gnana alone*. Sri Madhwa opines that, although Mukti results only from *gnana*, *karma* is helpful to the seer before and after God-vision; before, it secures him mental purity and paves the way to vision; after, it appeals to God who, in His Grace, ordains to the seer the unfolding of bliss in Heaven to the fullest extent he is qualified for.

Sri Madhwa rejects the belief that shrines, holy rivers, and pilgrimages, can, of themselves, bring on salvation. They may be holy and may purify the pilgrim; but Divine Light is the result of study and meditation alone. No doubt, Benares and Prayag, the Ganges and the Godavary, have been praised in hyperbolic words. But the hyperbole is meant only to accentuate their sanctity.

There is yet another reason why even the accomplished seer should engage in work. The world requires control and guidance for its moral and spiritual evolution and progress. If the seer retire into the forest the moment he is blessed with Divine Light, he is virtually lost to humanity. An ignorant world has to be taken in hand and guided carefully along paths of unselfish work. It is the privilege of the seer to take up his younger brethren in hand and guide them. He should set the example of duty performed for its own sake and for pleasing God. Having regard to the welfare of the world, the seer is , therefore, told to engage in work.

The world is not what we see through our naked eyes and ears. There is more behind it of which we have no idea. Unseen powers are guiding its motive-springs. Seers, seen and unseen, are in charge of its intricate wheels. Let the wise man realize that he has a duty to his fellowmen and stay on, irrespective of any mercenary motives, to fulfil that duty. The idea is lofty and makes for order and progress.

Sri Madhwa points out, quoting authority for his position that such an unselfish piece of work does

not go unrewarded. The seer acts from an implicit trust in God, and will find his reward in Divine Pleasure and enhanced Heavenly bliss.

Among the commentators of the Sankara school, some (especially Madhusoodana) render the text as conveying the lesson that, because Kshatriya-kings like Janaka betook to work, he, Arjuna, should do likewise. They quote Dharma Sastra for the position that the fourth Asrama (Asceticism) is barred to a Kshatriya. Being born a Kshatriya out of Prarabdha-karma, Arjuna, it follows, had no alternative but to engage in military duty and work out his Prarabdha-karma. It was part of that Prarabdha-karma, assuming that he was an accomplished seer, that he should guide and control the world, and he must do it though he may reap no benefit at all therefrom.

This view, bringing into prominence the question of Arjuna's caste, introduces an unnecessary controversy. Whether a Kshatriya is not qualified to take up the Fourth Order is a point that does not seem to arise for the present context. While Madhusoodana dwells much on the point and concludes against the Kshatriya, he himself quotes Vartika for the opposite opinion. It may be observed that nowhere in the whole discourse does Sri Krishna say to Arjuna "you are incompetent and disqualified for Sanyasa by reason of your birth." In the passages of Mahabharata quoted above, (*vide* Janaka and his wife), the wife of Janaka does not point out to her husband this fatal objection that his caste operated as a bar. In Bhagavata, Vth Skandha, Brahma had to dissuade King Priyavrata from asceticism, but he too did not urge this objection founded on his caste.



There is no doubt that God-vision, as we call it, or self-realization, as others say, is the monopoly of no caste. A Kshatriya seer necessarily renounces all worldly work by reason of the Divine light within him. That he is prohibited from assuming the garb and wielding the sceptre of the technical Sanyasin does not affect the point. He is a recluse, all the same, in thought, word, and deed. So Arjuna, deeming himself a seer, might retort at once that his caste offered no difficulty in the matter of renunciation.

Neelakanta, a commentator of the same school as Madhusoodana, has felt the force of this reasoning and disregarded the forced construction of the latter. Moreover, for the guidance, welfare, and control, of the world, even Brahmins are bound to work, although they are qualified technically for Sanyasa. Hence no question of qualification or disqualification need introduce a complication here. It is good to engage in work. It is quite efficacious to do so, for, unselfish work leads to proper rewards. To guide and control the world, even a seer does work and has to work. God is pleased thereby, and due benefit will follow in Vaikunta. As to men like Janaka and Priyavrata, there is an additional circumstance that they were आधिकारिकपुरुषाः — persons placed in positions of power and responsibility' to carry out Divine purposes in the governance of the world. Arjuna too belonged to the same class. These were bound to fulfill the purpose by strenuous performance, seers though they were.

Ramanujacharya sums up the gist of the text thus; 'One who is not qualified for Gnanayoga has no alternative but to take refuge in Karmayoga. This

has been already taught. Arjuna is of this class. Even those that are qualified for Gnanayoga, such as Janaka, have adopted Karmayoga because the latter is the superior course. Apart from qualification or qualification for Gnanayoga, any one who occupies the position of a leader and whose example will weigh with the public, must engage in work for the guidance of the world in the interests order and progress.'

21) यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः ।

स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ॥

|                |                         |
|----------------|-------------------------|
| यत्, यत्       | ... whatsoever          |
| आचरति          | ... does                |
| श्रेष्ठः       | ... a great man         |
| तत्, तत्       | ... that, that          |
| एव             | ... only                |
| इतरः           | ... other               |
| जनः            | ... persons             |
| सः             | ... he                  |
| यत्            | ... whatever            |
| प्रमाणं कुरुते | ... makes authoritative |
| लोकः           | ... people              |
| तत्            | ... that                |
| अनुवर्तते      | ... follow              |

"Whatever is done by a great man, that alone is done by other people; whatever he makes authoritative, that, the world follows."

The seer was told in the last verse to engage in work, for guiding the world. Who is competent to guide, and how is the guidance achieved? The text says, the great man guides and his example and his precept have the desired effect.

It is not every man that can deem himself 'great' for this purpose. He must be great, in truth, being possessed of knowledge and wisdom. He must excel in all that makes for leadership. By position as well as by merit, should he deserve to lead. As is the king, so are the subjects; as is the preceptor, so is the pupil; as is the father, so is the son. The influence of preceptor, leader or guide, in the formation of others' character, is only too obvious. Human education begins even in the cradle, and continues throughout on the basis of imitation. This holds good in intellectual progress, moral emulations, social advancements and fashionable pursuits. A reputed leader is a powerful influence for good or evil.

We see clearly enough that to imitate or to follow chimes in with our natural inclinations. It means proceeding in the line of least trouble. It saves us the time and trouble of original thought and research such as is involved in chalking out a path. Men are, to a large extent, sheepish by habit, and hero-worship is largely ingrained in our nature. Moreover, Shastras not only approve of obedience to the leader, but even lay it down as a duty. Manus says that as Vedas and Smritis are authoritative, so also is the example of good men and whatever has the approval of conscience. Vasishta lays down the law in similar words. Vedas, Dharma Shastras, and the standard set up by elders,

are the sources of law indicated by him. Of these, each preceding one is more authoritative than the next.

As people follow the great, naturally, and as it is also their duty to do so, it follows that the responsibility of the latter to set a proper example is correspondingly onerous.

It is the duty of the leader to accdept and promulgate as authority, only those teachings and old works as are truly great and binding. Ordinary people follow leaders on the presumption that what the latter do is likely to rest on a proper basis.

The idea in the second line of the text is that, whatever of true authority is propounded and promulgated as such, becomes the law. Reading the verse superficially, one might run away with the idea that whatever the leader may choose to say or do, be it true or not, is to be blindly accepted. This is, of course, wrong. The duty of following him rests on a presumption of his wisdom, and it is a rebuttable presumption. The example of the great is authority only in so far as it rests truly on some Sruti or Smriti, though the latter may be unknown to people.

Sri Madhwa reads प्रमाणं कुरुते to mean प्रमाणं सत् प्रमाणीकुरुते "Whatever, *being of authority*, is propounded *as such* to those who are ignorant." The qualification that the particular teaching should already rest on a sound basis, is important, and has been laid stress on by Sri Madhwa alone. In short, the teaching and example of the leader corresponds to *judge-made-law*



and not to enactments of the legislature, *in the words of a lawyer*.

There occur long passages in Santi Parva, chapter 224, where the responsibility of the leader to guide and control the duties of castes and *orders* aright, is elaborately set out and the penalties for misguiding, laid down. (*Vide Sanskrit Portion*).

With the exception of the point made clear by Sri Madhwa alone, namely, that the function of the leader is to elucidate the law and not make a new one, the commentators have not differed materially on the general purport of the text. Sankaracharya and his followers point out that the first line of the text deals with the conduct of the leader and the second line with his creed and beliefs. 'People follow what he does,' says the first line. 'They follow what he accepts as true,' says the second. Sridhara explains the idea of the 2nd line saying that, if the leader adopts the Shastras making men worldly, the ignorant follow him, but if, on the other hand, the leader adopts Shastras pointing heaven-ward, people follow him also.

Ramanujacharya has something original to say on the second line. According to him, the first line having taught us to follow the aims of the leader, the 2nd line speaks of the leader's *methods* which also should be imitated and followed. It is not the goal alone but also the means employed that should be closely adopted. It is not the behaviour, conduct and actions alone, that men follow, but also the ways and means, the accessories and auxiliaries, that are imitated.

The shades of difference detectable among the commentators are merely subtle varieties of standpoint which do not affect the main point of the text.

22) न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किञ्चन ।

नानवाप्तमवाप्तव्यं वर्त एव च कर्मणि ॥

|            |                         |
|------------|-------------------------|
| न          | ... not                 |
| मे         | ... for me              |
| पार्थ      | ... O ! Arjuna          |
| अस्ति      | ... there is            |
| कर्तव्यं   | ... obligatory work     |
| त्रिषु     | ... in the three        |
| लोकेषु     | ... worlds              |
| किञ्चन     | ... anything whatsoever |
| न          | ... not                 |
| अनवाप्तं   | ... unattained          |
| अवाप्तव्यं | ... attainable          |
| वर्ते      | ... am engaged          |
| एव         | ... only                |
| च          | ... yet                 |
| कर्मणि     | ... in work             |

“O! Arjuna, there is no obligatory work for me in the three worlds. There is nothing unattained by me, and nothing to be obtained. Yet, I am ever engaged in work.”

Sri Krishna quoted Janaka as an example of a non-selfish worker. He pointed out that, ever engaged, as Janaka was, in work, his engagement stood not as a hindrance to salvation. The Lord now offers a much higher example. Janaka, being a Jeeva, might work for Mukti or for enhanced bliss in Heaven. His work might, therefore, be not altogether free from aim, be it ever so slight. Hence, Sri Krishna quotes Himself as an example. God is ever engaged in work although there is not the slightest benefit or fruit to be attained by Him. The lesson impressed is that, when the Lord works in the absence of any purpose or benefit in view, why others should not do likewise, inasmuch as even the Seer reaps a reward in the shape of enhanced bliss in Heaven and the non-seer has his reward in God-vision and Emancipation.

The point conveyed by the verse is missed if the reader does not accept Sri Krishna as an incarnation of God. Of late, some, for instance, say that Sankaracharya, Buddha, Sri Krishna and Jesus, are no other than Rishi Maitreya. Notions of this kind are quite fallacious and out of place in Vedic theology.

As God, Sri Krishna is ever full in bliss. His knowledge and potency are likewise full and unlimited. There is no benefit or bliss he is not ever possessed of, and none whatever that he has to strive for. Yet, He is ever engaged in work. Vedic Theology accounts for Divine activity in two ways. The activity is spontaneous, out and out. Comparing small things with great, the drunkard sings away with no purpose in view. The madman jumps about with no object. It is of the Divine essence that He should be active.

His volition, knowledge, and activity are eternal. It may be that, sometimes, his activity is latent and at other times it is patent. But, latent or patent, it is always there.

Secondly, He ever works for the order and progress of the world, (लोकसंग्रह). He sets the wheel ever in motion, regulates and governs all, and sets a worthy example of incessant activity.

The verse speaks of the "three worlds". भूः, भुवः स्वः are the three worlds ordinarily denoted by the expression. That God works *everywhere* is the purport of what is said, not alone these three so-called worlds. He has nothing to do or wish for in these three worlds, nor in the three states of 'wakefulness, dream and sleep,' nor in the three conditions of body, known as gross, subtle and causal, nor in Forms known as Viswa, Taijasa and Pragna. (विश्व, तैजस, प्राज्ञ).

23) यदि ह्यहं न वर्तेयं जातु कर्मण्यतन्द्रितः ।

मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः ॥

|           |     |              |
|-----------|-----|--------------|
| यदि       | ... | if           |
| हि        | ... | indeed       |
| अहं       | ... | I            |
| न वर्तेयं | ... | do not enage |
| जातु      | ... | always       |
| कर्मणि    | ... | in work      |



|             |     |                  |
|-------------|-----|------------------|
| अतन्द्रितः  | ... | without laziness |
| मम          | ... | my               |
| वर्त्म      | ... | path             |
| अनुवर्तन्ते | ... | will pursue      |
| मनुष्याः    | ... | men              |
| पार्थ       | ... | O ! Arjuna       |
| सर्वशः      | ... | all              |

“Indeed, if I do not always engage in work without intermission, my example (of inaction) will be followed by all men, O ! Partha.”

It is the privilege of a great man to lead others by setting a good example. If Sri Krishna led an indolent life, others would do likewise. His divinity, princely birth, and greatness, attracted universal following. If he omitted or neglected duties laid down for a person of his birth, rank and caste, everybody would abandon the duties of his own station forthwith, under the shelter of the Master's example.

The order and progress of human society, therefore, demanded that the Master should always set a worthy example. Thus, the Lord set unto Himself duties never slackened on any account. जातु ‘always’ and अतन्द्रितः ‘unintermittent’ show that He is active without intermission, and otherwise, every one would go astray. A leader who is not universally obeyed and followed has not so grave a responsibility as one who is universally looked up to. The greater the elevation, the greater the responsibility.

The language of this verse offers little difficulty. The words are simple and the construction plain.

In the second line अनुवर्तन्ते though used as Indicative Mood, Present tense, is used, in fact, in the potential sense. 'If I should be negligent, all men would do likewise' is the purport. The line does not state a mere fact that people follow Him, but points out a disaster in people following a bad example.

The author of Utkarsha Deepika thinks that a gentle rebuke was meant to be conveyed here to Arjuna to the effect that although everyone obeyed Sri Krishna, he (Arjuna), kinsman as he was, would not do so. The context hardly justifies this meaning. There is no occasion for such a rebuke. The teacher is speaking generally of a bad example being followed blindly by others. According to this writer, if Sri Krishna ceased to work, all men would do likewise, "*except Arjuna*". In other words, Arjuna alone would continue to work without heeding the example of Sri Krishna. Is this the meaning? Obviously, it makes no sense.

Desikar is of opinion that the foregoing verse spoke of Divine work in all the three worlds, but that the verse under comment is restricted, however, to Sri Krishna alone. He thinks that the reference to other worlds indicated a comprehensive inclusion of all the Avatars of God, in any world, and at any time, whereas the express mention of मनुष्याः *men*, in the present verse, indicated a narrowed reference. As to this comment, it has to be observed that, if the last verse spoke of

Divine work in all the three worlds, the present verse, describing the disaster of the converse position, should, likewise, embrace the whole range of Divine activity. It seems to me that the two verses deal with *Divine work* and *no work* in the same sphere and region. If all Avatars were intended before, consistency and cogency require the same intention here also.

Desikar's difficulty is that the word मनुष्याः restricts the region to the human world. But this does not follow. It is not unusual to mean by such an expression the entire animal world. Instead of restricting the scope of the verse to the Avatar of Sri Krishna, the meaning of the word मनुष्याः may be duly enlarged; or, perhaps, the last verse itself may be understood as speaking of the Avatar of Sri Krishna alone. There is no word therein which compels us to construe the verse as an all-comprehensive reference to all the Avatars of God. The expression 'in the three worlds' may puzzle us a bit at first. But this phrase may go with the predicate "there is no obligatory work for me and nothing unattained or to be obtained." In other words, Sri Krishna has nothing to wish for 'in the three worlds.' It is not necessary to connect the expression "in the three worlds" with the predicate 'I am engaged in work' so as to make out the proposition that He works elsewhere too through other Avatars.

24) उत्सीदेयुरिमे लोका न कुर्यां कर्म चेदहम् ।

सङ्करस्य च कर्ता स्यामुपयहन्यामिमाः प्रजाः ॥

|                    |     |                         |
|--------------------|-----|-------------------------|
| उत्सीदेयुः         | ... | will be lost            |
| इमे                | ... | these                   |
| लोकाः              | ... | people                  |
| न अहं कुर्यां चेत् | ... | if I do not             |
| कर्म               | ... | work                    |
| संकरस्य च          | ... | and confusion           |
| कर्ता स्यां        | ... | I shall be the cause of |
| उपहन्त्यां         | ... | I shall be ruining      |
| इमां               | ... | These                   |
| प्रजाः             | ... | subjects                |

“ If I do not engage in work, these people will be lost. I shall be the author of confusion and will be ruining these creatures.”

If people fail in duty, confusion and disorder are the immediate result. Justice miscarries. Legal, moral, and social restraints, disappearing, men relapse into barbarism. Castes get mixed up. Illegitimacy becomes rampant. Whoever is in a position to stem this tide of disorder, by virtue of his status and position, is responsible for the disaster, if he will not exert himself. Sri Krishna says, “ I shall have brought about all this, if I be indolent, and people follow my example.”

In the last verse, it has been pointed out that Sri Krishna is very probably alluding to the doings of this particular Avatar alone and not to the workings of all Avatars in other regions than the Earth and other planes than the physical and gross.



Ramanujacharya is strongly of this view. The word मनुष्याः in the last verse and the word संकरस्य (of caste-confusion) here, lend some support to this. Madhusoodana (as pointed out by Dharma Datta, his annotator) thinks, however, that the work or God referred to, is the Divine work in any Avatar or Form. If God should fail to create and maintain the cosmos, the ruling deities of nature would not work; there would be no 'nature' and no laws of nature, no morals and no scriptures of ethics and religion. So all along the line, it would be chaos.

It is to be observed that this interpretation is a little too wide for the purposes of the context. Verse 20 called upon Arjuna to set an example to the world and guide it. The doubt arose how Arjuna's default could hinder the progress of the world and how he was in a position to guide it. The reply is started in verse 21 and continued in several verses. The argument is that it is the privilege of a great man to lead and influence his followers. A great man is looked up to by people, and if he errs, they err also. For instance, Sri Krishna engaged in work although he had no end to attain. Similarly, Arjuna, being likewise a leader, was bound to work, at least as an example to others, and guide the world.

It seems to me that this lesson is sufficiently impressed by understanding the reference to Divine actions being confined to Sri Krishna's Avatar. It would be needless to think of subtle Divine Forms working in Heavenly Lokas or at the beginnings and endings of Kalpa. The disaster flowing from Sri Krishna's non-action consists in the non-action of an imitative world.

The danger lies in the imitative character of people. The disaster, broadly speaking, of the God-in-Heaven ceasing to do His Divine work is quite another matter. We have nothing to do with that eventuality. Nor will it very much serve the reasoning of the present argument. Sri Krishna says, he worked and toiled like a man to keep up appearances and guide his fellows. He went through ceremonies, upanayana and marriages, studied in school, and, in every way, lived and moved like a man among men, for the purpose of लोकसंग्रह. If He who could well have dispensed with these forms did not do so, how much more, therefore, should Arjuna and others, Seers as they might be, conform to the duties and conventions of life? Thus, the force of the reasoning will suffer rather than gain by the Divine action being given a comprehensive interpretation.

