The Gita's Gospel of Works

Second Edition



A COMPILATION FROM THE WORKS OF
Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Compiled by Jamshed M Mavalwalla

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Sri Aurobindo Society
AUROPUBLICATIONS
POWERFUL THOUGHTS, INSPIRING VISION

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Second Edition

First Edition: 2021
Second Edition: 2026

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www.aurosociety.org

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Vijaybhai's Note on Comprehensive Compilation

All over the world, there is a growing interest in spirituality and Yoga. There is a search for the true meaning and purpose of life, for deeper solutions to the problems that confront us all, and for ways in which we can contribute to evolutionary change and progress.

In this search, more and more people are turning to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for guidance and enlightenment. But in their voluminous writings, they do not know where to find the answers they are looking for.

In this regard the Mother has said,

> "*It is not by books that Sri Aurobindo ought to be studied but by subjects—what he has said on the Divine, on Unity, on religion, on evolution, on education, on self-perfection, on supermind, etc., etc.*"
>
> (CWM 12: 206)

On another occasion She said:

> "*If you want to know what Sri Aurobindo has said on a given subject, you must at least read all he has written on that subject. You will then see that he seems to have said the most contradictory things. But when one has read everything and understood a little, one sees that all the*

contradictions complement one another and are organised and unified in an integral synthesis."

(CWM 16: 309–310)

While several compilations are now available, many sincere spiritual seekers have felt the need for Comprehensive Compilations from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on specific subjects, in which the contents are further organised into sub-topics, so that one can find everything one is looking for in one place.

This compilation is an effort to fulfil this need and thus help spiritual seekers in their journey and sadhana. We hope that this compilation will help us gain greater mental clarity about a subject so that we can channel our efforts in the right direction. For Sri Aurobindo has written:

"*It is always better to make an effort in the right direction; even if one fails the effort bears some result and is never lost.*"

(CWSA 29: 87)

We will be glad to receive suggestions and feedback from the readers.

Vijay

Preface

In this series of comprehensive compilations, we present *The Gita's Gospel of Works* as the third and final book on the topic of Work.

The Mother emphasizes that, if one wishes always to progress, one must understand more completely what one already knows.

> "For those who want always to progress, there are three major ways of progressing:
>
> (1) To widen the field of one's consciousness.
>
> (2) To understand ever better and more completely what one knows.
>
> (3) To find the Divine and surrender more and more to His Will." (CWM 16: 435–436)

The purpose of this comprehensive compilation is to help the reader gain an understanding of what the Gita says about work in Sadhana. The headings are intended to guide the reader towards a clearer and deeper understanding. However, it is important to read the quotations themselves, for the words of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are infused with a consciousness infinitely higher than our own. Therefore, reading these quotations will also help the reader elevate their consciousness.

The quotations in this compilation are taken from the volumes of *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo* (CWSA) and the *Collected Works of the Mother* (CWM), Second Edition. Each quotation is followed by the title of the book, the volume number, and the page number from which it has been taken.

The English translations of the Sanskrit sloka's of the Gita are taken from the book 'The Bhagavad Gita with Translation and Commentary in the Words of Sri Aurobindo', Edited by Parmeshwari Prasad Khetan. This book mentions: The translation of Sanskrit text ... adopted here are based on Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita.*

While the passages from Sri Aurobindo are in the original English, most of the passages from the Mother (selections from her talks and writings) are translations from the original French. We must also bear in mind that the excerpts have been taken out of their original context and that a compilation, by its very nature, is likely to have a personal and subjective approach. A sincere attempt, however, has been made to remain faithful to the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Those who would like to read the fuller text are advised to consult *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo* (CWSA) and the *Collected Works of the Mother* (CWM), Second Edition.

Jamshed M. Mavalwalla

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I—The Gita's Gospel of Works Culminates in Knowledge, Motivated by Devotion

1.

"Undoubtedly, the Gita is a Gospel of Works, but of works which culminate in knowledge, that is, in spiritual realisation and quietude, and of works motivated by devotion, that is, a conscious surrender of one's whole self first into the hands and then into the being of the Supreme, and not at all of works as they are understood by the modern mind, not at all an action dictated by egoistic and altruistic, by personal, social, humanitarian motives, principles, ideals." (CWSA 19: 30–31)

2.

"This is the distinguishing feature of the Gita that it is the culmination of such an action which gives rise to its teaching and assigns that prominence and bold relief to the gospel of works which it enunciates with an emphasis and force we do not find in other Indian Scriptures. Not only in the Gita, but in other passages of the Mahabharata we meet with Krishna declaring emphatically the necessity of action, but it is here that he reveals its secret and the divinity behind our works." (CWSA 19: 19)

3.

"... the Gita goes so far as to make works the distinctive characteristic of Yoga. Action ... in the Gita it is a permanent foundation; ... for the Gita it [*action*] is a means of the highest ascent and continues even after the complete liberation of the soul." (CWSA 19: 69–70)

4.

"The Gita is constantly justifying works as a means of spiritual salvation and enjoining a Yoga of works as well as of Bhakti and Knowledge. Krishna, however, superimposes a higher law also that work must be done without desire, without attachment to any fruit or reward, without any egoistic attitude or motive, as an offering or sacrifice to the Divine. This is the traditional Indian attitude towards these things, that all work can be done if it is done according to the dharma and, if it is rightly done, it does not prevent the approach to the Divine or the access to spiritual knowledge and the spiritual life." (CWSA 29: 249) (CWSA 35: 770)

5.

"It is in this sense that the Gita is speaking when it says that all the totality of work finds its completion, culmination, end in knowledge, *sarvaṁ karmākhilaṁ jñāne parisamāpyate*." (CWSA 19: 199)

II—The Yoga of Works Rapidly and Easily Brings the Soul to Brahman

1.

"… Yoga of works is entirely sufficient and it rapidly and easily brings the soul to Brahman. That Yoga of works is, we have seen, the offering of all action to the Lord, which induces as its culmination an inner and not an outer, a spiritual, not a physical giving up of works into the Brahman, into the being of the Lord, *brahmaṇi ādhāya karmāṇi, mayi sannyasya*. When works are thus 'reposed on the Brahman,' the personality of the instrumental doer ceases; though he acts, he does nothing; for he has given up not only the fruits of his works, but the works themselves and the doing of them to the Lord. The Divine then takes the burden of works from him; the Supreme becomes the doer and the act and the result.

This knowledge of which the Gita speaks, is not an intellectual activity of the mind; it is a luminous growth into the highest state of being by the outshining of the light of the divine sun of Truth, 'that Truth, the Sun lying concealed in the darkness' of our ignorance of which the Rigveda speaks, *tat satyaṁ sūryaṁ tamasi kṣiyantam*." (CWSA 19: 201)

2.

"Or it comes by the Yoga of works in which the personal will is dissolved through the opening up of our mind and heart and all our active forces to the Lord who assumes to himself the whole of our works in nature." (CWSA 19: 418)

3.

"I cannot promise that within a given time you will have a result which will enable you either to go out into the world with a stronger spirit or succeed in the Yoga. For the Yoga you yourself say that you have not yet the whole mind for it and without the whole mind success is hardly possible in sadhana. For the other it is hardly the function of sadhana to prepare a man for ordinary life in the world. There is one thing only that could work in a direction which would help you to something which is not that, but still not the whole Yoga for which you intimate that you are not wholly ready. It is if you get the spirit of the Yoga of works as it is indicated in the Gita—forget yourself and your miseries in the aspiration to a larger consciousness, feel the greater Force working in the world and make yourself an instrument for a work to be done, however small it may be. But, whatever the way may be, you must accept it wholly and put your whole will into it—with a divided and wavering will you cannot

hope for success in anything, neither in life nor in Yoga." (CWSA 29: 237–238)

4.