In interpreting verses 20 to 24, all the commentators are agreed in this that, assuming Arjuna to be a seer, he ought to work at least for the guidance of the world. How he could guide the world and how, if he failed to work, disaster would follow, are explained in verses 21 to 24. The said verses are meant to be explanatory of the statement in verse 20 that Arjuna should work at least for the guidance and welfare of the world.

Madhusoodana too concurs in this mutual relation of the verses. He suggests an alternative exposition, however, thus:— "Verse 20 called on Arjuna to work for the guidance of the world. Verse 21 proceeds to give a different reason why he should work. That reason is the duty of obeying Sri Krishna. The Lord says, according to this author, " You are my follower

and I am the leader. You ought to follow my example. I work, and so you must. Every one follows me, and why not you? Being my follower, you should not chalk out for yourselves an original line of action, instead of obeying me."

This explanation is ingenious but not convincing. It reads more natural to connect verses 21 onwards with the line of argument started in verse 20, based on "the guidance of the world." It sounds somewhat dictatorial that the Lord should say "I am great, you are not; I lead, you follow." Sri Krishna seldom takes up such an attitude. He is gentle in words and persuasive in argument. The reasoning based on the idea of "consideration of the world's welfare" called for explanation, and this consisted in taking Arjuna too to be a leader of men, as he certainly was, and proceeding to show what was expected of him as a leader. In this view, the tone is not only conciliatory but even complimentary, and the reasoning, cogently argued. If Sri Krishna said, "because I work, you must do likewise," Arjuna might retort "you might well work, for, it is all sport for you. You are perfect, and there is no benefit to be derived by you. But my position is different and is not to be compared with yours." To this retort, the answer is that just as Sri Krishna worked for the welfare and guidance of the world, Arjuna too, as a leader of men, should work for that end, although neither might's have selfish ends to gain. So the leadership of Arjuna and the welfare of the world form the central point of the reasoning. To interpret the verses, leaving out this central point, does not seem satisfactory.

25) सक्ताः कर्मण्यविद्वांसो यथा कुर्वन्ति भारत ।  
 कुर्याद्विद्वांस्तथाऽसक्तश्चिकीर्षुर्लोकसंग्रहम् ॥

|            |     |                          |
|------------|-----|--------------------------|
| सक्ताः     | ... | full of attachments      |
| कर्मणि     | ... | in work                  |
| अविद्वांसः | ... | the ignorant             |
| यथा        | ... | just as                  |
| कुर्वन्ति  | ... | do work                  |
| भारत       | ... | O! Bharata               |
| कुर्यात्   | ... | shall work               |
| विद्वान्   | ... | the learned man          |
| तथा        | ... | so                       |
| असक्तः     | ... | free from attachment     |
| चिकीर्षुः  | ... | desirous of              |
| लोकसंग्रहं | ... | the welfare of the world |

“Just as the ignorant do work attached to the fruits of work, the learned shall similarly work free from attachments, desiring the welfare of the world.”

The difference emphasized here between the ignorant and the learned is that the former are eagerly and anxiously attached to the fruits of their labour, while the latter are free from attachment. (सक्ताः and असक्ताः).

Although the verse uses the word अविद्वान् which means the “ignorant”, the reader will see that the



ignorant person alluded to is not the ignorant man of the low type who is a total unbeliever and discards religion altogether. The Tamasic drone who has no faith in religion and disputes the Shastras is simply left out of account. The verse refers to the Rajasic sorter who believes in Shashtra's and Vedas, and actively performs rites, but with an eager eye to fruits. That is the meaning indicated by the second line where the learned man is spoken of as doing the *same work* as the ignorant with the only difference that he is free from attachment while the former is not. It is clear that the learned are no unbelievers and drones. Nor will they indulge in forbidden doings. Hence it follows that the work in question is what the wise will not hesitate to perform.

Ramanujacharya thinks that by अविद्वान् is meant one who is qualified for *karmayoga*, and by विद्वान् one who is qualified for *gnanayoga*. The purport, according to him, may be stated thus:— "One who is fit for *karmayoga* adopts it and practises it for the sake of spiritual knowledge. One who is fit for *gnanayoga*, though possessed of spiritual knowledge, does *karma-yoga* likewise, for guiding the world." This rendering hardly touches the true point. In the first place, it is wrong to call the *karmayogin* an 'ignorant' person, अविद्वान् nor is it right to call him a person who is 'attached.' It is the essence of *karmayoga* that the votary is *free from* attachments (असक्त) has overcome passions, and performs duties in a spirit of devotion to God. Such a man is neither unlearned nor a सक्त Secondly, the contrast between the unlearned and the learned is pointed out with a purpose. It is said, while

the former is 'attached', the latter is unattached, and ought to convert the former to be so also. The point is that the *learned* work with no other object than to guide and instruct the unlearned. This guidance and instruction consists in making the ignorant *learned* by inducing him to abandon attachment like himself. If, as Ramanujacharya puts it, the *karmayogin* works for knowledge and the *gnanayogin* works for the guidance of the world, both are perfectly right. There is no question of *gnanayogin* setting on example of non-attachment to *Karmayogin*. Although the two work with different motives, as both the motives are perfectly right and legitimate, there is no question of one guiding the other. On the other hand, if we take अविद्वान् to mean the ignorant man who hankers after reward, and has not risen to be a *karmayogin*, the sense is plain, that whereas he is सक्त, the wise man, under the same circumstances is असक्त, be he a *karmayogin* or *gnanayogin* or *bhaktiyogin*, and thereby guides the former to follow his example and rise to be an असक्त.

The reader may note the force of the words यथा, तथा, which denote comparison. In addition to the meaning of "just as" and "so" which they respectively convey, they also mean that the wise shall work 'in the same manner as' the ignorant do; that is to say, that the wise shall behave in such a manner as to suit his example to the level of the surroundings and the capacity of the followers, not neglecting, omitting, or condemning, conventions and forms. It is only then that his example will be instructive.

26) न बुद्धिभेदं जनयेदज्ञानां कर्मसङ्गिनाम् ।  
जोषयेत्सर्वकर्माणि विद्वान्युक्तस्समाचरन् ॥

|              |     |                         |
|--------------|-----|-------------------------|
| न            | ... | not                     |
| बुद्धिभेदं   | ... | an unsettlement of mind |
| जनयेत्       | ... | cause                   |
| अज्ञानां     | ... | of the ignorant         |
| कर्मसङ्गिनां | ... | attached to action      |
| जोषयेत्      | ... | shall render agreeable  |
| सर्वकर्माणि  | ... | all actions             |
| विद्वान्     | ... | the learned             |
| युक्तः       | ... | fixing his mind on Me   |
| समाचरन्      | ... | doing actions (himself) |

“The learned man shall not cause an unsettlement of mind among the ignorant. He shall, by doing work with devotion to Me, render all actions agreeable to them.”

The seer should not disregard the *karma* of the ignorant. It may be that transgression of rules does not affect him, because he is a sage. But, he must render *karma* agreeable and pleasant to the ignorant by his own example; otherwise they will give it up. He should not unsettle their minds in regard to the obligation of doing work and observing the rules of conduct laid down in the Shastras.

A doubt may arise here, as to why the sage should engage in work himself, and why he should not correct

the ignorant by simply teaching them. What is meant here is that example is much more potent and effective than precept. A discrepancy between precept and example will seriously unsettle the minds of people. They are not capable of realising the truth that the sage is not affected by transgressions, but that they themselves are.

The verse does not prohibit the sage from leading the ignorant by means of precept. It only emphasizes the value of example. Otherwise, there would no such thing as teaching and learning, so largely laid stress on in Shastras.

Moreover, there is this vital difference between the doings of the ignorant and those of the wise. The former hanker after fruits and the latter do not. The work done, the rites performed, and the sacrifices celebrated, may be the same in both cases. The observances of the wise may, no doubt, set an example to the ignorant so far as the obligation to work is concerned, but will be misleading in respect to the spirit with which work should be done. The ignorant would misunderstand the wise to be engaged in work with the same selfish motives as they themselves are actuated by. Hence, while following the path of the Shastra's and that of the ignorant, the wise ought also to teach them that the inner meaning of the Shastra's demands a renunciation of selfishness. Therefore, the verse cannot be understood to *forbid* any teaching on the part of the seer.

Madhusoodana and Sankarananda think that, if the ignorant plunges into work with sordid ends



in view, The sage is prohibited from correcting him. It is said that the seer should permit the ignorant to go on in his course, for he is not qualified for any thing better.

I do not see why such a construction should be forced into the verse. It is true that the seer should suit his example and his teaching to the capacity of the pupils. If *karmayoga* be unintelligible to them, and if it will unsettle their minds so as to result in total inaction, *karmayoga* may not be taught straight sway. The first step may be to let them engage in *Vedic* actions out of selfish motives, but surely, there is no total prohibition of true teachings to ignorant people. What the verse is anxious about is that the ignorant should not be led away into inaction. It does not say that the ignorant should not be taught the true spirit with which duty should be performed.

The reader will not fail to note the word 'युक्तः' in the second line. The author of *Vivriti* renders it to mean 'being devoted to God'. Others take it to mean 'heartily or eagerly'. The difference is clear. The former rendering brings out the point well, that, whereas the ignorant does actions *without* devotion to God, the wise does the same actions *with* devotion. There may be similarity in respect to mere observances as such, but the inner spirit of the work differs. The verse calls on the wise to imitate the ignorant and do the duties laid down in *Shashtra's*. But it does not enjoin on the wise an imitation of their selfishness, but leaves it open to the wise, nay, even makes it incumbent on them, to dedicate work unto God. The other meaning noted above is feeble and even mis-

leading. If the sage engages in work with ardour, the ignorant is likely to misunderstand his motives to be similar to his own. Moreover, the great point of *karmayoga*, that God is to be the keynote of all duty, will be missed, if 'युक्त' be understood as other commentators have done.

According to Ramanujacharya, "the ignorant men," spoken of in the first line of the verse, are those qualified for *karmayoga* and the 'wise man' (विद्वान्) referred to in the second line is one qualified for *gnanayoga*. He states the meaning to be that one who is qualified for *gnanayoga* should practise *karma yoga* nevertheless, as the former does not include the latter while the latter includes the former, He should do so to attract men qualified for *karmayoga* and he should not tell them that any other means such as *gnanayoga* even exists for the attainment of knowledge.

The language of this verse speaks of अज्ञाः 'the ignorant', as 'persons who are attached to action'. Attachment consists in desire of fruits. Hence the men called ignorant are those who work for gain and are selfish in motive. One who is qualified for *karmayoga* is however quite a different person. Such a man has learnt about God and learnt to work unselfishly for His pleasure. It is hardly right to call him "the ignorant man attached to action". Nor is the statement correct, that the person qualified for *karmayoga* should not hear of *gnanayoga* at all. Why not? If he is fit for *karmayoga*, he ascends to salvation through that means. It may be that *gnanayoga* is not his path. But why is he incompetent to learn that there is,

in fact, another path also to the goal?

It is far from clear that विद्वान् 'the learned man' spoken of in the second line is necessarily one who is qualified for *gnanayoga*. The word means 'a learned man'. No man deserves that name who has not studied the Shastras and does not know of God. Such a person may be a seer who has visioned God, or may be one who is great in the knowledge of Shastras but has not yet visioned God. In the latter sense, he may be a karmayogin or gnanayogin. Anyhow, he is a learned man performing actions with love of God.

On the whole, the most satisfactory meaning of विद्वान् in this context is that it denotes the sage who has visioned God and who lives in the world only to work out his Prarabdha and guide his ignorant brethren. Only such a man is competent to work solely for others' good, having overcome the bondage of rules himself.

27) प्रकृतेः क्रियमाणानि गुणैः कर्माणि सर्वशः।  
अहङ्कारनिमूढात्मा कर्ताहमिति मन्यते ॥

|             |     |  |
|-------------|-----|--|
| प्रकृतेः    | ... | of God, of Jeeva's nature and<br>of matter |
| क्रियमाणानि | ... | done                                       |
| गुणैः       | ... | by the workings of                         |
| कर्माणि     | ... | actions                                    |
| सर्वशः      | ... | all  |

|                  |     |                    |
|------------------|-----|--------------------|
| अहंकारविमूढात्मा | ... | deluded by egotism |
| कर्ता            | ... | am doer            |
| अहं              | ... | I                  |
| इति              | ... | thus               |
| मन्यते           | ... | thinks             |

“The person deluded by egotism thinks, ‘I am the doer,’ in respect of all actions brought about by the workings of God, of Jeeva’s inherent nature, and of non-intelligent matter.”

The word *Prakriti* is variously understood. Literally construed, it means God, who is the chief doer. It means nature, here used to denote the inherent nature of the soul. It also means the qualities of matter.

The will, wisdom and work, of God is the chief agency in respect of every action performed by man. But God is not to be charged with being partial and unjust. He chooses and directs the activities of His creatures on the footing of their inherent nature and on their past *karma* and capacity. Hence, the inherent worth and capacity of every Jeeva is also a determining factor and responsible agency for the actions of men. They know and act well, or ill, or indifferently, according as they belong to the best or the last or the middle class of souls.

The qualities of matter – the *gunas* (*Sattvika*, *Rajasa* and *Tamasa*) of which all material forms consist, also shape and regulate the activities of men.

The verse says that, while, in respect of every item of work that a person goes through, the chief



doer is God, and subordinate factors and agencies also give it shape under His guidance, the poor ignorant man deludes himself under the influence of egotism with the belief that he alone is the doer.

As to the points above emphasized, the school of Advaita accepts not the theory that Brahman is any actor or doer, or the Atman, for that matter, of any individual. They attribute actions to the sole agency of the mind and the senses. They think that every activity and movement is strictly limited to, and confined within, the zone of matter. The delusion of man that he is the doer is the result of misapprehending the mind and senses to be the soul.

It seems to me that no true and consistent Theist can refuse to invest God with Omnipotence and Providence. God is the only independent worker in everything, His will, wisdom and work, are eternal and infinite, operating throughout every atom of the Universe.

Religious and ethical responsibility set forth in every theistic system demands that man also should be a free agent within limits. Theories of absolute Predestination and absolute Free Will are both inconsistent with any creed of true Theism. We are all governed by God, but we are also, in a sense and under His guidance, the architects of our own destiny. In the absence of Free Will of any kind, no man can be called on to do or refrain from anything. No moral or religious injunction can be addressed to one who is held in an iron vice and has no volition or freedom whatever. The Advaitic School harps much on the

notion that the mind and the senses are the only cognizing agents. This is unsound. These are but instruments of knowledge. The axe that cuts is not the true cutter, but the man who wields it. The governor in the body is the soul who works through the instruments he is endowed with.

There is controversy over Sri Madhwa's theory that souls fall under three distinct classes according to their inherent (स्वभाव) nature. But authorities are abundant in support of this belief and some have been quoted in the Sanskrit exposition.

Ramanujacharya is of opinion that in the expression अहंकारविमूढात्मा, the 'Ahankara' referred to is no other than the delusion of mistaking the body to be the soul. He agrees probably with the Adwaitic School that the Atman is no actor, and thinks that a belief in one's own action and activity is impossible except on the materialist's delusion that he is nothing but the body.

It is difficult to follow this view. Why should not a man who is fully conscious of the soul being different from the body fall into the delusion of his own independence, forget God and His power, and believe in his own greatness, worth and capacity? Why should this Geeta verse be necessarily understood as not referring to such an egotist?

The word प्रकृति in the verse is understood by Madhusoodana to mean the 'Positive ignorance', that is the origin of the world according to Monism. Dharma

Datta Sarma, the commentator of Madhusoodana, deals with the creed of भावाविद्या at great length. In Madhwa works (Vadavali, Sudha and Nyayamrita), the adwaitic arguments on the subject have been very elaborately discussed and refuted. It will be a digression to enter here into that discussion although on the authority of Vedas भावाविद्या is accepted by us as a tenet.

28) तत्त्ववित्तु महाबाहो गुणकर्मविभागयोः ।  
गुणा गुणेषु वर्तन्त इति मत्वा न सज्जते ॥

|                 |     |   |
|-----------------|-----|---|
| तत्त्ववित्तु    | ... | the knower of truth                                 |
| तु              | ... | but   |
| महाबाहो         | ... | O ! mighty-armed                                    |
| गुणकर्मविभागयोः | ... | relating to the various kinds of causes and effects |
| गुणाः           | ... | causes  |
| गुणेषु          | ... | in effects  |
| वर्तन्ते        | ... | operate   |
| इति             | ... | thus  |
| मत्वा           | ... | knowing   |
| न सज्जते        | ... | is not affected.                                    |

“But he who knows the truth relating to the various kinds of causes and effects is not affected, knowing (as he does) how causes operate among effects.”

Here is the converse statement relating to the wise. It was said before, that the egotist appropriated every kind of agency to himself, and ignored the operating causes from God downwards. The wise man, on the other hand, takes account of them and realizes that he himself is by no means a free agent.

“गुणा गुणेषु वर्तन्ते”. In the second line, this clause has been rendered by Sankaracharya to mean that “senses move among sense-objects.” This rendering is not unacceptable to us. For, Sri Madhwa takes senses and sense-objects also among the operating causes and effects in question. But the Adwaitic commentators mean, however, to say that senses are the independent actors free to roam among the objects, and that the soul has no concern whatever with the operations. To attribute independent actorship to inert matter is wrong. All action flows out of Intelligence, from God as the chief actor, and from the soul (जीव) who is a subordinate agent. The inherent nature of souls the guans, the material sheaths, the senses, and sense-objects are other factors operating under the stress of the Divine will and human will, as so many instruments in the world of causation. To enthrone non-intelligent matter as the only responsible actor and absolve the soul entirely from all responsibility may be a consolation to sinners. But the position is radically unsound.

Ramanujacharya takes गुणाः in the second line to mean Sattwa, Rajas, and Tamas and गुणेषु is taken to mean their effects. But the gunas too are material in essence and all matter is non-intelligent. We allow



that the qualities of Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas bring about varying results. But they surely cannot act of their own accord.

Sri Madhwa understands by gunas every agency that brings about results, taking God's will to be the prime cause.

The proposition in the verse is that the knower of the philosophy of causes and effects does not become attached. In understanding what is meant by 'the philosophy of causes and effects', one has to see by what knowledge, disattachment follows as a sure consequence. If senses move among sense objects, let them do so; – what has this got to do with non-attachment? If the gunas produce results, the answer is 'well, they might'. It is difficult to deduce from this alone that no man should feel attached. Sri Madhwa therefore adds that the true basis of disattachment is the conviction that no man is a free agent and that he is only one instrument among many in Divine hands. Any commentator who excludes God out of the premises will find himself unable to explain properly why and how any man would become disattached from a mere knowledge of causes and effects.

In the first line 'गुणकर्मविभागयोः' has been felt to be a perplexing expression. 'Of the two-fold divisions of gunas and karmas, (causes and effects)' would be a literal rendering. The difficulty is, if the distinction between gunas and karmas' is what is meant, there is no need to use the dual number and refer to it as "two-fold divisions."

According to Sankaracharya, the meaning is this. "Atman has to be distinguished from *gunas*. This is one विभाग. Atman has to be distinguished also from *karma*. This is another विभाग. The dual is justified on this basis.

Madhusoodana does not approve of Sankara Bhashya in this. He says that the same meaning could be clearly derived even though the word विभाग were omitted. गुणकर्मणोस्तत्त्ववित् Would clearly give the required meaning. "One who knows *gunas* and *karmas*, i.e., that these are the attributes of the non-soul," is the meaning required, and this is easily obtained even without the additional word विभाग. Nor is the dual number of the word विभाग clearly justified. It is but *one* distinction, after all, of the Atman from the world of non-Atman that is really referred to, although *gunas* as such may differ from *karmas* as such. Hence विभाग in the singular could give, as pointed out by Madhusoodana, the required sense.

Madhusoodana therefore gives a rendering of his own. By an etymological ingenuity, he construes the word विभाग to mean the *Atman*. The compound word गुणकर्मविभागयोः means, according to him, "of *gunas* and *karmas* taken together on the one hand, and विभाग, the Atman, on the other." In this meaning विभाग does not mean division or classification. It was difficult to see the force of the word विभाग if it meant division or sub-division and it was also difficult to

explain the duality of divisions. By rendering विभाग to denote the Atman, both the difficulties were ingeniously overcome by this author.

The author of Utkarsha Deepika however criticises and rejects Madhusoodana. He objects to the grammatical propriety of the compound being split up as has been done by Madhusoodana and rejects the forced meaning put on the word. विभाग.

Neelakanta quotes under this verse the commentary of Sankaracharya without any gloss of his own, then quotes Madhusoodana too *in extenso* including the latter's criticism of Sankaracharya, and then starts a third course, trying to give his own meaning, as in disapproval of both Sankaracharya and Madhusoodana.

Neelakanta takes विभाग in the sense of *classification* and having regard to the dual number (विभागयोः) of that word, he rightly takes the subdivisions of *gunas* as number one, and the subdivisions of *karmas* as number two. Gunas, meaning the senses, are divisible into Ahankara, Buddhi, mind and the 10 sense – organs, and *karmas* or actions are also divisible, constituting, as they do, the diverse functions of the abovenamed senses.

Having thus given a meaning of his own, in summing up his own commentary, he does not set out, strangely enough, the purport of his own meaning, but repeats that of Sankaracharya, as if through inadvertence or forgetfulness. Utkarsha Deepika

points out this incongruity and further rejects Neelakanta's original interpretation. It is pointed out by the critic that, what is important to be known being the distinction between the Atman on the one hand, and the gunas and karmas on the other, the sub-divisions of gunas and those of karmas are irrelevant to the lesson under notice.

It may be seen that Sankara Bhashya is properly criticized by Madhusoodana who sets forth his own rendering. This latter is criticized, and rightly too, by Utkarsha Deepika. Neelakanta is dissatisfied with both Sankaracharya and Madhusoodana and sets out his own interpretation. This latter is rightly enough criticized by the author of Utkarsha Deepika. In this conflict, the reader will see that the interpretation suggested by none of them is satisfactory. Neelakanta as a shrewd writer sees that, unless two distinct sub-divisions among gunas *inter se* and karmas *inter se* are meant, the dual number is not intelligible. Hence he adopts it. But the point remains, how is the knowledge that gunas fall under various heads helpful to bring about असक्ति non-attachment? Neelakanta could not meet this point, for, obviously, the classification of gunas into Ahankara, Buddhi, mind and the senses, has nothing to do with any man becoming a विरक्त or असक्त (disattached).

Sri Madhwa's interpretation may be noticed again, in this connection. Like Neelakanta, he takes the reference to be to the two distinct sub-divisions, viz., (1) among gunas themselves, (2) among karmas themselves. As to the query why any one should, in



order to become a विरक्त (disattached), realize or understand the above sub-divisions, Sri Madhwa's rendering gives a satisfactory reply. The sub-divisions in question relate to the supremacy, chief authorship, and independence of God, and to the subordination of man to God's will. It refers also to the power of nature over him and the operation of environments in shaping his actions. One who realizes this classification of true actorship and subordination thereto, feels convinced that he ought not to worry himself over causes and effects, and becomes a विरक्त (disattached). The purport and point of the whole lesson consists in the realization of God's greatness. Those who do not take this aspect into account and interpret the verse otherwise, fail to account for the use of the word विभाग in the first place, and of the dual number of that word in the second.

29) प्रकृतेर्गुणसंमूढाः सज्जन्ते गुणकर्मसु ।  
तानकृत्स्नविदो मन्दान्कृत्स्नविन्न विचालयेत् ॥

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| प्रकृतेः          | ... of Prakriti (which includes God, nature and matter) |
| गुणसंमूढाः        | ... deluded by the attributes of                        |
| सज्जन्ते          | ... are attached  |
| गुणकर्मसु         | ... to objects and work                                 |
| तान् अकृत्स्नविदः | ... those men of little knowledge                       |
| मन्दान्           | ... who are dull and unfit                              |

कृत्स्नवित् ... the man of perfect learning  
 न विचालयेत् ... shall not turn away

“Those who are deluded by the prompting and propensities of Prakriti remain affected by sense-objects and work. Such men, who, in fact, know little, and are unfit to learn, the man of perfect knowledge shall not turn away.”

This verse reads similar in some respects to verse No. 27. The influence of Prakriti on human work and motives is prominently pointed out. Again and again, it is shown that we are truly under fetters and enjoy little freedom in the choice and execution of work. The volition is not ours, nor are the instruments. Within certain limits fixed for us by the will of God, by our own inherent aptitudes, and by the qualities of matter, we move about ever under His guidance.

As the operating causes guide us, so do we move. Goaded by them we are attached to work. They delude us into a belief of freedom. Under this delusion, we assume airs and call pleasures our own, and work, our own.

What is the duty of the wise in respect to such deluded beings? It depends upon the character of the unlearned men whether the wise man should interfere or not. Duryodhana was bad by nature and his propensities were incapable of mending. Such a man had better be left alone. It would be a mere waste of effort if the wise man should try the impossible task of correcting him. Underneath the activities and

motives of the wicked, there is God's will, and the man's inherent propensities, at work. It is a rock on which the wise man's example and counsels of perfection will be simply lost. Sri Krishna therefore advises non-interference.

The reader may see that from verse No.25 onwards, a contrast is drawn between an inferior and a superior class of men. The former people are censured in strong language by words such as 'ignorant' 'attached to action,' 'non-knowing,' 'egotistic,' 'deluded,' 'knowing little,' 'dull,' etc. The latter class is throughout praised by words such as 'knowing' and 'all-knowing.'

In the opinion of Ramanujacharya, the contrast pointed out is between the karmayogin and the gnanayogin. The latter is exhorted, according to him, to adopt *karmayoga* in order to guide persons qualified for *karmayoga* alone. For, the latter are ignorant, and incline, naturally, to action. They do not distinguish between the soul and the spirit, and are deluded by material attractions.

I am bound to remark that this view is hardly intelligible or tenable. In one breath, Ramanujacharya puts *Karmayoga* above *gnanayoga*, saying that the former is easier and less risky than the latter, and, as the former necessarily implies gnana too among its elements, is a surer guide than the latter. But surely, then, the karmayogin, or one qualified for it, may well be spared the language used in this context, such as, "ignorant" "egotistic", "unlearned" and many others of the kind. If, besides , he is a materialist

mistaking the body for the soul, his ignorance is, indeed, of a very low order. How is he a karmayogin, or one fit for karmayoga?

Ramanujacharya construes the present verse, however, on this footing. The man who is qualified for *karmayoga*, happening to be a materialist, is deluded by and attached to pleasures and *karma*. The gnanayogin should himself adopt *karmayoga* for two reasons: - (a) because he will thereby set an example, and (b) because it is a more desirable course for himself, though he be qualified for *gnanayoga*. There is, as already pointed out, incongruity in this logic. The context shows, on the other hand, that the ignorant man addicted to action is one far below the *karmayogin*. Such a man may be a deluded person in any of the numerous ways in which delusion is possible. He may be a materialist mistaking the body for the soul; or, he may be one who, though not a materialist, is full of egotism or atheism. Sankaracharya and his disciples understood the deluded individual concerned, to be, not a karmayogin, but a sort of materialist. They explain the delusion to consist of the notion that the soul acts and is capable of action whereas the truth is that action is the exclusive function of the senses.

It is difficult to see why the deluded man in question should necessarily be a sort of materialist. Nor is it easy to follow the *dictum* that the soul is *no actor in any sense*, but that the organs of sense alone Will, Think, Feel and act. It has been already shown that volition and thought belong to the soul rather than to mere matter. Organs of sense are but instruments, and deserve not to be called free actors.



The verse under comment speaks of men being deluded by Prakriti. Sankaras understand by प्रकृति, the Primal Nescience; we take the word to mean God, nature, and matter.

The verse speaks of deluded men being attached to गुणकर्म. Sankaracharya and others, except Neelakanta, take the last to be a compound word meaning "activities of gunas". We take the compound word to be *copulative*, meaning gunas *and* karmas. So that, the attachment spoken of relates to both pleasures and activities, and consists in mental fondness and agitation due to the influence of work and pleasure. In other words, we are attached to gunas (pleasurable objects) because we are eager that they shall be ours. We are attached to work because we ignore God, and fancy that we are free and able to achieve.

In verse No. 26, an exhortation was addressed to the wise man that he should not unsettle the minds of the ignorant. In the verse under comment, it is said that the wise should not interfere with and turn away the ignorant from their course. On this, a doubt arises on a few points :-

(i) Is the 'ignorant' man spoken of, the same or similar in both the verses ?

(ii) Is the karma in which the ignorant indulges and to which he remains attached, the same or similar, as contemplated by the said two verses ?

(iii) Is the advice given to the wise man about his attitude the same or similar, under the circumstances contemplated by both the verses ?

It seems to me that the 'ignorant' man contemplated by verse No.26 cannot be of the same calibre as the one referred to now (in verse 29). This we infer from the contrast in the second line of verses 26 and 29. In 26, the wise man is told to perform the same *karma* as the ignorant, but with a pure motive. In verse 29, the wise man is asked not to interfere but let the ignorant alone. There is no command here to act like the ignorant, but only an injunction to refrain.

The *karma* that the wise man is called on to adopt and practise in verse No. 26 is bound to be *karma* of the right sort laid down or unforbidden by scriptures. Hence, the ignorant man indulging therein must be one who is inherently good, but who, for want of a guide, does it in a wrong spirit. The *karma* that verse 29 speaks of, seems to be such as no wise man can or ought to perform. It consists of forbidden acts to which the deluded person clings under the temptation of powers beyond control and the stress of his own inherent wickedness.

Thus, the person spoken of being one who is essentially wicked by nature, and the actions under reference being forbidden ones which the wise man ought not to imitate, the exhortation given to the learned, under such circumstances, is to leave the wicked alone to work out his destinies. It being impossible to revolutionize innate propensities, or resist God's will, for that matter, it will be a vain task for the learned man to attempt reformation in such a case. He is therefore advised not to throw pearls before swine.

30) मयि सर्वाणि कर्माणि संन्यस्याध्यात्मचेतसा ।  
निराशीर्निर्ममो भूत्वा युध्यस्व विगतज्वरः ॥

मयि ... in Me

सर्वाणि ... all

कर्माणि ... work

संन्यस्य ... dedicating

अध्यात्मचेतसा... with a mind devoted to God

निराशीः ... free from desires

निर्ममः ... free from deluded notions of self

भूत्वा ... being

युध्यस्व ... fight

विगतज्वरः ... with anxiety banished

“Having dedicated all work unto Me, with a mind full of devotion (to God,) engage in fight, free from desire, attachments and concern”.

The verse ends with the exhortation to fight. Usually, it marks the conclusion of a certain line of reasoning and thought. Arjuna was told how the wise man works in a spirit of utter disattachment, simply to guide and set an example to the world. The unwise man was censured by many a strong term of disapprobation. In concluding, the Lord sums up the points of *karmayoga* and points out devotion and disattachment as the essential features of a proper mental attitude in the performance of duties.

Adwaitic commentators put in a gloss, in this connection, about Arjuna. They insist that Arjuna was an ignorant man and that the exhortation contained herein was meant to confirm him in *karma* for which alone he was qualified, as contradistinguished from *gnana*. One commentator (Madhusoodana) divides the ignorant into two classes; (a) non-aspirants to Mukti and (b) aspirants to Mukti. According to Madhusoodana, Arjuna falls under the latter head. Reasons, however, for this allotment are far from apparent. We must, however, be thankful for small mercies.

Sankarananda has his own exposition as to the true purport of these lessons. Says he, "First comes the seer of Monistic self-realization. He works, if at all, only and solely for others' benefit. Next comes the sage of mere bookish knowledge who is convinced that everything is false but Brahman. Such a man works for a dual benefit, *viz.*, his own salvation and the good of the world. Next after him, is the ignorant man who has no notion of the soul and who works without desire of fruit, with no attachments of 'I' and 'mine', and dedicating work unto God. Such a man works for his own benefit only to reach Heaven through the doors of mental purity and knowledge.

In this exposition, no reference appears at all to God in setting out the characteristics of sages Nos. 1 and 2. They have evidently passed beyond the stage of any Divine fetters. They need not, and evidently do not, dedicate work unto God. The *ignoramus* of the third group is evidently the person to whom the description of the verse under notice, exactly applies;



for, the verse calls on Arjuna to give up attachment, dedicate work unto God, and go forth to fight. Poor Arjuna had had by now the benefit of many an elaborate lesson on Monism. He had been taught these, threadbare, in chapter II, and in many a verse of chapter III also. Still, he has not risen even to the level of group II of Sankarananda, to be at least a Monist of bookish knowledge.

Verse No. 28 spoke of the seer who is free from attachments. Whether Sankarananda would put down even this person in the third group is a matter not free from doubt. In construing that verse, 'तत्त्ववित्' was interpreted to allude, evidently, to the seer who realized the soul as being free from any taint of matter, energy, or action.

Applying ordinary canons of construction, it will be seen that the context speaks of the ignorant, selfish, doer, and contrasts him with the sage. The praise of the one combined with the censure of the other denotes that Arjuna should become the former. Hence, when Arjuna is asked to enter on war with devotion and dispassion, it is perfectly clear that these are characteristic of the true sage.

Sri Madhwa, therefore, introduces the verse with the observation, "Now then, you, too, are a sage, and what should be your conduct?" ; and the verse proceeds to indicate it.

A word more ; and it relates to the devotion referred to in the verse. Sri Krishna says, "Dedicate work unto Me and be devoted to God". A summary

naturally refers to points already taught. Where then is to be found the reference to 'dedication and devotion', in the present context dealing with the sage setting a worthy example.

According to Sri Madhwa, verse 26 used the word युक्तः to denote devotion. Verses 27 and 29 used the word प्रकृति to denote God among other senses. Thus in the present verse, the reference to 'dedication' and 'devotion' is not inapt. But, according to Advaita commentators, the lesson so far taught before in this context, is the independent agency of matter and the total irresponsibility of the soul for any kind of exertion or work.

If so, how jumps in this concluding lesson about work being dedicated to God and the mind being turned towards Him. If the soul is no actor in any sense, and if the sage attributes every human exertion to the independent agency of material organs, God, too, such as Sri Krishna is believed to be, is no actor forsooth; and why should any work be dedicated to Him or attributed to His authorship ?

Turning to notice some of the expressions in this verse more closely, we may observe that the exhortation to fight is merely illustrative of duties in general. These teachings are meant not only for Arjuna but to the world in general in respect to varied situations of religious and moral difficulty. Madhusoodana, however, does not remember this aspect. He takes युध्यस्व- (fight) literally, and thinks that the expressions निराशीः (=free from desire), and विगतज्वरः (=free from anxiety),

refer only to Arujuna's duty in the battle-field. This meaning is obviously strained, as freedom from desire and anxiety applies to every kind of duty and situation, either in the battle-field of a war or in the battle-field of life. Utkarsha Deepika takes this sensible view and criticizes Madhusoodana accordingly.

The संन्यास= ('dedication') mentioned in the verse consists in the votary attributing authorship of every kind to God. The devotee should be convinced that God is the true actor, free in every sense, independent, and absolute. He is to see that what he does or achieves is at His inward bidding, guided by His inspiration and carried out by His power. He believes that all his work is but a form of Divine Service.

The notion in the expression निर्मम is the converse of this, that the devotee denies to himself any independent agency or authorship.

The school of Sankaracharya explains "dedication" to consist in the belief that all work in Brahman and is no other than Brahman. As nothing is true but Brahman, the devotee should believe his own thought, word, and deed, to be identical with Brahman. Not to speak of the violence of language implied in this exposition, there is no spiritual or moral command involved in this teaching. Sankarananda opined that his verse, with all its exhortations as to dedication, was addressed to one who had no notion of the Atman or Brahman. When, however, he comes to explain 'dedication', he darts off into his favourite eloquence about the Realization of Oneness.

The compound word अध्यात्मचेतसा is one full of meaning. The word आत्मन् means in Sanskrit, 1. God, 2. Vayu, 3. Soul, 4. Sun, 5. Fire, 6. Mind, 7. Courage, 8. Effort, 9. Reason, and 10. Body. Splitting up the compound properly, the word lays stress on a variety of significant ideas. In the result, they are, briefly,

- (i) Turn your mind to God,
- (ii) Turn your mind to Vayu,
- (iii) Have regard to the salvation of the soul,
- (iv) Take account of God and the soul, and their mutual relation,
- (v) Be of courage – so as not to be affected by mundane things and earthly joys and griefs,
- (vi) Take your innate nature into account,
- &c. &c. &c.

The exposition of this verse by Ramanujacharya is framed in a truly devotional spirit and is very learned. He quotes texts, Sruits and Smritis, to prove the immanence of God, and brings out the greatness of Him in whom everything lives, moves, and has its being.

31) ये मे मतमिदं नित्यमनुतिष्ठन्ति मानवाः ।  
श्रद्धावन्तोऽनसूयन्तो मुच्यन्ते तेऽपि कर्मभिः ॥



|              |     |                             |
|--------------|-----|-----------------------------|
| ये           | ... | whoever                     |
| मे           | ... | My                          |
| मतं          | ... | teaching                    |
| इदं          | ... | this                        |
| नित्यं       | ... | always                      |
| इनूतिष्ठन्ति | ... | follow                      |
| मानवाः       | ... | men                         |
| श्रद्धावन्तः | ... | having faith                |
| अनसूयन्तः    | ... | free from envy              |
| मुच्यन्ते    | ... | are freed                   |
| ते अपि       | ... | they also                   |
| कर्मभिः      | ... | by means of unselfish karma |

“They who follow this teaching of Mine, full of faith and free from envy, are also freed by means of unselfish karma”.

The verse ends with the saying “they too are freed by means of karma” (मुच्यन्तेतेऽपि कर्मभिः). Herein is stated the fruit of *karmayoga*. The doubt arises why, right in the middle of the teaching, the goal should be stated as if in conclusion. But the exigencies of the context led to it, though not directly. The conduct of the ignorant was compared and contrasted with that of the sage, and Arjuna was called on to follow in the wake of the latter. “Not only because sages betake to work, but because it is also valuable and fruitful by itself, should you engage in unselfish duty”, is the purport of the verse.