"There is no need for you to change the line of life and work you have chosen so long as you feel that to be the way of your nature (*svabhāva*) or dictated to you by your inner being or, for some reason, it is seen to be your proper dharma. These are the three tests and apart from that I do not know if there is any fixed line of conduct or way of work or life that can be laid down for the yoga of the Gita. It is the spirit or consciousness in which the work is done that matters most; the outer form can vary greatly for different natures. This, so long as one does not get the settled experience of the Divine Power taking up one's works and doing them; afterwards it is the Power which determines what is to be done or not done." (CWSA 29: 236)

5.

"The Yoga of works has been crowned by the surrender of all works to their Master,—for the natural man is now only an instrument of his will." (CWSA 19: 356)

6.

"Therefore, it says, the Yoga of works is better than the physical renunciation of works, because, while Sannyasa

is difficult for embodied beings who must do works so long as they are in the body, ...” (CWSA 19: 201)

III—The Brahmic Consciousness Is the Gita's Teaching with Regard to Action

1.

"There are in the world, in fact, two different laws of conduct each valid on its own plane, the rule principally dependent on external status and the rule independent of status and entirely dependent on the thought and conscience. The Gita does not teach us to subordinate the higher plane to the lower, it does not ask the awakened moral consciousness to slay itself on the altar of duty as a sacrifice and victim to the law of the social status. It calls us higher and not lower; from the conflict of the two planes it bids us ascend to a supreme poise above the mainly practical, above the purely ethical, to the Brahmic consciousness. It replaces the conception of social duty by a divine obligation. The subjection to external law gives place to a certain principle of inner self-determination of action proceeding by the soul's freedom from the tangled law of works. And this, as we shall see,—the Brahmic consciousness, the soul's freedom from works and the determination of works in the nature by the Lord within and above us,—is the kernel of the Gita's teaching with regard to action." (CWSA 19: 35)

2.

"Undoubtedly, the Gita does, like the Upanishads, teach the equality which rises above sin and virtue, beyond good and evil, but only as a part of the Brahmic consciousness and for the man who is on the path and advanced enough to fulfil the supreme rule." (CWSA 19: 34)

3.

"Only I saw no reason why anyone should fall foul of works and deny the truth of those who have reached, as the Gita says, through works perfect realisation and oneness of nature with the Divine, *saṁsiddhim, sādharmyam*, as did 'Janaka and others', simply because he himself cannot find or has not yet found their deeper secret ..." (CWSA 29: 221)

IV—The Gita Teaches the Action of the Divine Will Working through Our Nature

1.

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

In other words, the Gita is not a book of practical ethics, but of the spiritual life." (CWSA 19: 31)

2.

"But the point here is that the modern mind has exiled from its practical motive-power the two essential things, God or the Eternal and spirituality or the God-state, which are the master conceptions of the Gita. It lives in humanity only, and the Gita would have us live in God, though for the world in God; in its life, heart and intellect only, and the Gita would have us live in the spirit; in the mutable Being who is 'all creatures', and the Gita would have us live also in the Immutable and the Supreme; in the changing march of Time, and the Gita would have us live in the Eternal. Or if these higher things are now

beginning to be vaguely envisaged, it is only to make them subservient to man and society; but God and spirituality exist in their own right and not as adjuncts. And in practice the lower in us must learn to exist for the higher, in order that the higher also may in us consciously exist for the lower, to draw it nearer to its own altitudes." (CWSA 19: 32)

V—Three Steps Shown by the Gita by Which Action Rises Out of the Human into the Divine Plane

1.

"The argument of the Gita resolves itself into three great steps by which action rises out of the human into the divine plane leaving the bondage of the lower for the liberty of a higher law. First, by the renunciation of desire and a perfect equality works have to be done as a sacrifice by man as the doer, a sacrifice to a deity who is the supreme and only Self though by him not yet realised in his own being. This is the initial step. Secondly, not only the desire of the fruit, but the claim to be the doer of works has to be renounced in the realisation of the Self as the equal, the inactive, the immutable principle and of all works as simply the operation of universal Force, of the Nature-Soul, Prakriti, the unequal, active, mutable power. Lastly, the supreme Self has to be seen as the supreme Purusha governing this Prakriti, of whom the soul in Nature is a partial manifestation, by whom all works are directed, in a perfect transcendence, through Nature. To him love and adoration and the sacrifice of works have to be offered; the whole being has to be surrendered to Him and the whole consciousness raised up to dwell in this divine consciousness so that the human soul may share in His divine transcendence of

Nature and of His works and act in a perfect spiritual liberty.

The first step is Karmayoga, the selfless sacrifice of works, and here the Gita's insistence is on action. The second is Jnanayoga, the self-realisation and knowledge of the true nature of the self and the world; and here the insistence is on knowledge; but the sacrifice of works continues and the path of Works becomes one with but does not disappear into the path of Knowledge. The last step is Bhaktiyoga, adoration and seeking of the supreme Self as the Divine Being, and here the insistence is on devotion; but the knowledge is not subordinated, only raised, vitalised and fulfilled, and still the sacrifice of works continues; the double path becomes the triune way of knowledge, works and devotion. And the fruit of the sacrifice, the one fruit still placed before the seeker, is attained, union with the divine Being and oneness with the supreme divine nature." (CWSA 19: 37–38)

2.

"The real soul and self of us is hidden from our intelligence by its ignorance of inner things, by a false identification, by an absorption in our outward mechanism of mind, life and body. But if the active soul of man can once draw back from this identification with its natural instruments, if it can see and live in the entire faith of its inner reality, then all is changed to it, life and

existence take on another appearance, action a different meaning and character. Our being then becomes no longer this little egoistic creation of Nature, but the largeness of a divine, immortal and spiritual Power. Our consciousness becomes no longer that of this limited and struggling mental and vital creature, but an infinite, divine and spiritual consciousness. And our will and action too are no longer that of this bounded personality and its ego, but a divine and spiritual will and action, the will and power of the Universal, the Supreme, the All-Self and Spirit acting freely through the human figure." (CWSA 19: 574–575)

3.

"A perfect perfection comes only by living in the supreme and the whole Divine. Then the soul of man is united with the Godhead of which it is a portion; then it is one with all beings in the self and spirit, one with them both in God and in Nature; then it is not only free but complete, plunged in the supreme felicity, ready for its ultimate perfection. He still sees the self as an eternal and changeless Spirit silently supporting all things; but he sees also Nature no longer as a mere mechanical force that works out things according to the mechanism of the gunas, but as a power of the Spirit and the force of God in manifestation. He sees that the lower Nature is not the inmost truth of the spirit's action; he becomes aware of a

highest spiritual nature of the Divine in which is contained the source and the yet to be realised greater truth of all that is imperfectly figured now in mind, life and body. Arisen from the lower mental to this supreme spiritual nature, he is delivered there from all ego. He knows himself as a spiritual being, in his essence one with all existences and in his active nature a power of the one Godhead and an eternal soul of the transcendent Infinite. He sees all in God and God in all; he sees all things as Vasudeva. He is delivered from the dualities of joy and grief, from the pleasant and the unpleasant, from desire and disappointment, from sin and virtue. All henceforth is to his conscious sight and sense the will and working of the Divine. He lives and acts as a soul and portion of the universal consciousness and power; he is filled with the transcendent divine delight, a spiritual Ananda. His action becomes the divine action and his status the highest spiritual status." (CWSA 19: 581)

VI—Work and Action in the Second Chapter of the Gita, 'Sankhya Yoga'

[38th Shloka of Second Chapter of the Gita]
"**Make grief and happiness, loss and gain, victory and defeat equal to his soul and then turn to the battle; so thou shalt not incur sin**." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"Thus Arjuna's plea of sorrow, his plea of the recoil from slaughter, his plea of the sense of sin, his plea of the unhappy results of his action, are answered according to the highest knowledge and ethical ideals to which his race and age had attained.

It is the creed of the Aryan fighter 'Know God,' it says, 'know thyself, help man; protect the Right, do without fear or weakness or faltering thy work of battle in the world. Thou art the eternal and imperishable Spirit, thy soul is here on its upward path to immortality; life and death are nothing, sorrow and wounds and suffering are nothing, for these things have to be conquered and overcome. Look not at thy own pleasure and gain and profit, but above and around, above at the shining summits to which thou climbest, around at this world of battle and trial in which good and evil, progress and retrogression are locked in stern conflict. Men call to thee, their strong man, their hero for help; help then, fight.

Destroy when by destruction the world must advance, but hate not that which thou destroyest, neither grieve for all those who perish. Know everywhere the one self, know all to be immortal souls and the body to be but dust. Do thy work with a calm, strong and equal spirit; fight and fall nobly or conquer mightily. For this is the work that God and thy nature have given to thee to accomplish'." (CWSA 19: 66–67)

[39th Shloka of Second Chapter of the Gita]

"**Such is the intelligence (the intelligent knowledge of things and will) declared to thee in the Sankhya, hear now this in the Yoga, for if thou art in Yoga by this intelligence, O son of Pritha, thou shalt cast away the bondage of works**." (CWSA 19: 68)

"The Gita then speaks of the five causes or indispensable requisites for the accomplishment of works as laid down by the Sankhya. These five are, first, the frame of body, life and mind which are the basis or standing-ground of the soul in Nature, *adhiṣṭhāna*, next, the doer, *kartā*, third, the various instrumentation of Nature, *karaṇa*, fourth, the many kinds of effort which make up the force of action, *ceṣṭāḥ*, and last, Fate, *daivam*, that is to say, the influence of the Power or powers other than the human factors, other than the visible mechanism of Nature, that stand behind these and modify the work and

dispose its fruits in the steps of act and consequence. These five elements make up among them all the efficient causes, *karaṇa*, that determine the shaping and outcome of whatever work man undertakes with mind and speech and body." (CWSA 19: 497–498)

"I have declared to you the poise of a self-liberating intelligence in Sankhya, says the divine Teacher to Arjuna. I will now declare to you another poise in Yoga. You are shrinking from the results of your works, you desire other results and turn from your right path in life because it does not lead you to them. But this idea of works and their result, desire of result as the motive, the work as a means for the satisfaction of desire, is the bondage of the ignorant who know not what works are, nor their true source, nor their real operation, nor their high utility. My Yoga will free you from all bondage of the soul to its works, *karmabandhaṁ prahāsyasi*." (CWSA 19: 94)

[47th Shloka of Second Chapter of the Gita]
"**Thou hast a right to action, but only to action, never to its fruits; let not the fruits of thy works be thy motive, neither let there be in thee any attachment to inactivity**." (CWSA 19: 102)

"In the field of action desire takes many forms, but the most powerful of all is the vital self's craving or seeking after the fruit of our works. The fruit we covet may be a reward of internal pleasure; it may be the accomplishment of some preferred idea or some cherished will or the satisfaction of the egoistic emotions, or else the pride of success of our highest hopes and ambitions. Or it may be an external reward, a recompense entirely material,—wealth, position, honour, victory, good fortune or any other fulfilment of vital or physical desire. But all alike are lures by which egoism holds us. Always these satisfactions delude us with the sense of mastery and the idea of freedom, while really we are harnessed and guided or ridden and whipped by some gross or subtle, some noble or ignoble, figure of the blind Desire that drives the world. Therefore the first rule of action laid down by the Gita is to do the work that should be done without any desire for the fruit, *niṣkāma karma*." (CWSA 23: 102)

"The fruit belongs solely to the Lord of all works; our only business with it is to prepare success by a true and careful action and to offer it, if it comes, to the divine Master. Afterwards even as we have renounced attachment to the fruit, we must renounce attachment to the work also; at any moment we must be prepared to change one work, one course or one field of action for

another or abandon all works if that is the clear command of the Master. Otherwise we do the act not for his sake but for our satisfaction and pleasure in the work, from the kinetic nature's need of action or for the fulfilment of our propensities; but these are all stations and refuges of the ego. ... In the end, as the attachment to the fruit of the work and to the work itself has been excised from the heart, so also the last clinging attachment to the idea and sense of ourselves as the doer has to be relinquished; the Divine Shakti must be known and felt above and within us as the true and sole worker." (CWSA 23: 222–223)

"And since in the path of works action is the knot we have first to loosen, we must endeavour to loosen it where it is centrally tied, in desire and in ego; for otherwise we shall cut only stray strands and not the heart of our bondage. These are the two knots of our subjection to this ignorant and divided Nature, desire and ego-sense. And of these two desire has its native home in the emotions and sensations and instincts and from there affects thought and volition; ego-sense lives indeed in these movements, but it casts its deep roots also in the thinking mind and its will and it is there that it becomes fully self-conscious. These are the twin obscure powers of the obsessing world-wide Ignorance that we have to enlighten and eliminate." (CWSA 23: 101–102)

"... nor is the right to the action and the rejection of claim to the fruit the great word of the Gita, but only a preliminary word governing the first state of the disciple when he begins ascending the hill of Yoga. It is practically superseded at a subsequent stage. For the Gita goes on to affirm emphatically that the man is not the doer of the action; it is Prakriti, it is Nature, it is the great Force with its three modes of action that works through him, and he must learn to see that it is *not* he who does the work. Therefore the 'right to action' is an idea which is only valid so long as we are still under the illusion of being the doer; it must necessarily disappear from the mind like the claim to the fruit, as soon as we cease to be to our own consciousness the doer of our works. All pragmatic egoism, whether of the claim to fruits or of the right to action, is then at an end.

But the determinism of Prakriti is not the last word of the Gita. The equality of the will and the rejection of fruits are only means for entering with the mind and the heart and the understanding into the divine consciousness and living in it; and the Gita expressly says that they are to be employed as a means as long as the disciple is unable so to live or even to seek by practice the gradual development of this higher state." (CWSA 19: 36)

"The first step on this free, this equal, this divine way of action is to put from you attachment to fruit and recompense and to labour only for the sake of the work itself that has to be done. For you must deeply feel that the fruits belong not to you but to the Master of the world. Consecrate your labour and leave its returns to the Spirit who manifests and fulfils himself in the universal movement. The outcome of your action is determined by his will alone and whatever it be, good or evil fortune, success or failure, it is turned by him to the accomplishment of his world purpose. An entirely desireless and disinterested working of the personal will and the whole instrumental nature is the first rule of Karmayoga. Demand no fruit, accept whatever result is given to you; accept it with equality and a calm gladness: successful or foiled, prosperous or afflicted, continue unafraid, untroubled and unwavering on the steep path of the divine action'." (CWSA 19: 586)