तेऽपि मुच्यन्ते— “They *also* are freed”. The word अपि offers some difficulty. It connotes others with whom these in question share Mukti. It also denotes that the persons referred to in the verse are of inferior grade to those others so connected. Both these notions are intelligible here. What is stated is that Karmayogins *also* are freed. Much more therefore is it the case with sages who have actually visioned God, when the former who have yet to vision God are assured of Mukti (through God-vision). Arjuna was a born seer, being Indra. Why should he give way to doubts and misgivings of sin, while one far less than he, *as yet a mere karmayogin*, is assured of salvation? In order to impress this point, the little word अपि (=also) is used.

In this connection, we may notice the word कर्मभिः in the instrumental case. Some commentators take it in the ablative sense and render the meaning to be “*freed from the bondage of karma*”. Karma binds no doubt. So does birth and death and many another fetter. But कर्मभिः is preferably used to denote the ‘means’. Janaka was saved although ever engaged in ‘karma’, (work). Sri Krishna says one who does his duty with faith and without cavil, is also freed, engaged in karma as he may be.

At first sight, it may occur, having regard to अपि ‘also’, and कर्मभिः (=by means of karma), that ‘karma’ is one road to salvation and ‘gnana’ another. But this is not the accepted teaching of Vedanta, for, no other than God-vision is recognized as the means leading to the end. The reconciliation lies in understanding

the verse to mean nothing else. 'By means of *karma*' does not exclude knowledge or God-vision which is the next step leading onwards.

Ramanujacharya thinks, in bringing out the force of 'अपि' ('also'), that the meaning of the whole verse reads thus, — "whoever follows, in practice, this teaching of Mine is saved; so also is one who has faith (though not yet a practising devotee) ; and so likewise is he who does not cavil (although he has not yet risen to faith and practice)". Thus, the first line of the verse contains an independent predication about the practitioner of *karmayoga*. The second line speaks of two others, who, *also*, will, in due course, reach the goal. These are lower in grade. Hence, it is said that अपि which indicates *cumulation* and *inferiority*, is rightly used. His commentator Desilkar points out, in a long note, that अपि is otherwise unintelligible, that it is impossible to think of the Gnanayogin by way of contrasted superiority and that the context does not admit of the Karmayogin being spoken of in depreciation. Hence, the result is stated to be that the first stage in the religious life under notice is marked by one who has banished envy. (अनसूया). The next higher stage is one of *faith* (श्रद्धा). The one higher still is where the actual practice of dutiful work is established.

As the language runs, it is difficult to make out that तेऽपि, 'They also', refers only to the *men of faith* and *those free from cavil*, and *not* to the votaries of the first line. The whole sentence is framed as a single predication in respect to all the three.

It may be that the Karmayogin is not to be depreciated here as अपि might otherwise do. Perhaps, he may not be depreciated with reference to the Gnanayogin. But why not contrast him with the *actual* seen who has visioned God ? The context does not offend against this contrast.

The division of the religious into three groups of varying gradation, as opined by Ramanujacharya, mars the beauty of the religious life consisting of a wholesome, harmonious, combination of all the three factors. The verse holds up to Arjuna the value of the combined whole. It may be seen that *practice, faith* and *freedom from envy*, are, all three of them, essential for true spirituality. Now, a few words about each.

If philosophy means intellectual realization, religion, as its help-maid, regulates conduct, and tends to purify the mind for true philosophy. Mere intellectuality or reason is not reliable or constant. To confirm our convictions, a noble life actually led is the very best aid and test. Pious resolves are of little value unless they are put into practice. Sri Krishna speaks of practice in relation to the teaching afore-said. He means *absence of passion, renunciation of 'I-ness' and 'mine-ness' and dedication of work to God*. In the light of this teaching and in perfect harmony with it, is to be the course of practice.

The next item is faith श्रद्धा. Those who rely on experimental science for a solution of all the ills and problems of life, will find themselves reduced to Atheism and Materialism. A religious outlook will be impossible for them. As Max Muller observes, among



faculties, such as of thought and speech, with which man is endowed, religious faith is an important faculty, so that, man, wherever he may be, situated perhaps like Robinshon Crusoe, will surely build for himself a God and a system of worship. A certain amount of trust in great men, scriptures and inspired works, is a necessary qualification and equipment for spiritual culture and progress. A passage in Agneya Purana (quoted below) brings out very well the importance of *faith* in religious and moral life. It runs to this effect :-

“Matter, spirit, and God are but pleasant words to hear. They are too subtle, and grasped only by faith and not by the hand or the eye. Neither by abundant bodily penances, nor by vast riches, is Dharma attained, being too subtle, even by the Gods devoid of faith. In faith, is Dharma, the super-subtle; in faith, is knowledge, sacrifice, and penance. In faith, is Swarga and Mukti. Therein lies the entire world. A person may make a gift of all, including his life, but if he does so without faith, he will not reap the slightest benefit out of his immense donation. Hence, gift lies in faith. Thus, every kind of Dharma is related to faith. Kesava himself (the God Supreme) is known by faith, meditated on, and worshipped by, faith”.

श्रुतिमात्ररसास्सूक्ष्माः प्रधानपुरुषेश्वराः ।

श्रद्धामात्रेण गृह्यन्ते न करेण न चक्षुषा ॥

कायक्लेशैर्न बहुभिस्तथैवार्थस्य राशिभिः ।

धर्मस्संप्राप्यते सूक्ष्मः श्रद्धाहीनैस्सुरैरपि ॥

श्रद्धा धर्मः परस्सूक्ष्मः श्रद्धा ज्ञानं हुतं तपः ।

श्रद्धा स्वर्गश्च मोक्षश्च श्रद्धा सर्वमिदं जगत् ॥

सर्वस्वं जीवितं वापि दद्यादश्रद्धया यदि ।

नाप्नुयात्तत्फलं किञ्चित्श्रद्धादानं ततो भवेत् ॥

एवं श्रद्धान्वयास्सर्वे सर्वधर्माः प्रकीर्तिताः ।

केशवः श्रद्धयागम्यो ध्येयः पूज्यश्च सर्वदा ॥

Stress is thus largely placed on *faith*, so that an insincere religious life may be avoided like poison. It is far too true that men and women observe outward forms scrupulously and lead a life of conscious or unconscious insincerity. To all such, the exhortation to be honest and sincere in conviction, and to cultivate faith in reality and truth, cannot fail to be of the highest value.

The third item *अनसूया* is equally important. It denotes the unsullied mind free from envy. It is difficult to come across such a person in ordinary life, while we meet, on the other hand, hundreds and thousands of instances to the contrary. The spirit of cavil is only too predominant in the world.

The atheist is, very often, an instance, at bottom, of one who cannot bear a God other than himself. So said Hiranya Kasipu in Bhagavata; "O! Wretch" said he to Prahlada "Speakest thou of God, the Ruler of the Universe. Where is He – other than Me?" Other forms of atheism are also conceivable who accept God

in name but shear him of greatness and supremacy. It is envy at bottom, an impatience and intolerance of others' greatness. Sisupala would not accept Sri Krishna, because envy warped his judgment.

Given a pure mind filled with faith and charity, followed by sincere conduct, it offers an ideal combination to make up a lovely religious life.

The verse says ये मानवाः = 'Those men'. Ramanujacharya thinks that the word मानवाः (men) excludes Soodras, though, literally speaking, these are denoted by the term ; and he includes Devas, though, literally, they do not come under it. The word includes, in fact, every one qualified for *Karmayoga*. But the reason for excluding Soodras by designation is not apparent, for, truly, they are quite qualified for devotional, unselfish, work.

The verse may also mean "whoever works in faith, free from envy, is *alone a man*" – the suggestion being that every one else is a beast.

The meaning may also be "such and such a person (meaning the worker in faith and charity) attains salvation, *after becoming a मानव*". मानव means etymologically a *Seer*.

The word नित्यं may be an adverb in the sense of 'always' qualifying all the three qualifications, (1) Practice, (2) Faith, and (3) Freedom from envy. Thus, importance is attached to a uniform life of devotion as contrasted with *spasmodic* fits of religious fervour.

The word नित्यं may also be taken as an adjective qualifying मतं – as Madhusoodana views it. Thus it means “the constant, the ever-truthful, teaching of Mine.”

32) ये त्वेतदभ्यसूयन्तो नानुतिष्ठन्ति मे मतम् ।  
सर्वज्ञानविमूढांस्तान्विद्धि नष्टानचेतसः ॥

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| ये तु             | ... But those   |
| एतत्              | ... this  |
| अभ्यसूयन्तः       | ... hate  |
| न, अनुतिष्ठन्ति   | ... do not follow   |
| मे                | ... My  |
| मतं               | ... teaching  |
| सर्वज्ञानविमूढान् | ... densely ignorant in respect of<br>everything that should be known |
| तान्              | ... them  |
| विद्धि            | ... know  |
| नष्टान्           | ... lost  |
| अचेतसः            | ... void of reason  |

“But those who hate and fail to follow this teaching of Mine, – know *them* to be densely ignorant of what ought to be known, to be sure of ruin, and to be devoid of sense.”

The converse is stated here. The religious life of *observance, faith and charity*, was praised in the



last verse as leading to salvation. The converse is stated to the effect that whoever hates the Divine Teaching and refuses to follow it, is a very ignorant man indeed and must face ruin.

Although *envy* and non-observance alone are specifically mentioned in the text, want to faith is also understood in the word अभ्यसूयन्तः – They have no faith, but go further and hate the teaching.

The language of the text lends further support to the criticism that the interpretation of Ramanujacharya, referred to under the last verse, is of doubtful cogency. As already noticed, that learned commentator thinks that अनसूया = ‘absence of envy’ is the first stage, (2) Faith is the next, and (3) Observance, the highest, and that the last verse *chiefly* predicated salvation to the last one only, and allowed the same result, *as if reluctantly*, to the two previous stages also. On the other hand, all the other commentators except Venkatanatha took the whole verse as one sentence with a single predication, the meaning being stated to be that the *observer* of Karma with *faith* and *charity* attains salvation.

The present verse supports the latter construction rather than the idea that salvation is stated severally and independently of the *observer*, of the mere man of *faith*, and of one who simply, and without more, refrains more *envy*. If such were the purport, the verse would have specially mentioned, “want to faith” also.

Venkatanatha follows Ramanuja Bhashya as far as he could, remembering that he is an Adwaita commentator. He takes the last verse as consisting of three different predications. In dealing with the present verse, he goes even further and renders it thus : — “Those who *hate*, those who lack *faith*, and those who fail to *observe*, are referred to in the first line, the men lacking in faith being referred to by implication. With regard to these three sets of men, the second line has three distinct predications. ‘Dense ignorance’ goes to the man who does not practise ; ‘ruin’ goes to the envious ; and ‘want of sense’ goes to the man wanting in faith. This, it has to be observed, is an improvement on Ramanuja Bhashya. But one wonders what there is in the text to justify such a distribution of epithets. For instance, let us change the order. What if the predication नष्टः is allotted to the *non-observer* and the other two, to the rest. The text would make equal sense even then. Then again, all the three epithets of the second line, *viz.*, *delusion*, *ruin*, and *unreason*, taken together, might well apply to the man lacking in faith, to the hater, as well as to the non-observer, taken jointly or severally.

The text says “this Teaching of Mine.” Commentators understand the teaching referred to, variously each according to the way he has construed the purport of the preceding verses. Ramanujacharya’s observation runs thus : — “*This teaching of Mine*” is to the effect that all souls are My bodies, supported by Me, are My remnants, and worked only by me”. There seems to lie underneath this observation some cult of Visishtadwaita about God being the *material* cause of the Universe. But I am not sure. If the idea

is that God exists in and through the universe, supporting it, and vitalizing it, though perfectly distinct from it as an entity, we have no quarrel with the proposition.

*"This Teaching of Mine"*, in this connection, naturally refers to what has been stated just before. The subject is *karmayoga*. Unselfish work dedicated to God is the point repeatedly impressed in various aspects.

As to the three predictions in the second line, it is easy to see their logical relation. One who is wanting in reason (अचेताः) is deluded as to truth, is (सर्वज्ञानविमूढः) and the latter is on the high road to ruin. (नष्टः) Vivriti and Madhusoodana set out this inter-relation.

‘सर्वज्ञानविमूढान्’ seems to offer some difficulty of interpretation. Neelakanta renders सर्व to mean God: so that the whole compound word means ‘persons deluded in respect to the knowledge of God’ ; सर्व is rather a rare word to denote God. It is difficult to see why सर्व meaning *all* should be restricted to mean God alone. The deluded individual in question is one who has no faith, who hates the Divine Teaching, and who fails to work. From his attitude and conduct, his delusion naturally relates to his notion of ‘conduct’. He is deluded in respect to what he ought to do and how and in what spirit he should do it. His relation to God is incidentally implied in this, for, he is ignorant of his own helplessness and dependence on God. But his ignorance does not end there, but

comprehends other features too. He fails to realize that all his work is governed by God in the first instance, and by his own inherent nature, next, and by the laws of matter also. He is ignorant of the value and authority of the Divine Teaching, of the necessity of practising *karmayoga* as the only proper means and discipline for spirituality, and of the great benefit in store for such a practitioner. Therefore सर्वज्ञान refers to all that has to be known on the subject of work.

Ramanujacharya and Desikar make out सर्वज्ञान to be a reference to the delusion of mistaking Body for the soul ; in other words, to the belief of the ordinary materialist. This may be one of the delusions, not altogether irrelevant. But the context tends to show that the delusion in question relates to what has just been accentuated, *viz.*, doing unselfish work, and dedicating it to God. Here is a fairly plain verse. Without attempting ingenious constructions, we gather that Sri Krishna condemns the man who fails to believe in His Teaching. He speaks as, and with the authority of, God. It is a sacrilege to disregard His Word.

He impresses on every one the importance of a proper mental attitude. Faith and charity are two essential requisites of spiritual culture. Without these, no progress is possible. Added to these, is a pure religious life actually and constantly lived. One who hates His Teaching, who believes not in Him and who would not practise His precepts, deserves to be set down as a highly deluded individual. He has no discrimination in him and will be lost.



33) सदृशं चेष्टते स्वस्याः प्रकृतेर्ज्ञानवानपि ।  
प्रकृतिं यान्ति भूतानि निग्रहः किं करिष्यति ॥

|              |     |                                 |
|--------------|-----|---------------------------------|
| सदृशं        | ... | in conformity to                |
| चेष्टते      | ... | acts                            |
| स्वस्याः     | ... | one's own                       |
| प्रकृतेः     | ... | of nature                       |
| ज्ञानवान्    | ... | who is possessed of discernment |
| अपि          | ... | even                            |
| प्रकृतिं     | ... | nature                          |
| यान्ति       | ... | follow                          |
| भूतानि       | ... | beings                          |
| निग्रहः      | ... | compulsion                      |
| किं करिष्यति | ... | what will do                    |

“Even one who possesses discernment acts in conformity to one's own nature. Beings follow their nature ; what will compulsion do ?”

The query is, if Sri Krishna's philosophy of conduct possess such merit, and unbelievers will suffer ruin for their lack of faith, why do not all men follow the Path?

The reply is furnished by this verse, to the effect that every man follows the bent of his own instincts and character, and compulsion is of little avail in turning men from their natural inclination. Vivriti

suggests another introduction also. It was said before, (*Vide* verse 29), that teachings of merit and value should not be wasted on unworthy persons. The doubt arises, why not? The answer is that the influence of one's own nature and character is paramount, and lessons not suited thereto fall flat on them.

A great truth is stated in this verse. We see the world full of inequalities. Men differ from one another in intellect and goodness. They vary in capacity and skill. They are dissimilar in mental and moral equipments and qualities. There is the greatest disparity in their work and worth, in their acquisitions and possessions, in their comforts and discomforts, and in their joys and griefs. Philosophers of every nation and country have tried to solve the problem of human evolution. Darwin's pronouncements on the laws heredity as affecting evolution have earned a classical reputation. The doubt, however, is whether heredity, taken as comprehensively as we please, can account for all the varieties of known phenomena on the subject. Too often, we meet with dunces born of parents who towered high in intellect. Other disparities of a like nature have also been seen. It is needless to labour for instances. Indian thinkers, who, by the bye, believe in Metempsychosis, think that, in addition to heredity, one's own experiences in previous births account for a great deal of one's character. If this parents account for him in part, his own past life or lives account for the rest. Sri Madhwa goes a step further and thinks that underneath the crust of Karmic experiences and the propensities of one's material embodiments, there is imbedded, as it were, in the soul itself, woven in the framework of the spirit, innate

nature which permanently determines the character and worth of the individual. In this point, Sankaracharya and Ramanujacharya do not agree with Sri Madhwa. After making every allowance for the influence of Karma, for the tendencies of untold experiences in the past and for the influence of heredity, Sri Madhwa believes, on excellent authority, that, in order to account for all the phenomena observed, we must take shelter, in the last resort, under the theory of innate nature.

The verse declares this power of प्रकृति, by which word is meant the experiences of the past and the innate nature of the Jeeva concerned. Too often, it happens that we know better and do the worse. Habits hold us very often as in an iron vice and we are powerless to overcome their strength and get free from their grip.

Ramanujacharya construes the purport of the verse in a somewhat peculiar manner. He holds that *karmayoga* is superior to *gnanayoga* for three reasons ; (1) because *karmayoga* allows play for one's own propensities, inclinations and habits, while *gnanayoga* resists them, (2) because the chances of slips, backslidings, and mistakes, are absent in *karmayoga*, while they are abundant in the other, and (3) because *karmayoga* is self-contained, containing, as it does, the element of knowledge, while the other (*gnanayoga*) cannot help seeking *karma* for its aid. Having set out this creed, Ramanujacharya proceeds to tell us that the verse in question, and the rest of the chapter to the end, is intended to explain how *gnanayoga* is beset with difficulty, so as to prove that *karmayoga*

is the proper course even for the gnanayogin. This interpretation of Ramanujacharya is hard to follow.

(1) We see that the verse under comment speaks of the power exerted by the habits, experiences, and tendencies, of the past. How does it follow that the instinctis, of which we are virtual slaves, are necessarily, instincts that help *karmayoga*. A man is a slave of instincts, whether they be good, bad, or indifferent. If they be good, let us take it then, they will help *karmayoga*. If they be otherwise, they will impede it. Hence, the proposition that the प्रकृति or nature spoken of in the verse is necessarily helpful to the *karmayogin* is not intelligible.

(2) The verse says that even one who knows better, acts, however, in accordance with his प्रकृति. It is important to mark the force of 'even'. It connotes a conflict between theory and practice. It shows that, while the spirit drags one way, the flesh drags the other way. This is hardly consistent with the supposed harmony between *karmayoga* and प्रकृति.

(3) The language of the verse conveys an undertone of regret that men are too often victimized by passions and prejudices, in disregard of reason. The regret is that they fail to overcome inclinations as they ought to do. In Ramanujacharya's interpretation, there is no vein of regret at all. On the other hand, he says that every man, be he a *karmayogin*, *gnanayogin*, or the seer himself setting an example to the world, ought to follow प्रकृति. How the present tense, that a man does, in fact, follow his own nature,



should be read in the imperative sense, that every one ought to do so, it is difficult to understand.