"But still there is an essential difficulty unsolved. Desire is the ordinary motive of all human actions, and if the soul is free from desire, then there is no farther rationale for action. We may be compelled to do certain works for the maintenance of the body, but even that is a subjection to the desire of the body which we ought to get rid of if we are to attain perfection. But granting that this cannot be done, the only way is to fix a rule for action outside

ourselves, not dictated by anything in our subjectivity, the *nityakarma* of the Vedic rule, the routine of ceremonial sacrifice, daily conduct and social duty, which the man who seeks liberation may do simply because it is enjoined upon him, without any personal purpose or subjective interest in them, with an absolute indifference to the doing, not because he is compelled by his nature but because it is enjoined by the Shastra. But if the principle of the action is not to be external to the nature but subjective, if the actions even of the liberated and the sage are to be controlled and determined by his nature, *svabhāva-niyatam*, then the only subjective principle of action is desire of whatever kind, lust of the flesh or emotion of the heart or base or noble aim of the mind, but all subject to the gun.as of Prakriti. Let us then interpret the *niyata karma* of the Gita as the nityakarma of the Vedic rule, its *kartavyaṁ karma*, or work that has to be done as the Aryan rule of social duty and let us take too its work done as a sacrifice to mean simply these Vedic sacrifices and this fixed social duty performed disinterestedly and without any personal object. This is how the Gita's doctrine of desireless work is often interpreted. But it seems to me that the Gita's teaching is not so crude and simple, not so local and temporal and narrow as all that. It is large, free, subtle and profound; it is for all time and for all men, not for a particular age and country. Especially, it is always breaking free from

external forms, details, dogmatic notions and going back to principles and the great facts of our nature and our being. It is a work of large philosophic truth and spiritual practicality, not of constrained religious and philosophical formulas and stereotyped dogmas." (CWSA 19: 109–110)

"And yet he does not cease from work and action. There is the originality and power of the Gita, that having affirmed this static condition, this superiority to nature, this emptiness even of all that constitutes ordinarily the action of Nature for the liberated soul, it is still able to vindicate for it, to enjoin on it even the continuance of works and thus avoid the great defect of the merely quietistic and ascetic philosophies,—the defect from which we find them today attempting to escape." (CWSA 19: 102)

[48th Shloka of Second Chapter of the Gita]
"**Fixed in Yoga do thy actions, having abandoned attachment, having become equal in failure and success; for it is equality that is meant by Yoga**." (CWSA 19: 103)

"Attaining to a perfect equality [samata] in the soul, mind and heart, we realise our true self of oneness, one with all beings, one too with That which expresses itself in them and in all that we see and experience. This equality

and this oneness are the indispensable twin foundation we must lay down for a divine being, a divine consciousness, a divine action. Not one with all, we are not spiritual, not divine. Not equal-souled to all things, happenings and creatures, we cannot see spiritually, cannot know divinely, cannot feel divinely towards others. The Supreme Power, the one Eternal and Infinite is equal to all things and to all beings; and because it is equal, it can act with an absolute wisdom according to the truth of its works and its force and according to the truth of each thing and of every creature." (CWSA 23: 96)

"The equality it enjoins does not begin and end in a static condition of the soul useful only for self-liberation; it is always a basis of works." (CWSA 19: 206)

"But the Gita, which strongly insists on a perfect and absolute samata, goes on to say, 'Fight, destroy the adversary, conquer.' If there is no kind of general action wanted, no loyalty to Truth as against Falsehood except for one's personal sadhana, no will for the Truth to conquer, then the samata of indifference will suffice. But here there is a work to be done, a Truth to be established against which immense forces are arranged, invisible forces which use visible things and persons and actions for their instruments. If one is among the disciples, the seekers of this Truth, one has to take sides for the Truth,

to stand against the Forces that attack it and seek to stifle it." (CWSA 29: 132)

"Samata does not mean the absence of ego, but the absence of desire and attachment." (CWSA 29: 133)

[49th Shloka of Second Chapter of the Gita]
"**Works are far inferior, to Yoga of the intelligence; desire rather refuge in the intelligence; poor and wretched souls are they who make the fruit of their works the object of their thoughts and activities**." (CWSA 19: 96)

"For it is because he acts ignorantly, with a wrong intelligence and therefore a wrong will in these matters, that man is or seems to be bound by his works; otherwise works are no bondage to the free soul. It is because of this wrong intelligence that he has hope and fear, wrath and grief and transient joy; otherwise works are possible with a perfect serenity and freedom. Therefore it is the Yoga of the buddhi, the intelligence, that is first enjoined on Arjuna. To act with right intelligence and, therefore, a right will, fixed in the One, aware of the one self in all and acting out of its equal serenity, not running about in different directions under the thousand impulses of our superficial mental self, is the Yoga of the intelligent will." (CWSA 19: 95)

[50th Shloka of Second Chapter of the Gita]

"**One whose intelligence has attained to unity, casts away from him even here in this world of dualities both good doing and evil doing; therefore strive to be in Yoga; Yoga is skill in Works**."

[Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"Action is distressed by the choice between a relative good and evil, the fear of sin and the difficult endeavour towards virtue? But the liberated who has united his reason and will with the Divine, casts away from him even here in this world of dualities both good doing and evil doing; for he rises to a higher law beyond good and evil, founded in the liberty of self-knowledge. Such desireless action can have no decisiveness, no effectiveness, no efficient motive, no large or vigorous creative power? Not so; action done in Yoga is not only the highest but the wisest, the most potent and efficient even for the affairs of the world; for it is informed by the knowledge and will of the Master of works: 'Yoga is skill in works'." (CWSA 19: 103)

"Yoga, says the Gita, is skill in works, and by this phrase the ancient Scripture meant that the transformation of mind and being to which it gave the name of Yoga brought with it a perfect inner state and faculty out of which the right principle of action and the right spiritual

and divine result of works emerged naturally like a tree out of its seed. Certainly, it did not mean that the clever general or politician or lawyer or shoemaker deserves the name of a Yogin; it did not mean that any kind of skill in works was Yoga, but by Yoga it signified a spiritual condition of universal equality and God-union and by the skill of the Yogic worker it intended a perfect adaptation of the soul and its instruments to the rhythm of the divine and universal Spirit in a nature liberated from the shackles of egoism and the limitations of the sense-mind." (CWSA 13: 119)

[51st Shloka of Second Chapter of the Gita]
"**The sages who have their intelligence in Union with the Divine, renounce the fruit which action yields and, liberated from the bondage of birth, they reach the status beyond misery**." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"But all action directed towards life leads away from the universal aim of the Yogin which is by common consent to escape from bondage to this distressed and sorrowful human birth? Not so, either; the sages who do works without desire for fruits and in Yoga with the Divine are liberated from the bondage of birth and reach that other perfect status in which there are none of the maladies

which afflict the mind and life of a suffering humanity." (CWSA 19: 103)

[52nd Shloka of Second Chapter of the Gita]
"**When thy intelligence shall cross beyond the whorl of delusion, then shalt thou become indifferent to Scripture heard or that which thou shall hast yet to hear.**" [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

[53rd Shloka of Second Chapter of the Gita]
"**When thy intelligence which is bewildered by the Sruti, shall stand unmoving and stable in Samadhi, thenshall thou attain to Yoga.**" [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"Still the letter of the Scripture binds and confuses, as the apostle of Christianity warned his disciples when he said that the letter killeth and it is the spirit that saves; and there is a point beyond which the utility of the Scripture itself ceases. The real source of knowledge is the Lord in the heart; 'I am seated in the heart of every man and from me is knowledge,' says the Gita; the Scripture is only a verbal form of that inner Veda, of that self-luminous Reality, it is *śabdabrahma* : the mantra, says the Veda, has risen from the heart, from the secret place where is the seat of the truth, *sadanād ṛtasya*, *guhāyām*.

That origin is its sanction; but still the infinite Truth is greater than its word. Nor shall you say of any Scripture that it alone is all-sufficient and no other truth can be admitted, as the Vedavadins said of the Veda, *nānyad astīti vādinaḥ.* This is a saving and liberating word which must be applied to all the Scriptures of the world. Take all the Scriptures that are or have been, Bible and Koran and the books of the Chinese, Veda and Upanishads and Purana and Tantra and Shastra and the Gita itself and the sayings of thinkers and sages, prophets and Avatars, still you shall not say that there is nothing else or that the truth your intellect cannot find there is not true because you cannot find it there. That is the limited thought of the sectarian or the composite thought of the eclectic religionist, not the untrammelled truth-seeking of the free and illumined mind and God-experienced soul. Heard or unheard before, that always is the truth which is seen by the heart of man in its illumined depths or heard within from the Master of all knowledge, the knower of the eternal Veda." (CWSA 19: 92–93)

[54th Shloka of Second Chapter of the Gita]

"**Arjuna said: What is the sign of the man in Samadhi whose intelligence is firmly fixed in wisdom? How does the sage of settled understanding speak, how sit, how walk?**"

[Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"Arjuna, voicing the average human mind, asks for some outward, physical, practically discernible sign of this great Samadhi; how does such a man speak, how sit, how walk? No such signs can be given, nor does the Teacher attempt to supply them; for the only possible test of its possession is inward and that there are plenty of hostile psychological forces to apply. Equality is the great stamp of the liberated soul and of that equality even the most discernible signs are still subjective." (CWSA 19: 102)

[55th Shloka of Second Chapter of the Gita]

"**The Blessed Lord said: When a man expels, O Partha, all desires from the mind, and is satisfied in the Self by the Self, then is he called stable in intelligence**." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"The sign of the man in Samadhi is not that he loses consciousness of objects and surroundings and of his mental and physical self and cannot be recalled to it even by burning or torture of the body,—the ordinary idea of the matter; trance is a particular intensity, not the essential sign. The test is the expulsion of all desires, their inability to get at the mind, and it is the inner state from which this freedom arises, the delight of the soul gathered within itself with the mind equal and still and high-poised above the attractions and repulsions, the

alternations of sunshine and storm and stress of the external life. It is drawn inward even when acting outwardly; it is concentrated in self even when gazing out upon things; it is directed wholly to the Divine even when to the outward vision of others busy and preoccupied with the affairs of the world." (CWSA 19: 101–102)

[56th Shloka of Second Chapter of the Gita]
"**A man with mind untroubled by sorrows, who has done with desire for pleasures, from whom liking and wrath and fear have passed away, such is the sage whose understanding has become founded in stability**." (CWSA 19: 102)

[58th Shloka of Second Chapter of the Gita]
"**One who draws away the sense from the objects of sense, as the tortoise draws in his limbs into the shell, his intelligence is firm in its seat**." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"For evidently there are two possibilities of the action of the intelligent will. It may take its downward and outward orientation towards a discursive action of the perceptions and the will in the triple play of Prakriti, or it may take its upward and inward orientation towards a settled peace and equality in the calm and immutable purity of the conscious silent soul no longer subject to the distractions

of Nature. In the former alternative the subjective being is at the mercy of the objects of sense, it lives in the outward contact of things." (CWSA 19: 98)

"Therefore, it is the upward and inward orientation of the intelligent will that we must resolutely choose with a settled concentration and perseverance, *vyavasāya* ; we must fix it firmly in the calm self-knowledge of the Purusha. The first movement must be obviously to get rid of desire which is the whole root of the evil and suffering; and in order to get rid of desire, we must put an end to the cause of desire, the rushing out of the senses to seize and enjoy their objects. We must draw them back when they are inclined thus to rush out, draw them away from their objects,—as the tortoise draws in his limbs into the shell, so these into their source, quiescent in the mind, the mind quiescent in intelligence, the intelligence quiescent in the soul and its self-knowledge, observing the action of Nature, but not subject to it, not desiring anything that the objective life can give." (CWSA 19: 99)

[59th Shloka of Second Chapter of the Gita]
"**The objects of senses cease to affect an abstemious dweller in the body, but the affection itself of the senses, the *rasa* also ceases when the Supreme is see.**" [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"It is not an external asceticism, the physical renunciation of the objects of sense that I am teaching, suggests Krishna immediately to avoid a misunderstanding which is likely at once to arise. ... for I speak of an inner withdrawal, a renunciation of desire. The embodied soul, having a body, has to support it normally by food for its normal physical action; by abstention from food it simply removes from itself the physical contact with the object of sense, but does not get rid of the inner relation which makes that contact hurtful. It retains the pleasure of the sense in the object, the *rasa*, the liking and disliking,—for *rasa* has two sides; the soul must, on the contrary, be capable of enduring the physical contact without suffering inwardly this sensuous reaction. Otherwise there is *nivṛtti,* cessation of the object, *viṣayā vinivartante* , but no subjective cessation, no *nivṛtti* of the mind; but the senses are of the mind, subjective, and subjective cessation of the *rasa* is the only real sign of mastery. But how is this desireless contact with objects, this unsensuous use of the senses possible? It is possible, *paraṁ dṛṣṭvā* by the vision of the supreme, — *param*, the Soul, the Purusha,—and by living in the Yoga, in union or oneness of the whole subjective being with that, through the Yoga of the intelligence; for the one Soul is calm, satisfied in its own delight, and that delight free from duality can take, once we see this supreme thing in us and fix the mind and will on that, the place of the

sensuous object-ridden pleasures and repulsions of the mind. This is the true way of liberation." (CWSA 19: 99–100)

[61st Shloka of Second Chapter of the Gita]
"**Having brought all the senses under control, he must sit firm in Yoga, wholly given up to Me; for in him whose senses are mastered the intelligence is firmly established in its seat.**" [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

This then must be prevented and all the senses brought utterly under control; for only by an absolute control of the senses can the wise and calm intelligence be firmly established in its proper seat.

This cannot be done perfectly by the act of the intelligence itself, by a merely mental self-discipline; it can only be done by Yoga with something which is higher than itself and in which calm and self-mastery are inherent. And this Yoga can only arrive at its success by devoting, by consecrating, by giving up the whole self to the Divine, 'to Me', says Krishna; for the Liberator is within us, but it is not our mind, nor our intelligence, nor our personal will,—they are only instruments. It is the Lord in whom, as we are told in the end, we have utterly to take refuge. And for that we must at first make him the object of our whole being and keep in soul-contact

with him. This is the sense of the phrase 'he must sit firm in Yoga, wholly given up to Me'; but as yet it is the merest passing hint after the manner of the Gita, three words only which contain in seed the whole gist of the highest secret yet to be developed. *Yukta āsīta matparāḥ* .." (CWSA 19: 100–101)

[64th Shloka of Second Chapter of the Gita]
"**But the self-disciplined being, moving among the objects of senses with the senses free from attraction and repulsion and under the control of the Self, attains to supreme felicity.**" [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

[65th Shloka of Second Chapter of the Gita]
"**In that felicity comes the cessation of all miseries, and in the soul that has felicity the intelligence is rapidly established.**" [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"If this is done, then it becomes possible to move among the objects of sense, in contact with them, acting on them, but with the senses entirely under the control of the subjective self,—not at the mercy of the objects and their contacts and reactions,—and that self again obedient to the highest self, the Purusha. Then, free from reactions, the senses will be delivered from the affections

of liking and disliking, escape the duality of positive and negative desire, and calm, peace, clearness, happy tranquillity, *ātmaprasāda*, will settle upon the man. That clear tranquillity is the source of the soul's felicity; all grief begins to lose its power of touching the tranquil soul; the intelligence is rapidly established in the peace of the self; suffering is destroyed. It is this calm, desireless, griefless fixity of the buddhi in self-poise and self-knowledge to which the Gita gives the name of Samadhi." (CWSA 19: 101)