(4) It is said by Ramanujacharya that the rest of the chapter, down to the end, deals with the difficulties and impracticability of *gnanayoga*. We see that the rest of the chapter mostly deals, in fact, with the restraint and conquest of the senses. It cannot be said that to restrain and conquer the senses is within the province of *gnanayoga* alone. The karmayogin has to overcome passions and prejudices as much as the gnanayogin. Unless senses are subdued and work is done without desire of fruit, for the sake of God, no one has a right to call himself a karmayogin. Let us never forget that by 'karmayogin' is not meant *a mere doer*, but a dispassionate, disinterested doer, defined over and over again in chapter II. Thus, the power and temptations of the flesh stand as obstacles, not only in the path of *gnanayoga* but of *karmayoga*, as also of *bhaktiyoga*. It is an enemy of *yoga* in general.

It seems to me that, in the simple and broad statement of the verse setting out the power of nature and habit over one's conduct, it is impossible to thrust and force the idea that nature is a friend of *karmayoga* or that it is a *foe of gnanayoga*. Leaving this alone, let me turn to some of the other points expressly mentioned in the verse.

It is said that 'even the knower' ज्ञानवानपि, is drawn away by his प्रकृति. Who is the 'knower' herein referred to? Sankarananda says that the knower is one who has realized Unity with Brahman, whose hoarded

instincts have been uprooted and whose doubts have been destroyed. Such a sage, too, we are told, does work to keep body and soul together under the influence of habit.

It may be observed that Sankarananda is, of all Adwaitic writers, the one writer who eagerly and enthusiastically jumps at the word ज्ञान wherever it occurs, and forces it to mean "the Monists' Realization of Oneness". In this context, it is difficult to see how ज्ञानवान् could mean such a seer. In the first place, such a seer does no *karma* worth the name. Secondly, he has overstepped the limits of *karmayoga* and passed beyond the pale of inimical passions and prejudices. What Sankarananda says about the seer's food and doings for avoiding suicide, is hardly in point. It is not wrong for the sage to eat and live. Such an act is not forbidden by the Shastras, and there is no conflict between his knowledge and doings in such a case.

As pointed out by Desikar, the 'knower' here is not the seer who has visioned God. Nor is he one whose knowledge is confined to material sciences. He is one who has studied Shastras, and knows moral and religious truths, but who, in practice, finds it hard to resist instinctive and acquired habits.

At the end of the verse occurs the observation निग्रहः किं करिष्यति = 'what will compulsion do?'. It is a leading question suggestive of the answer 'No ; nothing'. The doubt arises, 'whose compulsion?'. Sri Madhwa answers 'compulsion imposed by the individual himself on his own mind'. Hands and legs may

be bound, senses held under control, even the mind may be forced and restrained, — all this will be of no avail, if instincts and nature draw him away into the wrong path. Ramanujacharya thinks that the compulsion referred to is one imposed by the Shashtras. This view is not open to any serious objection.

Shankaracharya's gloss, at the end of his note to this verse, runs as follows : — "Compulsion imposed by Me or anybody else." 'Me' refers to Sri Krishna understood as God. His commentators bring out the meaning of their master that God himself cannot destroy the power of Prakriti even if He wills it. I venture to point out that to speak of God in this manner is derogatory. It is highly disparaging and derogatory to say that God Himself is powerless even if He should will it. A better explanation, in fact, one that should be adopted by all theists believing in the omnipotence of God, is that Prakriti itself is His Servant, that it is He that endows it with the Power it possesses, and that He does not choose to destroy that Power.

34) इन्द्रियस्येन्द्रियस्यार्थे रागद्वेषौ व्यवस्थितौ ।  
तयोर्न वशमागच्छेत्तौ ह्यस्य परिपन्थिनौ ॥

|                          |                              |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| इन्द्रियस्य, इन्द्रियस्य | ... of every sense           |
| अर्थे                    | ... in respect to the object |
| रागद्वेषौ                | ... love and hate            |
| व्यवस्थितौ               | ... indispensably persist    |
| तयोः                     | ... of them                  |

|            |                         |
|------------|-------------------------|
| न          | ... not                 |
| वशम्       | ... power               |
| आगच्छेत्   | ... he shall come under |
| तौ हि      | ... they indeed         |
| अस्य       | ... of him              |
| परिपन्थिनौ | ... are enemies         |

“In respect to the objects of every sense, love and hate unavoidably persist. Let him not come under their power ; for, they, indeed, are his enemies.”

If all beings follow their own nature, instincts and inclinations, and if coercion be of no avail, it follows that scriptural injunctions have no purpose to serve. Nor is any use conceivable of stating rewards and fruits. This doubt is sought to be answered here.

Madhusoodana has a long note of explanation. He thinks that the term प्रकृति which, it was said in the last verse, is all-powerful means only ‘hoarded experience’. By itself, it is feeble. Added to love and hate, it works with a might irresistible. Love (or passion) is the result of two elements, namely, (1) failure to see that forbidden pleasures are associated with evil now and hereafter, and (2) a conviction that they are bliss-giving. Hate likewise consists of two elements: (1) failure to see the blissful aspect of enjoined doings (like सन्ध्यावन्दन) and (2) a strong belief of their irksomeness. Love and hate being thus composed of two elements each, it is the function and privilege of Shastras to tackle and destroy the first element. They teach us that avarice, adultery, and crimes, are evils



associated with penalties, and that disliked things, such as religious and moral duties, are associated with blessings and rewards. As these teachings destroy one of two elements constituting love and hate, these latter are nipped in the bud before they are born. Mere Prakriti, being feeble without their help, does not prevent further progress in true knowledge and morals. Hence, Shastras have this great purpose to serve, namely, that they prevent love and hate from being born. Thus opines Madhusoodana. Notwithstanding the ingenuity of the explanation, it has to be observed that it is not convincing. The last verse said almost conclusively that all beings pursue their own Prakriti and that coercion into other channels is of no use. It was not stated there that Prakriti by itself is feeble and powerless, and that it derives all its strength from love and hate. If love and hate, understood as something quite distinct from Prakriti, be the determining factors of conduct and character, and not Prakriti, the last verse should have said so and left Prakriti alone, which, by itself, is a apparently innocuous.

If Prakriti be so easily manageable by the Shastras doing away with love and hate, it is difficult to see why any fuss was made of Prakriti being irresistible, and why Sankaracharya said '*Even God could not resist its course by restrains*'.

Sridhara attempts an explanation more or less similar. He says that, once a man gets beyond his depth, it impossible to save him. But, before he proceeds or is carried far, Shastras step in like a boat, and save him from being drowned. Love and hate being

overcome with the aid of Shashtras, in good time, Prakriti is no longer powerful.

It is difficult to see why Prakriti is so narrowly understood. It means *innate nature* literally. It means hoarded experience, whether the hoard was acquired in this life or in the past. This experience is blended with love, hate, avarice, delusion, egotism, and envy, the six internal foes of man usually spoken of. It is but right that, in thinking of Prakriti as being mighty, all these elements are understood by the word. It is inconsistent, and implies also violence to the text and context, to speak first of Prakriti's might and, in the next step, to say that not Prakriti, but something else, is the hostile source of harm.

If one's nature be bad, one does not turn to the holy Shastras at all. He does not give them a chance to deal with him and remove love and hate for him. Thus Sridhara's note that, before love and hate dominate his will, Shastras manage to seize hold of him, involves an argument in vicious circle.

There is, no doubt, some difficulty in reconciling the last verse with the present verse, if every word of both be understood far too literally. It is but right to understand the word Prakriti to include *nature*, hoarded experience and the brood of passions it is blended with. Otherwise, it could not be spoken of as mighty.

Sri Madhwa thinks that the predication निग्रहः किं करिष्यति is not to be too literally taken under all circumstances. It does not mean that compulsion or

pressure is absolutely of no avail. There are men of various grades of nature. If one is of wicked स्वभाव out and out, if his wickedness be ingrained in the soul or spirit itself, the proposition that coercion is of no avail is true. If, however, the man is not wicked by nature, and if he is ignorant or bad only by reason of environments and extraneous influences alone (which also constitute Prakriti in the sense of hoarded experience), then Shastras reform him slowly and by degrees. Passion, hate, and the rest of the brood, are thus, no doubt, not absolutely invincible, but great and mighty is the effort to be made to conquer them, constituting, as they do, a weighty legacy of instincts and inclinations left to us by untold lives in the past. Hence, in Vivriti, at the very end of the commentary of this verse, the author adds, "this verse applies only to those who are inherently good, not being disqualified by nature".

Ramanujacharya's view follows his chief idea that *gnanayoga* is a risky business altogether. He understood the last verse, as, in effect, an injunction to follow Prakriti, and according to him, the present verse shows how and why Prakriti should be obeyed and followed. Love and hate being established inextricably in respect to every sensuous experience, the *gnanayogin* provokes their hostility and onslaught, by trying to shut up the senses and subdue them. As he sails against the wind and the stream, he runs great risks. On the other hand, the *karmayogin* sails along the current. He gives senses and sense-objects a free scope and befriends them, so that love and hate are not his foes. Hence, the verse enjoins on every one not to venture on *gnanayoga*.

This creed as to karmayoga's superiority to gnanayoga has already been noticed in several places, and repetition is needless.

It seems quite wrong to imagine that the context speaks disparagingly of the gnanayogin. It is equally unsound to fancy that love and hate are inimical only to the gnanayogin and not to the karmayogin. It has been already pointed out (under the last verse) that the karmayogin has the hard task of overcoming sensuous temptations as much as the gnanayogin. While the verse says, in plain language, "Do not get under the power of *love and hate*," to say that the injunction is to avoid gnanayoga is, to say the least, very highly strained.

35) श्रेयान्स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात् ।

स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः ॥

|               |     |   |
|---------------|-----|---|
| श्रेयान्      | ... | of greater merit                        |
| स्वधर्मः      | ... | is one's own Dharma                     |
| विगुणः        | ... | though imperfectly done                 |
| परधर्मात्     | ... | than another's Dharma                   |
| स्वनुष्ठितात् | ... | well done                               |
| स्वधर्मे      | ... | in one's own Dharma                     |
| निधनं         | ... | death                                   |
| श्रेयः        | ... | is of superior merit                    |
| परधर्मः       | ... | another's Dharma                        |
| भयावहः        | ... | is beset with fear (dire consequences). |



“Of greater merit is one’s own Dharma, though imperfectly discharged, than another’s Dharma well done. It is better to die in one’s own Dharma. Another’s Dharma is beset with fear.”

Chapter III opens, it may be remembered, with questions by Arjuna. He asks (1) why should I be called on to do *karma* such as battle, which is selfish if engaged in for the sake of pelf or power, and is pure if carried out as a mere duty. Are there not other duties, such as of a Sanyasin, which are not ambiguous in this manner, which do not admit of selfish and mercenary fruits, at all, and which have to be performed only in a spirit of purity. This is one question. He also meant another. (2) “If I must engage in *ambiguous* actions as above explained, why, of all such, should I plunge into the task of fighting wherein hot blood and passions have so large a play? It is inconceivable that any one can fight without an outburst of temper; and you have devoted many a verse to the value of subduing passions and controlling the senses. If so, why should I take to a line of work where passions are unavoidable?”

Sri Krishna proceeded to answer these doubts of Arjuna. He says that Arjuna being one specially qualified like Janaka and Priyavrata, to be *in* the world but not *of* it, he was bound to work hard and strenuously, without being affected by it. His path was Karmayoga and it was his privilege as well as his duty to reach salvation through it, without the need and help of renunciation. Having discussed this in numerous verses, Sri Krishna touches on the second question now.

Says Arjuna, 'Why should I fight, rather than follow a peaceful occupation?' The Lord says that to die in one's own Dharma is better than to proper in another's, however well the latter may be discharged. Says He, "To fight is the duty of your caste and order. You ought to perform it. You are competent to do it well, without giving way to passions. But, assuming you error in details, that does not matter. Even an imperfect performance of one's own Dharma is of greater merit than another's perfectly executed." This is the purport of the verse. To this very effect, Arjuna's mother had sent him a stirring message the day before (*Vide* Bharata, Udyoga ; verses quoted in the Sanskrit portion), saying "To you, mendicancy is forbidden and agriculture is unsuited. You are a kshatriya, which means one who protects by means of wounds. Then, where is misery greater than mine, that I, being the mother of a warrior, have to depend on alms to quench my hunger."

In commenting on this verse, Ramanujacharya and Desikar have indulged in a great deal of forced construction. Their rendering may be summed up thus :— "One's own *Dharma*, here, is *karmayoga*. Another's Dharma is *gnanayoga*. *Karmayoga* is one's own, because it is easier and less risky than the other. *Karmayoga* is therefore superior in merit to *Gnanayoga*. It is the intention of the context to depreciate *gnanayoga* and dissuade every one from trying it. *Gnanayoga* well performed, with sustained effort up to the end, may be good. But no one can do it so. Hence, the expression "another's Dharma well done" means *gnanayoga* well begun but soon abandoned. All *karmayoga* is necessarily काम्य 'selfish'. It consists

of a higher and a lower grade, the higher one aiming at Divine knowledge as its fruit and the lower one aiming at Swarga or mundane rewards. The latter *karmayoga* is useless. The former has this efficacy that, if the man dies, the thread is taken up easily in the next or later births. On the other hand, *gnanayoga* well begun but abandoned means a dead loss of effort. It does not admit of being resumed in later births. Hence it is beset with dire results. The verse, it may be seen, uses the परधर्म word. If Dharma of another individual were meant, the expression would be wrong. For, the duty of one caste or order is veritable sin (अधर्म) for another. It is not Dharma at all to him. Then again, श्रेयान् means 'of greater merit'. The comparative degree implies the positive that is meritorious, though less so than स्वधर्म. But to a Brahman, for instance, of the Grihastha Order, the duty of the warrior Grihastha is no Dharma whatsoever, and much less is it to him associated with any merit. Hence, स्वधर्म and परधर्म are not to be understood in the ordinary sense of one's own Dharma and another's Dharma, having regard to the established rules of caste and order. They therefore stand for *karmayoga* and *gnanayoga* respectively. Further, Arjuna did not, as a matter of fact, urge that he would practice a Dharma of some other caste or order."

These are the chief points I gather from Ramanujacharya's Bhashya and Desikar's Tatparya Chandrika. I regret that the reasoning seems far from convincing. The fallacy at the bottom, on which the whole superstructure rests, is that Sri Krishna has

anywhere depreciated *gnanayoga* as inferior in merit to *karmayoga*. Nor has He done so in the present context.

In Ramanujacharya's theory, *gnanayoga* is foreign to everybody's nature and *karmayoga* chimes in with the nature of all. Hence, in calling Gnanayoga 'another's Dharma', who is the person referred to as *another*? It is not conceivable who that 'other' can be, for, none exists who is not sheathed in matter and influenced by it. Why should *gnanayoga* be described by this inaccurate and purposeless expression परधर्म 'another's duty'? The rendering of स्वनुष्ठितात् so as to mean *Gnanayoga well begun but abandoned*, is equally forced. There is nothing in the word to indicate the idea of "begun" and "abandoned". The author sees the absurdity of the position that *gnanayoga* well and truly done is still inferior to *karmayoga* badly practiced. But, rather than abandon his pet theory of *gnanayoga*'s inferiority, he imports into the word an idea that is not there and says that the reference is to an abandoned *gnanayoga*.

Although one's duty may be a sin to another of a different caste or order, it is still enjoined duty in respect to the person to whom it relates. In that sense, it is admissible to call it Dharma though relatively to somebody else it is no Dharma. It has been pointed out that Arjuna never wished to practise another's Dharma. This is not accurate. He has been repeatedly urging on Sri Krishna that he would give up his own duty as a Kshatriya Grishasta and take to renunciation which is the privilege or duty of a Brahman or a Sanyasin.



It will be seen that a fine distinction has been drawn between a higher and a lower *Karmayoga*, according as the fruit aimed at is Divine knowledge or mundane reward. But it is a misnomer to call any worker for pelf and power a Karmayogin. He is merely a worker, and no yogin at all (*Vide* definition, verse 48, chapter II, for example, — “Renouncing attachments, to be balanced evenly in success and failure is yoga”). Karmayogin of the higher grade has been misconceived to be a काम्य doer, simply because he aims at Divine knowledge. Shastras not only permit but even command such an aspiration. Hence, such an aspirant is not a selfish or mercenary individual. He only works for the sake of God.

As to the statement, that the Karmayogin, dying as such, easily picks up the thread in the next or later births, while the Gnanayogin is incapable of doing so, it is difficult to appreciate the logic, cogency, or authority, of such a theory. Interrupted by death, both the Yogins are similar in situation. Why should one be capable and the other be incapable of resuming his own *yoga*? Why should interrupted *karmayoga* be a blessing and interrupted *gnanayoga* a curse and calamity?

The reader will excuse this long note. But the idea so largely harped on is peculiar, — not shared by any other commentator, as far as I can see.

The author of Urkarsha Deepika (Sankaracharya's annotator) sets out an explanation of this verse different from and in addition to his master's. It is to this effect. “स्वधर्म is the knowledge

of the self. परधर्म is the way of the senses, including all worldly pursuits. Self-knowledge is superior, though imperfect. Worldly pursuits carry little merit. To die in self -knowledge is good, for, death then means release from bondage and liability of rebirth. The sensuous world, on the other hand, is beset with feat, for, it means birth and death, again and again, in the cycles of Samsara."

The interpretation seems quite out of place in the context. Just a little before (*Vide* verse, 30), "Do you fight free from mental fever" is the exhortation to Arjuna. Why should the Lord at once go back on his injunction and call upon Arjuna to give up every worldly pursuit and retire into self - realization? It is difficult to see why the pursuit of the *senses* should be called by the unusual expression परधर्म. विगुण Is rendered by this writer to mean "stripped of material influence." This also jars with the drift of the lessons being given here. निधनं Means only 'death' i.e., the severance of the gross physical body from the soul within. It involves ordinarily no release from, संसार, i.e., liability of re-birth. It is hard to see why and how the said *word* connotes "absolute emancipation," as the writer thinks.

Hence, the best rendering of the verse is the one that follows the plain meaning. There is no need to fight shy of the plain meaning here on any supposed ground that it is inaccurate or untrue. Caste is acknowledged even by some *savants* of the West, including the missionary Abbe Dubois, as one of the happiest products of Indian civilization, that has saved

the country, during these long ages, from degradation and ruin. This is no place to enter on an explanation or discussion of this view.

In verse 13 of chapter IV, Sri Krishna is going to say, "The four castes were created by *Me*, with reference to qualities and actions". The division is logical, natural, and has been beneficial. It is of the utmost importance in social and political economy, that every one should discharge his own duty with all his heart and might, and not hanker after another's avocation seemingly more prosperous or less distasteful. At that rate, society can hardly get on. In pondering over the import of विगुण applied to स्वधर्म, the reader may think of a Prakrita verse in the Prelude to Act VI of Kalidasa's Sakuntala. There, a low fisherman says to a Policeman who scorned him for his low life, "The occupation of one's own birth is, Sir, not to be despised, indeed, because it is seemingly low. The Deekshita Brahmin kills the sacrificial victim, but he is not, on that account, to be deemed a hard-hearted person devoid of sympathy and kindliness." Sri Krishna accordingly puts it most emphatically, "Death in one's own dutiful occupation is far better than life and success in alien and forbidden professions."