[68th Shloka of Second Chapter of the Gita]
"**Therefore, O mighty-armed, one who has utterly restrained the excitement of the senses by their objects, his intelligence sits firmly in its seat.**" [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

[70th Shloka of Second Chapter of the Gita]
"**He attains peace, into whom all desires enter as waters into the sea which is ever being filled, yet ever motionless, not he who longs for desires**."[Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

[71st Shloka of Second Chapter of the Gita]
"**He who abandons all desires and lives and acts free from longing, free from sense of 'I' or 'mine',**

attain to peace." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

[72nd Shloka of Second Chapter of the Gita]
"**This is the *brāhmī sthiti* (firm standing in the Brahman), O Partha. Having attained thereto one is bewildered no more and, fixed in that status even at the end, one attains to extinction (Nirvana) in the Brahman**."[Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"The status he [sage] reaches is the Brahmic condition; he gets to firm standing in the Brahman, *brāhmī sthiti.* It is a reversal of the whole view, experience, knowledge, values, seeings of earthbound creatures. This life of the dualities which is to them their day, their waking, their consciousness, their bright condition of activity and knowledge, is to him a night, a troubled sleep and darkness of the soul; that higher being which is to them a night, a sleep in which all knowledge and will cease, is to the self-mastering sage his waking, his luminous day of true being, knowledge and power. They are troubled and muddy waters disturbed by every little inrush of desire; he is an ocean of wide being and consciousness which is ever being filled, yet ever motionless in its large poise of his soul; all the desires of the world enter into him as waters into the sea, yet he has no desire nor is troubled.

For while they are filled with the troubling sense of ego and mine and thine, he is one with the one Self in all and has no 'I' or 'mine'. He acts as others, but he has abandoned all desires and their longings. He attains to the great peace and is not bewildered by the shows of things; he has extinguished his individual ego in the One, lives in that unity and, fixed in that status at his end, can attain to extinction in the Brahman, Nirvana, — not the negative self-annihilation of the Buddhists, but the great immergence of the separate personal self into the vast reality of the one infinite impersonal Existence." (CWSA 19: 103–104)

The second chapter of Gita ends with the Yoga of the intelligent will and its culmination in the Brahmic status

"The Yoga of the intelligent will and its culmination in the Brahmic status, which occupies all the close of the second chapter, contains the seed of much of the teaching of the Gita,—its doctrine of desireless works, of equality, of the rejection of outward renunciation, of devotion to the Divine; but as yet all this is slight and obscure. What is most strongly emphasised as yet is the withdrawal of the will from the ordinary motive of human activities, desire, from man's normal temperament of the sense-seeking thought and will with its passions and ignorance, and

from its customary habit of troubled many branching ideas and wishes to the desireless calm unity and passionless serenity of the Brahmic poise." (CWSA 19: 105)

VII—Work and Action in the Third Chapter of the Gita, 'Karma Yoga' or 'The Yoga of Works'

[1st Shloka of Third Chapter of the Gita]
[Arjuna breaks out impatiently] "**If thou holdest the intelligence to be greater than action, why then dost thou appoint me to an action terrible in its nature?**" (CWSA 19: 26)

[2nd Shloka of Third Chapter of the Gita]
"**Thou bewilderest my understanding with a mingled word: speak one thing decisively by which I can attain to what is the best**." (CWSA 19: 26–27)

"Arjuna complains that he has been given a contradictory and confusing doctrine, not the clear, strenuously single road by which the human intelligence can move straight and trenchantly to the supreme good. It is in answer to this objection that the Gita begins at once to develop more clearly its positive and imperative doctrine of Works." (CWSA 19: 106)

"It is always the pragmatic man who has no value for metaphysical thought or for the inner life except when they help him to his one demand, a *dharma*, a law of life in the world or, if need be, of leaving the world; for that too is a decisive action which he can understand. But to

live and act in the world, yet be above it, this is a 'mingled' and confusing word the sense of which he has no patience to grasp." (CWSA 19: 27)

[3rd Shloka of Third Chapter of the Gita]
"The Blessed Lord said: Twofold is the abiding faith and discipline in this world, as declared by Me before, O sinless one: that of Sankhyas by the Yoga of knowledge and that of the Yogins by the Yoga of Works." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

[4th Shloka of Third Chapter of the Gita]
"**Not by abstention from works does a man enjoy actionlessness, nor by mere renunciation (of works) does he attain to his perfection."** (CWSA 19: 106)

"The Teacher first makes a distinction between the two means of salvation on which in this world men can concentrate separately, the Yoga of knowledge, the Yoga of works, the one implying, it is usually supposed, renunciation of works as an obstacle to salvation, the other accepting works as a means of salvation. He does not yet insist strongly on any fusion of them, on any reconciliation of the thought that divides them, but begins by showing that the renunciation of the Sankhyas, the

physical renunciation, Sannyasa, is neither the only way, nor at all the better way. *Naiṣkarmya* a calm voidness from works, is no doubt that to which the soul, the Purusha has to attain; for it is Prakriti which does the work and the soul has to rise above involution in the activities of the being and attain to a free serenity and poise watching over the operations of Prakriti, but not affected by them. That, and not cessation of the works of Prakriti, is what is really meant by the soul's *naiṣkarmya*. Therefore it is an error to think that by not engaging in any kind of action this actionless state of the soul can be attained and enjoyed. Mere renunciation of works is not a sufficient, not even quite a proper means for salvation." (CWSA 19: 106)

"This is the teaching of the Sankhyas that the intelligence of the man who engages in the activities of Nature, is entangled in egoism, ignorance and desire and therefore drawn to action; on the contrary, if the intelligence draws back, then the action must cease with the cessation of the desire and the ignorance. Therefore the giving up of life and works is a necessary part, an inevitable circumstance and an indispensable last means of the movement to liberation. This objection of a current logic,—it is not expressed by Arjuna, but it is in his mind as the turn of his subsequent utterances shows,—the Teacher immediately anticipates. No, he says, such

renunciation, far from being indispensable, is not even possible." (CWSA 19: 106–107)

[5th Shloka of Third Chapter of the Gita]
"**For none stands even for a moment not doing work; everyone is made to do action helplessly by the modes born of Prakriti**." (CWSA 19: 107)

"The strong perception of the great cosmic action and the eternal activity and power of the cosmic energy which was so much emphasised afterwards by the teaching of the Tantric Shaktas who even made Prakriti or Shakti superior to Purusha, is a very remarkable feature of the Gita. Although here an undertone, it is still strong enough, coupled with what we might call the theistic and devotional elements of its thought, to bring in that activism which so strongly modifies in its scheme of Yoga the quietistic tendencies of the old metaphysical Vedanta. Man embodied in the natural world cannot cease from action, not for a moment, not for a second; his very existence here is an action; the whole universe is an act of God, mere living even is His movement." (CWSA 19: 107)

"Our physical life, its maintenance, its continuance is a journey, a pilgrimage of the body, *śarīra-yātrā*, and that cannot be effected without action. But even if a man

could leave his body unmaintained, otiose, if he could stand still always like a tree or sit inert like a stone, *tiṣṭhati*, that vegetable or material immobility would not save him from the hands of Nature; he would not be liberated from her workings. For it is not our physical movements and activities alone which are meant by works, by *karma*; our mental existence also is a great complex action, it is even the greater and more important part of the works of the unresting energy,—subjective cause and determinant of the physical. We have gained nothing if we repress the effect but retain the activity of the subjective cause. The objects of sense are only an occasion for our bondage, the mind's insistence on them is the means, the instrumental cause." (CWSA 19: 107–108)