अर्जुन उवाच —

36) अथ केन प्रयुक्तोऽयं पापं चरति पूरुषः ।

अनिच्छन्नपि बाष्पेय बलादिव नियोजितः ॥

|           |     |                 |
|-----------|-----|-----------------|
| अर्जुनः   | ... | Arjuna          |
| उवाच      | ... | said            |
| अथ        | ... | Then            |
| केन       | ... | By what or whom |
| प्रयुक्तः | ... | goaded          |
| अयं       | ... | this            |
| पापं      | ... | sin             |
| चरति      | ... | commits         |
| पूरुषः    | ... | Man             |
| अनिच्छन्  | ... | against wish    |
| अपि       | ... | even            |
| वाष्णेय   | ... | O! Krishna      |
| बलात्     | ... | by force        |
| इव        | ... | as if           |
| नियोजितः  | ... | impelled        |

Arjuna said, "Goaded by *what*, then, does the man commit sin even against his wish, O! Krishna, as if impelled by force?".

Commentators have felt difficulty in explaining why Arjuna asks such a question. The forces at work in making a man sinful were set out by the Master in many verses in chapter II and chapter III. Verses 62 and 63 of chapter II traced the downward slip from the moment a man muses over objects of pleasure, and set out how he slides down step by step through attachment, desire, anger, delusion, forgetfulness, and loss of reason, to final ruin. Verse 67 of chapter II



pointed out the danger of *roving* senses. Chapter III, verses 27, 29 and 30 showed the inward and outward prompters of our actions, how God is the primary prompter, how our lower nature operates under His will, how senses play their part, as also external causes and things. Verse 34 distinctly pointed to love and hate along with other passions of the kindred group as mortal foes. In the face of so many pointed lessons, there should hardly be any occasion for Arjuna to ask again, "What is the impeller of sin?"

Sankaracharya's explanation is that the teachings of the Lord had been scattered and diffused, and Arjuna had failed to grasp the true meaning properly. Hence, he wished to know the truth briefly and succinctly so as to be sure and certain. It need hardly be observed that this explanation reflects little credit on Arjuna's intellectual qualifications as a pupil of Sri Krishna. It further throws some discredit on the Teacher, too, that He had not yet taught what He meant to teach, in a sufficiently clear and compact manner. If we can account for Arjuna's question only on the hypothesis of his dull understanding, of course, there is no other go. But the doubt is, are we bound to do so?

Neelakanta offers explanation in another way. It may be stated thus, "Prompters of human action are (1) God, (2) religion and ethics, and (3) passions. Of these, the last *viz.*, love and hate should be eliminated, because they imply a consenting volition, and Arjuna's question relates to one who sins *against or without his wish* (अनिच्छन् in the verse). Religion and ethics too are to be eliminated, because they operate

only through wishes and desires. God, too, is out of the question, because He impels to action in accordance with one's Karma, Dharma and Adharma. Otherwise, He would be guilty of partiality and favouritism. Thus, the three possible prompters being eliminated, Arjuna asks, "If not these, what or who else is there who could be thought of as the inciter or sins?"

This reasoning is based on a fallacy. It is one thing to say that all actions and efforts rest on a consenting will and quite another thing to say that a man necessarily wishes or desires a particular result. At the point of the sword, a man may give up his ring to a robber. In this case, his delivery to the robber is preceded by muscular action based on a consenting will. But surely, he does not wish the result. What Arjuna means by अनिच्छन् and बलात् is obviously the compulsion implied in coercive acts as of a brigand. Hence a man may be carried away by passions, although he might know better and really desire the contrary. On this imagined inconsistency, Neelakanta eliminates passions, Dharmadharma (धर्मधर्म) and God from the category of impellers.

If such were the meaning of Arjuna's doubt, we might expect a suitable reply to it in the words of the Lord. He would have met it by referring to the supposed conflict and reconciling it. As there was no conflict at all, the Lord says nothing about it in his reply.

The language of the text raises the doubt whether Arjuna wished to know who was the enemy of righteousness, or which one was the *leader* of the foes.

If we remember that he had been abundantly told, in chapters II and III, of who the enemies were, and if we hold also that Arjuna was a fairly capable pupil, his query cannot reasonably be about *who* the enemy was or the enemies were. The probabilities, therefore, point to the view that Arjuna wishes to know who is the *most* powerful of the foes. This is the interpretation of Sri Madhwa. Arjuna, in effect, says, "I remember and have assimilated all your lessons on this subject. I see that love, hate, avarice, delusion, pride and envy, are the enemies of goodness. But you have not told me whether all these are of equal potency. Assuming they are not, please tell me, O! Krishna, by which one among them sin is prompted and brought about as if by force, and in spite of the sinner's wish". In this interpretation, Madhusoodana concurs. The agreement on such a point between Sri Madhwa and Madhusoodana is of value and significance.

The reader may see that the theme starting with this question of Arjuna is, truly speaking, a digression. He was being taught his duty about karma and the spirit with which he should engage in work. It was not quite germane to the subject as to who or what, in particular, forcible impels to sin. But the digression is not altogether out of place and alien to the main theme. For, verse No. 34 spoke pointedly of love, hate etc., as enemies, and it was admissible that Arjuna should wish to know of their relative potency *inter se*.

The word अथ introduces this digression. It always marks off a new theme. It also means here, what is denoted by "*then*," so that Arjuna says in effect "you

have already told me of प्रकृति in the sense of God to be the chief doer in all our actions. It is well known that Devas presiding over the organs of sense are also doers and prompters, next to God and under His will. I am the son of Indra and I know this, being a Deva myself. Next after God and after Devas too, (अथ), who is the chief prompter?"

While many enemies had been referred to before, the fact that Arjuna asks in the singular number केन is a further indication that he wanted to know of the enemy's chieftain rather than of the host.

Ramanujacharya continues, in this verse, the strain he has been harping on, about *gnanayoga* being more difficult and risky than *karmayoga*. In his opinion, the man spoken of in the text is one who has entered on *gnanayoga*. Arjuna's question does not, in his view, relate to the *karmayogin* at all, but is confined to the other. He wishes to know the obstructor of the *gnanayogin*, by whose compulsion the latter lapses into sin, against his own better judgment and wish. Desikar states the case for the questioner thus : – "Sir, you told me that every man follows his own nature, by which you mean his own past hoard of instincts. These instincts operate through volition and wish. If a man wishes and adopts *gnanayoga*, and, therefore, does not wish for sensuous pleasure, it is impossible that those instincts can draw him away ; for, the latter can act only through his wish. Hence, I cannot make out how instincts prompt any one to sin against *gnanayoga*."



Here we see that Desikar's point of view seems different from Ramanujacharya's. However, we are not concerned with it. But what we have to notice, however, is that, if Arjuna wanted to know how instincts could operate without the aid, or in spite of, the will on which love and hate depend, Sri Krishna should have addressed Himself to allay that particular doubt. He should have told Arjuna what special potency is possessed by "*instincts*" in that they are able to impel the sinner, apart from the wishful will and its off-shoots of love, hate and other passions. Instead of doing so, we see that Sri Krishna leaves the instincts (वासना) alone and picks out काम 'desire' as the arch-enemy of righteousness.

It may be seen from Ramanujacharya's commentary that the word पाप is taken to mean every enjoyment of the sense organs. The word means sin which consists, ordinarily speaking, of forbidden enjoyments only. The text uses the expression अयं पुरुषः "this man". There is nothing to show that only the gnanayogin is contemplated here to the exclusion of the karmayogin who is as much on the path of righteousness as the other and has to face the hostility of passions to the same extent.

श्रीभगवानुवाच —

37) काम एष क्रोध एष रजोगुणसमुद्भवः ।

महाशनो महापाप्मा विद्ध्येनमिह वैरिणम् ॥

|                |     |                             |
|----------------|-----|-----------------------------|
| श्रीभगवान्     | ... | The Blessed Lord            |
| उवाच           | ... | said                        |
| कामः           | ... | desire, greed               |
| एषः            | ... | it or he is                 |
| क्रोधः         | ... | anger                       |
| एषः            | ... | it or he is                 |
| रजोगुणसमुद्भवः | ... | born of Rajoguna            |
| महाशनः         | ... | it or he, is all-consuming  |
| महापाप्मा      | ... | inciter of the greatest sin |
| विद्धि         | ... | know                        |
| एनं            | ... | him or it                   |
| इहं            | ... | here                        |
| वैरिणं         | ... | the foe                     |

*The blessed Lord said, —*

“It (or he) is desire ; It (or he) is wrath, all-consuming inciter of the worst sins. Know it (or him) as the foe here.”

The answer to the query of Arjuna is, that the arch-enemy is desire or greed. That is the chief, because all else follows in its wake. From desire is born wrath. Desire is said to be no other than wrath; it means that the distinction is fine and subtle : one being the cause and the other its effect. Wrath is the outcome of Rajasa (राजस) quality and stands for the rest of the brood *viz.*, avarice, delusion, pride and envy. If desire is conquered, every one of the rest retires also. There is no use of dalliance, with it. It is insatiate,

being capable of consuming everything. There is no sin it will not abet. It bars the way to every blessing here and hereafter. Take it as *the* enemy, because it stands between you and salvation. A great Asura, Kalanemi, is the ruling spirit of greed.

*This, in brief, is the purport of the verse.*

In verse 34, Sri Krishna said, "Let none come under the dominion of desire and hate, for, they, indeed, are his enemies." As desire and wrath were here spoken of as the enemies, one might naturally take it that, in the verse under comment, they both are, again, mentioned as enemies. Such, however, is not the meaning. It is only of the chief enemy that Arjuna asked, and the Lord mentions the chieftain only, *viz., greed*. The Lord anticipates the objector who might point out wrath, too, as an enemy, and says, 'not so; wrath is but another name for greed, being born out of it. So, it is enough to tackle greed, and the rest are easily conquered.'

That desire alone is the subject of reference is clear from this verse and the succeeding verses of the chapter. Throughout, the enemy is referred to in the singular. – In the present verse, 'know *it* as the enemy' is the expression used. Verse 38 ends with the words "By *it* all this is enveloped." Verse 39 again says "By *it* is knowledge veiled'. 'It' in all these places means 'Kama'. In the second line of verse 39 कामरूपेण 'by kama' is the word used. The chapter ends with the exhortation to kill 'kama'. Hence, there can hardly be any doubt that '*kama*' alone is referred to throughout, it being the leader of the inimical host.

It is to be observed that 'desire' seems to be at the very bottom of samsara. It is, no doubt, of various degrees of intensity. Manu says, "All the actions and activities, and possessions of man, are invariably based on desire."

In Brihadaranyaka, it is set out that "man is desire - made. As he wishes, so he thinks. As he thinks, so he acts, and of this, he reaps the fruit."

In Mahabharata, Santiparva, desire is compared to a tree of which other passions are roots, shoots, and branches ; and the eager worshipper of money and worldliness is tied by chains of iron to this tree to which he pays incessant homage.

हृदिकामद्रुमश्चित्रो मोहसंचयसंभवः ।

क्रोधमानमहास्कन्धो विधित्सापरिषेचनः ॥

तस्य चाज्ञानमाधारः प्रमादः परिषेचनम् ।

सोभ्यसूयापलाशो हि पुरादुष्कुतसारवान् ।

सम्मोहचिन्ताविटपः शोकशाखो भयांकुरः ।

मोहिनीभिः पिपासाभिर्लताभिरनुवेष्टितः ॥

उपासते महावृक्षं सुलुब्धास्तत्फलेप्सवः ।

आयसैस्संयताः पाशैः फलदं परिवेष्ट्य तम् ॥

"There is the wonderful tree of desire planted in the heart sprouting out of combined delusions. Its



main trunk consists of wrath and pride. Spontaneous activity is its parterre. Its base is ignorance and it is fed on the waters of misapprehension. Its leaves are envy and its sap consists of past sins. Mistake and care are its branches. Grief is its bough, and fear, its shoot. It is encircled by creepers consisting of alluring thirst. From greed of its fruits, misers worship the great tree, enchained thereto with ropes of iron and circling it round and round."

God Supreme is no doubt the prompter of universal energy and work. Under His will, good and bad have their presiding deities and genii. Among them, the Asura known as Kalanemi rules over greed and he envelopes ever one. (*Vide Sanskrit passage.*)

The verse describes Wrath (क्रोध) as born of Rajoguna. The qualities known as Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas, are elementary states of matter. They permeate, shape and colour, every object. Men's character depends on the predominating element among these. Strength, understanding, clearness of mind and sound knowledge result from Sattwa. Desireful activity, wrath and kindred passions, grow out of Rajas. Sloth and idleness is Tamasa.

"Born of Rajoguna" (रजोगुणसमुद्भवः) is the description applying to Wrath (क्रोधः) : so thinks Vivritiacharya. Other commentators take it that it applies also to (काम) desire. They say that the compound word (रजोगुणसमुद्भवः) may be split up and rendered in two ways so that the meaning is that

काम (desire) is the product as well as the producer of Rajas. It is the function of Rajas to allure. Out of it, is desire born. Out of desireful appetites, in contact with pleasure - giving objects, arise efforts and work to grasp them, these being also Rajasic. Hence, Kama is connected at both ends with Rajas, as its cause and as its effect.

Desikacharya sees some incongruity in such a material quality as Rajoguna producing greed and wrath, which are attributes of the spirit, and proceeds to account for it by observing, "Just as the heat of fire scalds the hand by contact, so do the gunas of Prakriti rouse the passions greed and wrath by its contact with Atman." It is, however, not quite true to call greed and wrath spiritual attributes. They are made of mental stuff also, so they are material like gunas themselves (Vide verse 55, of chapter II, where desires (कामाः) are expressly stated to be attributes of the mind).

Among policies of state - craft laid down in Hindu books for vanquishing a foe, they speak of four in particular, (1) suasion (साम) (2) concession (दान) (3) division (भेद) and (4) chastisement (दण्ड). Here is our enemy, greed, to be defeated. Greed is invulnerable except by the very last of these means. It is (महाशन) 'all - consumer', so that the hope is unentertainable of controlling it by concessions. One who thinks he can pacify greed by yielding to it and allowing it ample food for gratification, will soon find out his mistake.

King Yayati in Mahabharata had four sons. He became old and infirm, and so, it is said, he applied to each of his sons to exchange his youth for the old man's infirmity, as he (the old man) was still possessed of lust and desired to continue in enjoyment till satiety.

The first three sons declined. The fourth agreed. Thus Yayati went on with zest, in borrowed youth, devising and devouring fresh pleasures with avidity. At the end of 1000 years, he found himself no better than when he started, his desires continuing as powerful as ever. At last, he burst forth, "Never, never, is desire appeased by enjoyment. On the other hand, it grows higher and higher just as fire flames up with clarified butter. The grains of the earth, all its gold and cattle, and all its women are not enough for one man. Therefore do you abandon desire rather than feed it." So saying, he exchanged places with his dutiful son.

Nor is greed amenable to 'suasion' and 'division'. For, it is a great inciter of wickedness. Its character being so bad, peaceful words do not tame it and its forces are so strong that a split in the camp is out of the question. Hence subjugation by force is the only alternative. The very last words of this chapter are, "slay it".

The verse under comment says "know this the foe *here*", इह. What is referred to by the word "here" is explained by Ramanujacharya to be *gnanayoga*. In his view, Kama is an impediment only to *gnanayoga*. Why it confines its hostility to *gnanayoga* only, rather than extend it to *karmayoga* and everything else, good and righteous, it is difficult to follow. But consistency

compels Ramanujacharya to persist, throughout the chapter, in this strain. But 'इह' 'here' is obviously meant to denote, in general, the Path of Religion and Goodness.

In Harivamsa and Bhagavata, Skandha VIII, the churning of the ocean for nectar is narrated in great detail. We are told that God took a beauteous feminine form and baulked the Asuras of their hope and wish. Disappointed and discomfited, they were up in arms in a moment against the Divine Host. Leader after leader turned up to conduct the campaign and failed. At last, *Kalanemi*, the great and powerful, stalked forward, bestriding the world in *three* paces. As the presiding spirit of greed, he could influence, though variously, the good, bad and indifferent, like the smoke of fire, the dust of mirrors, and the amnion encasing the foetus of the womb. When the Devas saw his great form and triple pace, they quailed in spite of their nectar. At last, as the narrative goes, Sri Vishnu himself appeared, cut his arm, and slew him with his disc.

The esoteric import of this narrative lies on its surface and need hardly be pointed out.

38) धूमेनाव्रियते वह्निर्यथादर्शो मलेन च ।  
यथोल्बेनावृतो गर्भस्तथा तेनेदमावृतम् ॥

धूमेन ... By smoke  
आव्रियते ... is enveloped



|        |     |               |
|--------|-----|---------------|
| वह्निः | ... | Fire          |
| यथा    | ... | Just as       |
| आदर्शः | ... | Mirror        |
| मलेन   | ... | by dust       |
| च      | ... | Likewise      |
| यथा    | ... | Just as       |
| उल्बेन | ... | by the amnion |
| आवृतः  | ... | enveloped     |
| गर्मः  | ... | the embryo    |
| तथा    | ... | so            |
| तेन    | ... | by that       |
| इदं    | ... | This          |
| आवृतं  | ... | is enveloped  |

“Just as fire is veiled by smoke, as the mirror is by dust, just as the embryo is enveloped by the amnion, so is *this* enveloped by *that*.”

It may be seen that three examples have been given to illustrate the operation to *kama* (desire) on men. The significance of *three*, where one might have sufficed, has to be examined.

Desikar points out that as smoke is attached to fire as a co-existing part of it, desire goes along with the soul, co-existent and beginningless. The dust on a mirror illustrates how desire sticks to us with persistence. However often, the mirror may be dusted and cleaned, it becomes soiled again and again by dirt. The amnion wrapping up the embryo shows how

firmly and fully we are enveloped by Desire and how powerless we are to get free from it, without external help. Thus, the three epithets are meant to lay stress on the three cardinal characteristics of Desire, *viz.*, (1) that it is beginningless and co-existent, (2) that it persistently reverts, however much we may wipe it away, and (3) that it embraces us so fully that release is unattainable except by means of others' help.

Madhusoodana looks on the three-fold illustration from another aspect. He says that Desire exists quite subtle and unmanifest before the soul takes on a gross body. In the embodied being, it becomes gross and dense. When it develops into longing or yearning, it becomes denser. When the further stage is reached of the longing being translated into enjoyment, it is densest. Thus the three degrees of density are illustrated by the three examples. Smoke but touches the outskirts of fire, and does not destroy its capacity to burn and scald. Dust so far affects the mirror as to interfere with its reflecting capacity. Still, it leaves the mirror exposed to view, only its capacity is dimmed. The sac of the embryo not only keeps the inmate in prison and prevents the limbs from movement, but veils it completely out of view.

Sankarananda thinks that the point emphasised is the antithesis between desire and knowledge. Whereas the former may be said to be dark, opaque and inanimate, the latter is light, transparent and animate. Desire, enveloping knowledge or reason, colours it dark, destroys its discrimination, and makes it dull and lifeless. Thus act smoke, dust and amnion. Smoke colours the fire dark. Dust kills the reflecting

capacity of the mirror, and the amnion renders the living inmate virtually lifeless.