[6thShloka of Third Chapter of the Gita]
"**He who controls the organs of action, but continues in his mind to remember and dwell upon the objects of sense, is a deluded soul, and his method of self-discipline is said to be false and vain**." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"A man may control his organs of action and refuse to give them their natural play, but he has gained nothing if his mind continues to remember and dwell upon the objects of sense. Such a man has bewildered himself with

false notions of self-discipline; he has not understood its object or its truth, nor the first principles of his subjective existence; therefore all his methods of self-discipline are false and null. The body's actions, even the mind's actions are nothing in themselves, neither a bondage, nor the first cause of bondage. What is vital is the mighty energy of Nature which will have her way and her play in her great field of mind and life and body; what is dangerous in her, is the power of her three *guṇas*, modes or qualities to confuse and bewilder the intelligence and so obscure the soul. That, as we shall see later, is the whole crux of action and liberation for the Gita. Be free from obscuration and bewilderment by the three *guṇas* and action can continue, as it must continue, and even the largest, richest or most enormous and violent action; it does not matter, for nothing then touches the Purusha, the soul has *naiṣkarmya*.

But at present the Gita does not proceed to that larger point. Since the mind is the instrumental cause, since inaction is impossible, what is rational, necessary, the right way is a controlled action of the subjective and objective organism." (CWSA 19: 108)

[7th Shloka of Third Chapter of the Gita]

"**He who controls the senses by the mind, O Arjuna, and without attachment engages with the**

organs of action in Yoga of action, he excels." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

[8th Shloka of Third Chapter of the Gita]
"Do thou action thus self-controlled, for action is greater than inaction; even the maintenance of thy physical life cannot be effected without action." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"Do action thus self-controlled, says Krishna, *niyataṁ kuru karma tvam:* I have said that knowledge, the intelligence, is greater than works, *jyāyasī karmaṇo buddhiḥ*, but I did not mean that inaction is greater than action; the contrary is the truth, *karma jyāyo akarmaṇaḥ*. For knowledge does not mean renunciation of works, it means equality and non-attachment to desire and the objects of sense; and it means the poise of the intelligent will in the Soul free and high-uplifted above the lower instrumentation of Prakriti and controlling the works of the mind and the senses and body in the power of self-knowledge and the pure objectless self-delight of spiritual realisation, *niyataṁ karma*. Buddhiyoga is fulfilled by *karmayoga*; the Yoga of the self-liberating intelligent will finds its full meaning by the Yoga of desireless works. Thus the Gita founds its teaching of the necessity of desireless works, *niṣkāma karma* , and unites the

subjective practice of the Sankhyas — rejecting their merely physical rule—with the practice of Yoga.

But still there is an essential difficulty unsolved. " (CWSA 19: 109)

"The difficulty is this, how, our nature being what it is and desire the common principle of its action, is it possible to institute a really desireless action? .. By doing all works with sacrifice as the only object, is the reply of the divine Teacher." (CWSA 19: 110–111)

[9th Shloka of Third Chapter of the Gita]
"**By doing works otherwise than for sacrifice, this world of men is in bondage to works; for sacrifice practise works, O son of Kunti, becoming free from all attachment**." (CWSA 19: 111)

"Sacrifice means an inner offering to the Divine and the real spiritual sacrifice is a very joyful thing." (CWSA 28: 434)

"In the spiritual sense, however, sacrifice has a different meaning—it does not so much indicate giving up what is held dear as an offering of oneself, one's being, one's mind, heart, will, body, life, actions to the Divine. It has the original sense of 'making sacred' and is used as an equivalent of the word Yajna. When the Gita speaks of

the 'sacrifice of knowledge', it does not mean a giving up of anything, but a turning of the mind towards the Divine in the search for knowledge and an offering of oneself through it. It is in this sense, too, that one speaks of the offering or sacrifice of works. The Mother has written somewhere that the spiritual sacrifice is joyful and not painful in its nature." (CWSA 28: 433)

"It is evident that all works and not merely sacrifice and social duties can be done in this spirit; any action may be done either from the ego-sense narrow or enlarged or for the sake of the Divine. All being and all action of Prakriti exist only for the sake of the Divine; from that it proceeds, by that it endures, to that it is directed. But so long as we are dominated by the ego-sense we cannot perceive or act in the spirit of this truth, but act for the satisfaction of the ego and in the spirit of the ego, otherwise than for sacrifice. Egoism is the knot of the bondage. By acting Godwards, without any thought of ego, we loosen this knot and finally arrive at freedom." (CWSA 19: 111)

"At first, however, the Gita takes up the Vedic statement of the idea of sacrifice and phrases the law of sacrifice in its current terms. This it does with a definite object. We have seen that the quarrel between renunciation and works has two forms, the opposition of Sankhya and

Yoga which is already in principle reconciled and the opposition of Vedism and Vedantism which the Teacher has yet to reconcile. The first is a larger statement of the opposition in which the idea of works is general and wide. The Sankhya starts from the notion of the divine status as that of the immutable and inactive Purusha which each soul is in reality and makes an opposition between inactivity of Purusha and activity of Prakriti; so its logical culmination is cessation of all works. Yoga starts from the notion of the Divine as Ishwara, lord of the operations of Prakriti and therefore superior to them, and its logical culmination is not cessation of works but the soul's superiority to them and freedom even though doing all works. In the opposition of Vedism and Vedantism works, *karma,* are restricted to Vedic works and sometimes even to Vedic sacrifice and ritualised works, all else being excluded as not useful to salvation. Vedism of the Mimansakas insisted on them as the means, Vedantism taking its stand on the Upanishads looked on them as only a preliminary belonging to the state of ignorance and in the end to be overpassed and rejected, an obstacle to the seeker of liberation. Vedism worshipped the Devas, the gods, with sacrifice and held them to be the powers who assist our salvation. Vedantism was inclined to regard them as powers of the mental and material world opposed to our salvation (men, says the Upanishad, are the cattle of the gods, who do not desire man to know

and be free); it saw the Divine as the immutable Brahman who has to be attained not by works of sacrifice and worship but by knowledge. Works only lead to material results and to an inferior Paradise; therefore they have to be renounced." (CWSA 19: 111–112)

"The Gita resolves this opposition by insisting that the Devas are only forms of the one Deva, the Ishwara, the Lord of all Yoga and worship and sacrifice and austerity, and if it is true that sacrifice offered to the Devas leads only to material results and to Paradise, it is also true that sacrifice offered to the Ishwara leads beyond them to the great liberation. For the Lord and the immutable Brahman are not two different beings, but one and the same Being, and whoever strives towards either, is striving towards that one divine Existence. All works in their totality find their culmination and completeness in the knowledge of the Divine, *sarvaṁ karmākhilaṁ pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate.*[this line repeated on pg 3]They are not an obstacle, but the way to the supreme knowledge. Thus this opposition too is reconciled with the help of a large elucidation of the meaning of sacrifice. In fact its conflict is only a restricted form of the larger opposition between Yoga and Sankhya. Vedism is a specialised and narrow form of Yoga; the principle of the Vedantists is identical with that of the Sankhyas, for to both the movement of salvation is the recoil of the intelligence, the

buddhi, from the differentiating powers of Nature, from ego, mind, senses, from the subjective and the objective, and its return to the undifferentiated and the immutable. It is with this object of reconciliation in his mind that the Teacher first approaches his statement of the doctrine of sacrifice; but throughout, even from the very beginning, he keeps his eye not on the restricted Vedic sense of sacrifice and works, but on their larger and universal application,—that widening of narrow and formal notions to admit the great general truths they unduly restrict which is always the method of the Gita." (CWSA 19: 112–113)