Another writer (Utkarsha Deepika) says that 'Desire' first prevents knowledge from revealing the Atman, next, it dims knowledge so that it fails to see the external world as it truly is, and, lastly, it kills discrimination.

Anandagiri, the commentator of Sankara Bhashya, takes the view that the three examples are similar in import, and that the object of the repetition is simply to press the point home, by making the meaning quite clear.

There is latitude given to imagination in some of these ingenious expositions. None of them has sought for authority, nor quoted any.

Sri Madhwa thinks (*vide* his Tatparya) that the example of the smoke shows the action of Desire on beings decidedly good in nature. The dust on the mirror illustrates how 'desire' operates on the middle class of Jeevas. The third example points out how the lowest class of Jeevas is held tight. Desire (काम) thus affects three classes of men in three different degrees of intensity and power.

It is said in Brahma Tarka quoted by Sri Madhwa, "तत्र कामः कालनेमिस्सर्वं धूममलोल्बवत् । शुभमध्याधमजनं क्रमादावृत्य तिष्ठति ॥"

"Desire, ruled over by the Asura *Kalanemi*, envelops all like smoke, dust and amnion. He affects

the good, middling, and low Jeevas, in the manner respectively of the three examples." We may remember how Dhruva shook off worldly desires as if it were but a puff of smoke. But Dhritarashtra's good sense was so badly warped that, in spite of better counsel, he invariably yielded to the machinations and instigations of his wicked son. Duryodhana illustrates the third class of men, wicked out and out. So tight and overpowering was the hold of greed over him that he exclaimed when asked to yield but 5 villages to his cousins, "No, not so much space as could be covered by a pin-prick."

It is easy to study the lesson of the three-fold example from another aspect also, as Sri Madhwa puts it in Geeta Bhashya.

Greed veils off God from our view as smoke does the flame. God is not affected by the veil but man is unable to see him on account of the cloud of smoke.

Kama affects the *mind* like dust on the mirror. Mental clearness gives place to turbidity and opacity. Thus affected, the mind becomes incapable of revealing God and the soul.

Like the amnion, greed envelops the Jeeva himself and holds him tight. His freedom is destroyed thereby.

Thus, we see that the Lord did not take the trouble of giving us *three* different examples in vain. To say, as Anandagiri does, that He simply repeated Himself for greater clearness seems a feeble explanation, especially in the light of the various points set out by the other commentators.



The last quarter of the verse says, "So, by *that*, *this* is enveloped," The antecedent of 'that' is obviously 'desire'. The antecedent of 'this' is not so clear.

Sankarananda, Neelakanta and others consider that the reference is to Gnana, the meaning being that Desire warps Gnana, knowledge. In support of this, they point to the next verse (39), which begins with the words "Enveloped is knowledge by this constant enemy." As the idea of the present verse is simply continued in the next one, and as the next verse may fairly be deemed an answer to the supposed query 'Well, Sir, you say, by *that*, *this* is enveloped: What is it you refer to, by "this"?, Sankarananda and others thus justify their annotation.

Desikar thinks that the antecedent is easily found in verse 36 – where Arjuna puts his question, "Impelled by what does *man* commit sin?" The answer to the question is "It is desire (verse 37); Like smoke etc., it envelops *him*." The word in the text is इदं 'this'. But the neuter is used in the sense of common gender with reference to the totality of men.

Madhusoodana and Venkatanatha think that इदं refers to the "mind" rather than to ज्ञानं of the next verse.

Sri Madhwa thinks that इदं stands for the totality of souls with special reference to their division into good, bad and indifferent, natures. It may also stand for God, Mind and the Soul, as already pointed out, which are variously veiled off.

If इदं stood for ज्ञानं mentioned in the next verse, the Lord might well have used the word ज्ञानं for इदं—the versified line might easily have run thus “यथोल्बेनावृतो गर्भस्तथा च ज्ञानमावृतं” or other words to the same effect.

39) आवृतं ज्ञानमेतेन ज्ञानिनो नित्यवैरिणा ।  
कामरूपेण कौन्तेय दुष्पूरेणानलेन च ॥

|              |     |                           |
|--------------|-----|---------------------------|
| आवृतं        | ... | is enveloped              |
| ज्ञज्ञज्ञानं | ... | knowledge                 |
| एतेन         | ... | by this                   |
| ज्ञानिनः     | ... | of the knower             |
| नित्यवैरिणा  | ... | by the invariable enemy   |
| कामरूपेण     | ... | known as Kama             |
| कौन्तेय      | ... | O! son of Kunti           |
| दुष्पूरेण    | ... | which is filled with pain |
| अनलेन        | ... | ever craving for more     |
| च            | ... | and                       |

“The knowledge of the knower is enveloped by this, the invariable enemy, known as Desire, which is stocked with pain and is insatiate.”

By the examples of smoke, dirt, and the sac of the embryo, the last verse taught us the operation of Desire on the sinning world (इदं). We see that the

*modus operandi* consisted in *truth* being veiled off from us. In other words sound knowledge in respect to God and the Soul is not born, because of the domination of Desire. The present verse presents the matter in a slightly different aspect. We are now told that, assuming for a moment, a man manages to wade through the Shastras and acquires true knowledge, he is still thwarted by Desire from reaping its legitimate fruit, namely, God-vision. If the wise man of Shashtraic culture and knowledge be thus hampered, much more therefore does it follow that the ordinary man of ignorance and the superficial scholar is seriously hindered and handicapped by this foe.

While the last verse relates to Desire being an obstacle to the birth of true knowledge, the present relates to its being an obstacle to the knower in his further progress, which, but for the impediment, ought to culminate easily in God-vision (अपरोक्ष). Hence there is no redundancy.

In explaining the relation and connection of these two verses, 38 and 39, Sankaracharya and others drag the pronoun इदं = 'this' of verse No. 38 into service, and say that the antecedent of the pronoun is furnished by the present verse. The last verse ended with the words "*Thus is This enveloped by That.*" The inquirer is supposed to ask "who is it, O Lord, you mean by *This*?" and the reply follows that the antecedent is '*knowledge*'. (ज्ञानं आवृतं).

It has already been pointed out that this explanation is far from convincing, because इदं obviously

relates to the sinning world. By whom is the sinner impelled to sin? The reply was given by verse 38 that he (meaning the sinning world) is enveloped as if by smoke, dirt and amnion. No further occasion arises for doubt as to who the pronoun 'This' stands for. Hence, the interpretation of Sri Madhwa and Ramanujacharya is that verses 38 and 39 are not meant to point out *who* the enveloper or the enveloped is, but how Desire operates. Hence, the *modus operandi* is set out in two different aspects in the two verse respectively.

In the first line, Madhusoodana understands the word ज्ञानं to stand for the *Mind*. Utkarsha Deepika criticizes this and points out that ज्ञानं must mean *discrimination* as in verse 41, where Desire is spoken of as the destroyer of ज्ञान and विज्ञान. In this latter verse, ज्ञानं does not obviously stand for the *Mind*.

Leaving 'the mind' out of account, other commentators of the Sankara School take 'discriminative knowledge' as the meaning of ज्ञान. As desire does not hamper every discrimination, as, for instance, where it relates to worldly and selfish affairs of the flesh, Desikar narrows the sense so as to make it relate to matters of spiritual and Divine knowledge, and says that the text treats only of Desire as affecting religious and philosophical belief. Sri Madhwa also understands to mean the knowledge obtained by a true scholar of the Shastras.

In the first line, it is possible to read the sentence in two ways so as to mean



(i) "knowledge is enveloped by this constant foe of the knower (ज्ञानं आवृतं ज्ञानिनो नित्यवैरिणा),

(or)

(ii) the knowledge of the knower is enveloped by this constant foe (ज्ञानीनः ज्ञानं, आवृतं नित्यवैरिणा).

The reader will please note the difference. The former is how Sankaracharya and his disciples read the sentences. The latter is what is approved of by Sri Madhwa and Ramanujacharya. The Sankara commentators think that Desire is the constant enemy only of the wise and not of the fool. The wise man realizes where Desire is precipitating him to, while the fool does not. Thus, the former is unhappy *long before* the disaster, as he anticipates it, while the latter feels elation before the event, and sees the misery only after it fully develops. On this, they argue that Desire is the *perpetual* enemy of one and not of the other. This reasoning seems very queer. In the first place, it makes the wise man more foolish than the fool, because he (the wise man) seems to plunge into the paths of Desire with eyes open and meets disaster, which, he knew fully beforehand, he should avoid. The fool has, at any rate, the excuse of ignorance. But, truly, Desire is the enemy of the wise as well as the fool, because it leads both to ruin. It is immaterial at what particular point or stage, the man scents the danger. Surely, poison is deadly if it enters the body, whether the victim knows of it or not.

Thus the proposition that *Kama* is the foe of the wise only, seems quite unsound.

In the other construction, which Sri Madhwa and Ramanujacharya adopt, to the effect that "the knowledge of the knower is enveloped by the foe", the difficulty is that the expression, "the knowledge of the knower" (ज्ञानिनः ज्ञानं) involves an obvious tautology. A knower is inconceivable without knowledge, and it may suffice to speak of knowledge being shrouded without the redundant expression "knower's knowledge", as if a non-knower or an inanimate object can ever boast of knowledge.

Desikar surmounts the difficulty by rendering ज्ञानिनः to mean not 'the knower,' but of the knowing essence, the soul being in its essence and purity a knower as distinguished from the soul as ordinarily found with crusts of superimposed impurity. The reference to ज्ञानिनः ज्ञानं is intended, according to Desikar, to lay stress on the natural and inherent purity of the soul.

Sri Madhwa thinks that the point is to emphasize how even the 'knower's knowledge' is warped. The knower referred to is the scholar of the Shastras as distinguished from the superficial student on the one side, and the sage who has visioned God, on the other. It is pointed out that even a good scholar (short of the sage) is dominated and misled by Desire, and it need hardly be said how seriously it affects the ordinary man of little learning. To take the sage who has visioned God as contemplated by the word ज्ञानिनः would be wrong, as he is one who has transcended the Zone of Desires. (See chapter II, verses 55 and 59 in particular).

The reader may note the significance of the expression नित्यवैरिणा. If नित्य means 'always', it is of doubtful force. Desikar says, *it* (नित्यत्व) may be literally true, because in respect of souls that are doomed to eternal *Samsara*, *Kama* operates without cessation. It is commonly believed that the school of Sri Madhwa alone puts forward this tenet relating to eternal samsarins. But Desikar's statement aforesaid is a startling eye-opener (*vide* p.252, Vol. I of the Sanskrit Edition of the three Bhashyas, 1910, issued by R. Venkateswar & Co).

It is hardly necessary, however, to render नित्य into "always" or "eternal". It means "necessarily or invariably." Desire being invariable hostile to spiritual and religious introspection, the adjective is not inappropriate.

In the second line, the words are fairly easy. A great truth is therein accentuated, in that 'desire' ever longs for the unattainable, and is dissatisfied with what is attained. With great zest, we pursue phantoms, and pass through risks and difficulties. At last, we grasp what we longed for. But the pleasure ends here, and the mind starts off on another pursuit, a similar wild-goose chase. Contentment and satiety are unknown. The more we get, the more we want, and 'enough' is a word that is absent from our dictionary of pleasures.

40) इन्द्रियाणि मनोबुद्धिरस्याधिष्ठानमुच्यते ।  
एतैर्विमोहयत्येष ज्ञानमावृत्य देहिनम् ॥

|             |     |                     |
|-------------|-----|---------------------|
| इन्द्रियाणि | ... | senses              |
| मनः         | ... | mind                |
| बुद्धिः     | ... | reason              |
| अस्य        | ... | of this             |
| अधिष्ठानं   | ... | the seat            |
| उच्यते      | ... | is called           |
| एतैः        | ... | by these            |
| विमोहयति    | ... | deludes             |
| एषः         | ... | this desire (or he) |
| ज्ञानं      | ... | knowledge           |
| आवृत्य      | ... | enveloping          |
| देहिनं      | ... | the Jeeva           |

“The sense, mind, and reason, are called its seat. By these, it deludes the Jeeva, obstructing knowledge.”

The thread is continued, of the lesson as to how desire operates. We are told, it is entrenched in the senses, mind, and reason. These are *our* possessions and should be at *our* service. But the enemy occupies them, and, being lodged firmly therein, he attacks the Jeeva by interfering with his knowledge. His darts prevent the birth of true knowledge and obstruct what little of it may have been born from bearing fruit. The spiritual aspirant should catch the enemy in his fort and dislodge him from his shelter. For this purpose, Sri Krishna points out the *senses, mind and reason* to be the forts where he establishes himself and from which he derives well-nigh irresistible power.



A brief reference to the psychology of Reason, Mind, and the Senses, cannot be out of place in this connection. In order that volition may act, it is necessary that intellect should marshal experiences, store them in distinct pigeon-holes of the brain, and produce them whenever necessary in groups of associated ideas. Unless this is done, no wish for a coveted object is possible. It is the whole history of the object including all the pleasure it ever gave us or others in the past, that should stand before the mind's eye and fall within the mental purview, before a wish can be directed to it. Thus, unless desires secures the strong aid of the intellect, it is abortive of results. Generalised and classified experiences, impressions, thoughts, and ideas, making up bundles of *concepts*, fall within the operations of Reason ; and their value in directing human efforts, activities, and civilization, cannot be over-estimated. It is this that elevates the animal into man.

Lower than buddhi, is *mind*, the internal organ which receives and transmits sensory messages through in-going and out-going nerves. Mind is the storehouse of sensations and ideas, in which, these are seized and sifted by Intellect and grouped into classified bundles. Unless the mind is attentive so as to respond to the demands and calls of the senses, eyes, ears, nose, touch and tongue, however active they may be, their activity cannot result in perception. Hence, desire (काम) captures the mind so that it may get stocked with percepts which develop later into concepts.

Thirdly, there are the senses, five of knowledge and five of action, which come in contact with objects

and convey impressions. The senses are the external gates of perception, and they transmit and receive messages from without and within. It is needless to say how, if the senses are deadened, there is no possibility of any wish being carried out.

This brief notice of psychological functions should suffice for understanding what Sri Krishna means by speaking of desire being lodged and entrenched in the senses, the mind, and the reason.

In Hindu Psychology, *mind* is only an internal sense like the eye or the ear which are external senses. *Buddhi* being a part of the mind, Sri Krishna might have used the word senses इन्द्रियाणि alone to denote all that He wished to refer to. But He chooses to confine इन्द्रियाणि in the text to the external senses, and speaks separately of *mind* and *reason*, having regard to their prominence and importance.

In Kataka Upanishad, the soul is described as the chariot-master, and the body is said to be the chariot. Reason is the chariot-driver, and *mind*, the reins. The senses are the horses and sense-objects are fields for their roaming. This is a beautiful simile to bring the truth home that, if we let the horses, the reins and the driver, go out of control, the master and the car precipitate into the pit with a crash. काम our foe, seizes hold of these accessories of the chariot, and brings about the ruin of its master.

There is another fine allegory set out in Puranjanopakhyana, Bhagavata, Skandha IV, Chap-

ter 25. The passage is quoted in Sanskrit and will repay perusal. Buddhi is described as the lovely spouse of the soul. She is served by the mind and the ten senses, besides numberless slaves in the shape of pleasure-giving objects. She is filled with desire and moves about to charm and enchant the will. The sequel is that the Jeevā allows himself to be enslaved by her and goes down upon his knees in abject surrender.

41) तस्मात्त्वमिन्द्रियाण्यादौ नियम्य भरतर्षभ ।  
पाप्मानं प्रजहि ह्येनं ज्ञानविज्ञाननाशनम् ॥

|                    |     |  |
|--------------------|-----|--|
| तस्मात्            | ... | therefore                                  |
| त्वं               | ... | you  |
| इन्द्रियाणि        | ... | senses                                     |
| आदौ                | ... | first                                      |
| नियम्य             | ... | controlling                                |
| भरतर्षभ            | ... | O! Arjuna                                  |
| पाप्मानं           | ... | sinful                                     |
| प्रजहि             | ... | destroy                                    |
| हि                 | ... | indeed                                     |
| एनं                | ... | this                                       |
| ज्ञानविज्ञाननाशनम् | ... | destroyer of every knowledge<br>and wisdom |

“Therefore, O! Arjuna, controlling the senses first, do you destroy this sinful killer of every kind of knowledge and wisdom.”

The control of sense consists in turning them away from sensuality. Even if the contact occurs, self-control lies in keeping the *mind* and *reason* indifferent to, and out of touch with, the sensations. Even if the mental functions do follow, one ought to see that the mind and reason are not affected and dominated by it.

The principal predicate of the verse is "kill him." "Him" relates to *kama* and *kalanemi*. Some commentators read the word जहि into जहिहि (adding हि to the verb and making the whole a single word) ; and the meaning then is "*abandon him*". At the end of the chapter, it may be noted that जहि is used again. There, it is not possible to read जहिहि. Hence, it seems better to read जहि here also and let alone the next word हि which means 'verily or utterly'. To speak of utterly destroying Kama and Kalanemi is not inappropriate. Although Sankara Bhashya adopts जहिहि, his commentator thinks that जहि is the true reading, but that the meaning of जहि itself is, 'abandon', for, Desire is not an animal which can be killed as by cutting off its head. After all, the difference is subtle and unimportant, and it seems admissible to read either way.

He has to be killed or abandoned, because (1) he is sinful (पाप्मा) and (2) because he is an enemy of ज्ञान and विज्ञान. 'Sinful', because he instigates sin. Referring to Kalanemi, the Assura, he is truly sinful, being full of wickedness. He veils off knowledge like smoke, dust and the embryo-sac, and his sinful nature



is evident. As the result of his work, men commit sins. Manu says, "From errors of the body, men are born trees and fixtures : from those of speech, they become birds and animals : from those of the mind, they are born low among men."

The words ज्ञान and विज्ञान are elastic. They mean :-

(i) ज्ञान is book-learning – gathered from Shastras. विज्ञान is Realized knowledge, God-vision.

This is the meaning adopted by a majority of Sankara-commentators. It is not open to objection. We too have understood the work of Kama to lie in preventing Shastraic knowledge in the first instance, and in thwarting Divine-vision next (see verses 39 and 40) ;

or

(ii) As Sridhara says, ज्ञान is book-learning, विज्ञान is contemplation ;

or

(iii) As Sridhara says also, ज्ञान is Realization of God and विज्ञान is book – learning.

Note : this follows Amarakosha. But Sridhara having rendered ज्ञान in verses 38, 39 and 40 uniformly to mean, *reason, discrimination, or wisdom*, some inconsistency results in departing therefrom. Utkarsha Deepika points out this ;

or

(iv) as the Lexicon मेदिनी allows, विज्ञानं is Karma, or observance ; so that knowledge and karma are said to be the victims of Kama's hostility ;

or

(v) ज्ञानं is mind and is and विज्ञानं of बुद्धि these, Kama is a foe ;

or

(vi) as one Abhidhana defines, विज्ञानं is knowledge possessed by Gods ; ज्ञान is human. Kama is the enemy of both ;

or

(vii) as Desikar puts it in a long note, ज्ञानं is knowledge of the Soul in a general way, and विज्ञानं relates to the innumerable aspects, details and distinctions, relating to the nature and attributes thereof.

In the first line, we are told what is the first thing the seeker should do, in launching on a war with Kama. "Therefore, control the senses *first*." – "Therefore" sums up all the foregoing lessons. It refers, in particular, to the teaching that Kama is firmly established in the fortress of our senses, mind and reason. An enemy firmly protected thus, cannot be killed, unless he is first dislodged from his entrenchment. Hence, "control the senses and dislodge the enemy" is the exhortation.

By the word 'senses', we may easily take 'mind and reason', also, understood as inner senses. It is not unimportant to note, that Shastras draw a dis-

inction between Buddhi and Manas understood as primal principles in Evolution, and those which are *manifested inner senses*. To make this clearer, we may note that *Mahat* is evolved out of Prakriti and the three gunas. From Mahat is born बुद्धि. From Mahat and बुद्धि, is born *Ahankara*. From Ahankara is born a principle which consists of five sub-divisions called, mind, reason, egoism, enemy, memory and consciousness. Into the definition of these, space forbids us to enter ; but the distinction is clear. By the word इन्द्रियाणि in the text, it is quite permissible to take *mind* and *reason* which, being products of Vaikarikahankara, are senses in the strict sense of the word.

The text says, "Control the senses 'first'." 'First', implies that this should come early in life as one of the early steps to be taken by the seeker. He should not postpone it on any account. 'First', *i.e.*, before he thinks of tackling Kama itself. By restraining the senses, *kama* is enfeebled, and to deal with him bereft of his fortress, will be easy. Hence, 'take care of your senses and that will pave the way to the conquest of Desire'. 'First' *i.e.*, before *kama* has developed and enchanted our *mind* and reason. Habit is, at first, a tendril which the finger-nails may pluck away, but when it develops by continued nursing and watering, it is soon an oak that no axe can cut down. So is Desire invincible when it captures the *mind* and *reason*, and affects them vitally. 'Before it has time to do so, restrain the senses.'

Or as Sankarananda puts it, 'First' tackle the senses, meaning the external ones, *viz.*, eye, ear, smell, touch,

and tongue, with speech, legs, hands, and the two senses of evacuation. Leave the *mind* and *reason* alone ; for these are innocuous unless the external senses aid them. 'First' means before you turn to *mind* and *reason*, address yourself to the external senses, for, from the conquest of the latter, follows that of the former.

There is some force, no doubt, in Sankarananda's exposition. But Sri Krishna attaches greater importance to the conquest of the mind than to that of the external senses. For, early in this chapter, He says, Verse 6. "Who stays controlling the organs of action, but dwelling in his mind on sense-objects, that deluded individual is a hypocrite".

Hence it seems for preferable to take the word इन्द्रियाणि 'senses', comprehensively so as to mean the inner and outward senses, and interpret the word First (आदौ) to relate to measures and steps other than the control of मन and बुद्धि being postponed. However, the point is not vital, and the word आदौ 'in the beginning' emphasizes the principal idea that delay is dangerous and that we should, on no account, neglect the senses.

42) इन्द्रियाणि पराण्याहुरिन्द्रियेभ्यः परं मनः ।

मनसस्तु परा बुद्धिर्यो बुद्धेः परतस्तु सः ॥

इन्द्रियाणि ... senses

पराणि ... are superior



|               |     |               |
|---------------|-----|---------------|
| आहुः          | ... | they say      |
| इन्द्रियेभ्यः | ... | than senses   |
| परं           | ... | higher        |
| मनः           | ... | is the mind   |
| मनसः          | ... | than the mind |
| तु            | ... | But           |
| परा           | ... | higher        |
| बुद्धिः       | ... | is Reason     |
| यः            | ... | who is        |
| बुद्धेः       | ... | than reason   |
| परतः          | ... | higher        |
| तु            | ... | but           |
| सः            | ... | is he         |

“They say that senses are superior ; than senses is the mind higher ; but higher than the mind, is Buddhi. But one who is higher than Buddhi is He.”

The true knowledge of the supreme is the weapon for the conquest of Desire. The next verse states so. To prepare for it, the present verse teaches us how the senses, mind and Buddhi of which we have already been told, stand in mutual relation and in relation to the Supreme. We are told that senses are higher than objects, that the mind is higher than the senses, that Buddhi is higher than the Mind, and that God transcends Buddhi.

In Kathopanishad, there is an analogous passage on the subject, (III, Mantras 10 and 11). Literally

rendered, the Mantras read thus, "Objects are superior to senses. Higher than objects is Manas. Budhi is higher than Manas, and higher than Budhi, Mahan Atman, the Universal consciousness of Hiranaya Garbha. The unmanifest is superior to Mahat and above the unmanifest, is Purusha (Narayana). He is the end, the Supreme goal."

The Upanishad passage deals also with the Divinities presiding over the senses, mind and budhi. The following table sets out Sri Madhwa's view on the point.

| Indriyas                          | Presiding Divinities | Arthas, Objects | Presiding Divinities. |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Ear ...                           | Soma ...             | Sound ...       | Suparni.              |
| Touch ...                         | Kubera ...           | Touch ...       | Do                    |
| Eye ...                           | Soorya ...           | Sight ...       | Varuni.               |
| Tongue<br>(sense of<br>taste) ... | Varuna ...           | Taste ...       | Do                    |
| Nose ...                          | Aswinou ...          | Smell ...       | Uma                   |
| Speech ...                        | Agni                 |                 |                       |
| Hand ...                          | Indra                |                 |                       |
| Feet ...                          | Jayanta              |                 |                       |
| Rectum ...                        | Yama                 |                 |                       |
| Private ...<br>organ              | Daksha               |                 |                       |

*The Mantras refer to the Divinities thus :-*

“Higher than the Devas of sensation, are the Devas of perceptions ; higher than the Devas of perceptions, are the Devas of Manas, (Rudra, Garuda and Sesha) ; higher than the Devas of Manas is Saraswati, the Divinity of Buddhi ; higher than the Devata of Buddhi, is Mahan Atman or Brahama called Virincha. The Avyakta (Lakshmee) is higher than Mahat ; the Purusha is higher than Avyakata. He is the end, He the Supreme goal.”

Comparing the mantras with the Geeta text, two points should be noted :— (1) The Geeta text makes no mention of Mahat and Avyakta. (ii) While the Geeta puts senses above objects, the Upanishad just reverses the order.

Notwithstanding these two points of difference, there can be no doubt that the Geeta text and the mantras deal with the same subject and set out the hierarchy of Divinities and the gradations of what they preside over. In the Geeta text, Mahat and Avyakta should be read between Buddhi and Purusha. There is no intention to exclude them as negligible. The Geeta text states a few things briefly and those few are the *senses*, *mind*, and *reason* that figured largely in the context.

Sense-objects are placed above *senses* in power, in the Upanished. But the Geeta places *senses* above the other. Various explanations have been given to account for this difference. Desikar considers it so vital that he thinks the Geeta does not allude to the Kataka Mantras at all, in this place. He thinks the enumeration in the Mantras at all, in this place. He thinks

the enumeration in the Mantras, and the point and conclusion pressed therein, are altogether different from those of the Geeta verses under comment. But all the other commentators are unanimous in seeing an identity of thought and matter.

It may be seen that in one sense, pleasures are more powerful than senses, and in another sense, inferior. The senses lie dormant and latent until a contact with sense-objects occurs. Then they leap forward like tongues of electric flash and over power the man. Rishyasringa, the adult Rishi, who had been utterly unconscious of the difference between the sexes, felt tickled by the language and allurements of women. He mistook them for a strange kind of Rishi tribe, and spoke to his father about these *men* who had attracted his heart.

In another sense, sense-objects are inferior to senses. Senses are illuminative, internal, subtle, pervasive, causal, and inspiring, while the others are dark, external, gross, pervaded, and inspired effects.

Hence, both the propositions, *viz.*, the one in the text and that of the Mantras, are intelligible.

If, as Sri Madhwa explains, it is not the inanimate things alone that are described, but also Divinities presiding over them, the statement as to gradation receives further light. The deities presiding over sense-objects are many. Some of them are lower than the deities of senses, while others are higher. The Geeta statement alludes to the former relation, while the Mantras deal with the latter.



The theory of gradation is one peculiar to the system of Sri Madhwa. The gradations of the inanimate world are of no particular value if that of the hierarchy of Divinities is not recognized and realized. According to Sri Madhwa, a true and firm belief in the relation of the Gods and the Supremacy of Sri Narayana is a vital and essential article of faith.

After the prolonged night of Pralaya, when evolution begins, the subtlest forms of matter emanate first, and the denser follow in due course. From the unmanifest (Avyakta) issues Mahat. From the latter, Buddhi, then Ahankara, then Manas, and so on down to gross conditions of matter. When involution occurs, each grosser form dissolves into its parent which, again, in its turn, is wound up in its own parent later, and so on up to the unmanifest which at last merges in Purusha the Supreme, dormant and quiescent. Involution being a reverse process of evolution, the order and sequence of merger and emanation in opposite processes is clear.

Of the Divinities, who are all, of course, eternal in essence, being Jeevas, Brahma, the four-faced, is the first born, his birth consisting, as in the case of every soul, in donning a fresh material body. Brahma then gives birth to later beings. He is the father of creation in the sense that his body gives rise to the body of his offspring. Thus we understand the lineage downwards.

The gradation of superiority and inferiority is based on this principle. The deity who is earlier-born and who is the parent, is superior to one who is later-

born and who is an offspring. The intellect, power, and capacity, of the former is greater than that of the latter.

Thus evolution on the twofold planes of matter and spirit accounts for the graduated scale of material and spiritual ascendancy.

Each lower Divinity is the reflection of the higher one, just as all beings are reflections of the God Supreme. The reflected character consists in (1) Dependence, and (2) some sort of resemblance.

We come to the last person referred to in the verse as "one who is above all". The verse refers to Him as 'He'.

Sankara-commentators think that the antecedent of 'He' is the soul – the Atman, spoken of as देहिन् in verse 40, who is deluded by Kama.

No doubt, in the school of Monism, the individual soul(Jeeva) is identical with the soul Supreme. But the former is, for practical purposes, a conditioned being, limited and dominated by Avidya and tossed about in Samsara by the power of *kama*. To know him is no salvation. It is no better than knowing the senses, mind and reason.

In verse 59, chapter II, we were told that "even relish (meaning काम) turneth away after the Supreme is seen." It is God-vision, then, that kills relish, not a knowledge of the Jeeva.

In Kathopanishad, Mantra No. 9., IIIrd Valli, says, "the man of self-control reaches the Haven which is the great abode of Vishnu." (सोऽध्वनः परमाप्नोति तद्विष्णोः परमं पदं). Hence the goal is Vishnu and it is His knowledge that kills Desire.

Ramanujacharya's commentary of this verse makes out that the antecedent of "He" (सः) is Desire. He argues that senses, mind, reason, and desire, are our four enemies, the last being aided by the preceding three. Arjuna is asked to realize the power of these four enemies in the ascending scale of strength, and told to spot काम as the worst, and kill him. According to this commentator, the Geeta text is not a reproduction of the Kataka Mantras and has no connection therewith.

This rendering of Ramanujacharya is both original and startling.

In the first place, *senses*, *mind* and *reason* are no enemies of man. As one of the Upanishadas has it, "Manas is of two kinds, pure and impure. The impure one is that which is suffused by Desire. The pure one is what is free from it. According as the mind is impure or pure, is the man a bondsman or free." By themselves, therefore, *senses*, *mind* and *Buddhi* are our best friends for purposes of study and knowledge. But, spoiled by Desire, they are hostile. Hence, it is not right to speak of them as foes. It is greed and greed alone that is our antagonist. Moreover, there was no need to tell Arjuna here that Desire was the arch-enemy. He had been told this abundantly in verse

37, chapter III and later. It is some what late in the day to begin the point over again by drawing attention to who is the foe. It is time that Arjuna was taught the ways and means of the conquest.

It is well known that Desire is an attribute of Manas. Sruti itself “कामस्संकल्पो etc.,” declares this. How such an attribute of Manas can be placed higher than Manas and higher even than Buddhi, it is hard for Hindu Psychologists to understand.

One of the chief difficulties of Desikar in rendering सः to mean Sri Narayana, is that the antecedent will, in this event, have to be sought for not in the Geeta but in the Mantras of Kataka. It is there that the passage occurs. “पुरुषः परः । पुरुषान्न परं किञ्चित्सा काष्ठा सा परागतिः ॥”

In the Upanishad, of course, there is no doubt that पुरुष is Vishnu.

This difficulty of Desikar's is somewhat fanciful. सः=That, is a well-known religious designation of Para Brahman (so it is stated in verse 23 of chapter XVII, the Bhagavad Geeta).

An antecedent may be implied from the context and the fitness of things, as by express reference. In the present instance, there is no difficulty in ascertaining it by implication.

Critic Venkatanatha annotates the verse like the rest of the Monist school. But he does not choose



to look askance at Ramanujacharya or notice his singular view as to the antecedent of सः (He). But his eye is ever on Sri Madhwa and he darts with fury at him.

The philosophy that claims for all men, identity or equality with God, can hardly put up with Divinities being graded as superior and inferior. Venkatanatha picks up this part of Sri Madhwa's commentary for animadversion.

His points are these :—

(i) If gradation depends on the region each God rules over, Vishnu being the presiding Divinity of Feet, how could He be Supreme and how could he be superior to Rudra who rules the mind?

(ii) The graded hierarchy of Gods rests on no authority. Surely the Geeta text is no authority on this point, for, it admits of intelligible meaning otherwise. "That there is no other scriptural basis for it is proved by me," says he "in my work called Pashandagajakesari."

Venkatanatha only shows his own ignorance by these criticisms. Sri Madhwa does not hold that a higher Deity may not rule over a lower region. Sense-objects, for instance, have Presiding Deities some of whom are higher than Indra and others lower. It is the privilege of a Superior Deity to stay in and rule over regions far below what is exclusively allotted to him, but not *vice versa*.

Moreover, it is not this circumstance alone that determines the ranks in question. There are hosts of other circumstances and numerous authorities, for some of which, the reader is referred to the Sanskrit exposition. If we said that Rudra's position is below the God Supreme simply because his region is Manas, Vankatanatha's argument might be of force. That is not the reason. Every Vaishnavite author of note has quoted texts on this very ancient controversy.

Who denies, moreover, that the words of the Geeta verse bear not their ordinary and literal meaning? In addition to the superficial senses, Sri Madhwa construes the language to connote the Presiding Divinities as well. Venkatanatha has erred in thinking that we interpret the verse in the latter sense alone.

That terrific work, Pashandagajakesari, which claims to have smashed up Sri Madhwa's tenets, is to us an unknown work. Hence, we dare not say anything about its merits. If we may judge from what we know of this critic's biassed logic, our surmise cannot be very complimentary to him.

That, in this Geeta verse, a reference to the Presiding Devas is not inappropriate, may easily be gathered from the annotations of Neelakanta and Madhusoodana, brethren of the same school. Both of them speak of Presiding Deities as the parents of various material effects. (*Vide Sanskrit*)

The truth of the matter seems to be that Venkatanatha is wrathful to see Rudra placed below

Vishnu in Sri Madhwa's system. Otherwise, he would probably have left the Geeta verse and Sri Madhwa severely alone. But the Siva-Vishnu controversy is ancient and does not admit of disposal in a line or two.

43) एवं बुद्धेः परं बुद्ध्वा संस्तभ्यात्मानमात्मना ।  
जहि शत्रुं महाबाहो कामरूपं दुरासदम् ॥

|          |     |                    |
|----------|-----|--------------------|
| एवं      | ... | Thus               |
| बुद्धेः  | ... | above Buddhi       |
| परं      | ... | one who transcends |
| बुद्ध्वा | ... | having known       |
| संस्तभ्य | ... | controlling        |
| आत्मानं  | ... | the mind           |
| आत्मना   | ... | by means of wisdom |
| जहि      | ... | kill               |
| शत्रुं   | ... | the foe            |
| महाबाहो  | ... | O! Mighty – armed  |
| कामरूपं  | ... | called Kama        |
| दुरासदं  | ... | intractable        |

“ Having known Him who transcends Buddhi thus, and controlling the mind by means of wisdom, do you kill the foe known as Kama who is intractable.”

The person referred to as transcending Buddhi is Sri Narayana. The point has been discussed under the last verse.

By काम, reference must be understood to both inanimate desires and their presiding spirit, Kalanemi the Asura. We are reminded again of Harivamsa, Parva 1, chapters 47 and 48 in this connection. It is said there, as to Kalanemi,

“Five things did not obey him by yielding to his temptations. They were 1. Vedas, 2. Dharma, 3. Forgiveness, 4. Truth and 5. Sree, these having taken refuge in Narayana.”

“The Asura therefore directed his attack to Narayana”.

“Insulted by him, the mace-wielder (Narayana) did not become wrathful. By the energy of forgiveness, He mildly addressed the foe (कालनेमि).

“The Asura then struck at Garuda with his mace. The bird fell to the ground staggered by the blow.

“Then as the Asura strode along, garlanded, assuming myriads of forms at will, – whose pace enchanted the whole creation, mobile and stationary, Sridhara (Narayana) cut down with His disc, the arms of Kalanemi.”

In the Geeta verse, the word, आत्मन् occurs twice. The Sankara - interpretation thereof is that “the self should be restrained by *the self*”. It is not easy to understand the import of this. Possibly, the idea is that no external effort is of value to steady oneself. The *Atman* must work out his own salvation and has to depend on his own unaided effort for balanced equanimity.



But 'the self' in Monism is an unconditioned absolute. It is incapable of steadying itself or anything else. It is no subject or object of any effort, nor instrument either. How it can exert itself for any purpose, it is not easy to see. Sankaracharya's commentator Utkarsha Deepika construes आत्मना and आत्मानं like Sri Madhwa. आत्मना Means, 'through wisdom' ; आत्मानं means, 'the mind'. It is reason, discrimination, or wisdom, that can steady the mind. The same is the interpretation of Ramanujacharya.

Sankarananda says that this verse, the last one of this chapter, ends by exhorting Arjuna to Gnanayoga. According to him, *Kama* stands for the cosmos. Its annihilation is accomplished by a conviction and realization of Brahman as the only truth. If Atman be thus known, all else vanishes. To know thus is renunciation and *Gnanayoga*.

In this exposition, there is an obvious fallacy. The chapter is known as *Karmayoga*. Throughout, the injunction has been to work, and *not* to abstain. The conclusion, as interpreted by Sankarananda, will thus be directly at variance with the whole trend of the discourse. Sankarananda goes so far as to say that although the chapter is known by the name of *karmayoga* and although work has been, in fact, enjoined, the true purport is to exhort every aspirant to adopt Gnanayoga. In this view, even his own brethren of the Adwaita School, the author of Utkarsha Deepika and others, do not concur..

True Vaishnavas will feel no difficulty in understanding the contents and conclusion of the chapter. Arjuna is told to work without selfishness and attachment. He wishes to know of the arch-instigator of sins. Sri Krishna points to *Kama* and asks Arjuna to beware of him. Knowledge of Sri Narayana is the only effective weapon with which we can tackle this foe. "Believe in God, know Him, worship Him, pray unto Him and He confers the boon." This is true religion and piety. Faith (श्रद्धा) convinces one of this Truth.

End of the Chapter III







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