"Having thus stated the necessity of sacrifice, ... Krishna proceeds to state the superiority of the spiritual man to works." (CWSA 19: 114)

[17th Shloka of Third Chapter of the Gita]
"**But the man whose delight is in the Self and who is satisfied with the enjoyment of the Self and in the Self he is content, for him there exists no work that needs to be done**." (CWSA 19: 114)

[18th Shloka of Third Chapter of the Gita]
"**He has no object here to be gained by action done and none to be gained by action undone; he has no**

dependence on all these existences for any object to be gained." (CWSA 19:114–115)

"He recognises that his life is a part of this divine action in Nature and not a thing separate and to be held and pursued for its own sake. He regards his enjoyments and the satisfaction of his desires as the fruit of sacrifice and the gift of the gods in their divine universal workings and he ceases to pursue them in the false and evil spirit of sinful egoistic selfishness as if they were a good to be seized from life by his own unaided strength without return and without thankfulness. As this spirit increases in him, he subordinates his desires, becomes satisfied with sacrifice as the law of life and works and is content with whatever remains over from the sacrifice, giving up all the rest freely as an offering in the great and beneficent interchange between his life and the world-life. Whoever goes contrary to this law of action and pursues works and enjoyment for his own isolated personal self-interest, lives in vain; he misses the true meaning and aim and utility of living and the upward growth of the soul; he is not on the path which leads to the highest good. But the highest only comes when the sacrifice is no longer to the gods, but to the one all pervading Divine established in the sacrifice, of whom the gods are inferior forms and powers, and when he puts away the lower self that desires and enjoys and gives up his personal sense of

being the worker to the true executrix of all works, Prakriti, and his personal sense of being the enjoyer to the Divine Purusha, the higher and universal Self who is the real enjoyer of the works of Prakriti. In that Self and not in any personal enjoyment he finds now his sole satisfaction, complete content, pure delight; he has nothing to gain by action or inaction, depends neither on gods nor men for anything, seeks no profit from any, for the self-delight is all-sufficient to him, but does works for the sake of the Divine only, as a pure sacrifice, without attachment or desire. Thus he gains equality and becomes free from the modes of Nature, *nistraiguṇya* his soul takes its poise not in the insecurity of Prakriti, but in the peace of the immutable Brahman, even while his actions continue in the movement of Prakriti. Thus is sacrifice his way of attaining to the Highest." (CWSA 19: 118–119)

"That this is the sense of the passage is made clear in what follows, by the affirmation of *lokasaṅgraha* as the object of works, of Prakriti as the sole doer of works and the divine Purusha as their equal upholder, to whom works have to be given up even in their doing,—this inner giving up of works and yet physical doing of them is the culmination of sacrifice,—and by the affirmation that the result of such active sacrifice with an equal and desireless

mind is liberation from the bondage of works." (CWSA 19: 119)

"... the secret is not inaction as soon as one turns towards the higher truth, but desireless action both before and after it is reached. The liberated man has nothing to gain by action, but nothing also to gain by inaction, and it is not at all for any personal object that he has to make his choice." (CWSA 19: 115)

[19th Shloka of Third Chapter of the Gita]
"**Therefore without attachment perform ever the work that is to be done; for by doing work without attachment man attains to the highest**." (CWSA 19: 115)

"It is true that works and sacrifice are a means of arriving at the highest good, *śreyaḥ param avāpsyatha* ; but there are three kinds of works, that done without sacrifice for personal enjoyment which is entirely selfish and egoistic and misses the true law and aim and utility of life, *mogham̐ pārtha sa jīvati*, that done with desire, but with sacrifice and the enjoyment only as a result of sacrifice and therefore to that extent consecrated and sanctified, and that done without desire or attachment of any kind. It is the last which brings the soul of man to the highest, *param āpnoti pūruṣaḥ.*" (CWSA 19: 115)

"The overcoming of all attachments must necessarily be difficult and cannot come except as the fruit of a long *sādhanā*—unless there is a rapid general growth in the inner spiritual experience which is the substance of the Gita's teaching. The cessation of desire of the fruit, of the attachment to the work itself, the growth of equality to all beings, to all happenings, to good repute or ill repute, praise or blame, to good fortune or ill fortune, the dropping of the ego which are necessary for the loss of all attachments can come completely only when all work becomes a spontaneous sacrifice to the Divine, the heart is offered up to Him and one has the settled experience of the Divine in all things and all beings. This consciousness or experience must come in all parts and movements of the being, *sarvabhāvena,* not only in the mind and idea; then the falling away of all attachments becomes easy. I speak of the Gita's way of yoga, for in the ascetic life one obtains the same object differently, by cutting away from the objects of attachment and the consequent atrophy of the attachment itself through rejection and disuse." (CWSA 29: 236–237)

[20th Shloka of Third Chapter of the Gita]

"**It was even by works that Janaka and the rest attained to perfection. Thou shouldst do works regarding also the holding together of the peoples**." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"The works of sacrifice are thus vindicated as a means of liberation and absolute spiritual perfection, *saṁsiddhi*. So Janaka and other great Karmayogins of the mighty ancient Yoga attained to perfection, by equal and desireless works done as a sacrifice, without the least egoistic aim or attachment—*karmaṇaiva hi saṁsiddhim āsthitā janakādayaḥ*. So too and with the same desirelessness, after liberation and perfection, works can and have to be continued by us in a large divine spirit, with the calm high nature of a spiritual royalty." (CWSA 19: 135)

[21st Shloka of Third Chapter of the Gita]
"**Whatsoever the Best doeth, that the lower kind of man puts into practice; the standard he creates, the people follows**." (CWSA 19: 135)

[22nd Shloka of Third Chapter of the Gita]
"**O son of Pritha, I have no work that I need to do in all the three worlds [physical, vital, mental], I have nothing that I have not gained and have yet to gain, and I abide verily in the paths of action**." (CWSA 19: 135)

[23rd& 24th Shloka of Third Chapter of the Gita]
"**For if I did not abide sleeplessly in the paths of action, men follow in every way my path, these**

peoples would sink to destruction if I did not works and I should be the creator of confusion and slay these creatures." (CWSA 19: 135–136)

[25th Shloka of Third Chapter of the Gita]
"**As those who know not act with attachment to the action, he who knows should act without attachment, having for his motive to hold together the peoples**." (CWSA 19: 136)

[26th Shloka of Third Chapter of the Gita]
"**He should not create a division of their understanding in the ignorant who are attached to their works; he should set them to all actions, doing them himself with knowledge and in Yoga**." (CWSA 19: 136)

"But let us clearly understand that they [seven striking couplets] must not be interpreted, as the modern pragmatic tendency concerned much more with the present affairs of the world than with any high and far-off spiritual possibility seeks to interpret them, as no more than a philosophical and religious justification of social service, patriotic, cosmopolitan and humanitarian effort and attachment to the hundred eager social schemes and dreams which attract the modern intellect. It is not the rule of a large moral and intellectual altruism which is

here announced, but that of a spiritual unity with God and with this world of beings who dwell in him and in whom he dwells. It is not an injunction to subordinate the individual to society and humanity or immolate egoism on the altar of the human collectivity, but to fulfil the individual in God and to sacrifice the ego on the one true altar of the all embracing Divinity. The Gita moves on a plane of ideas and experiences higher than those of the modern mind which is at the stage indeed of a struggle to shake off the coils of egoism, but is still mundane in its outlook and intellectual and moral rather than spiritual in its temperament. Patriotism, cosmopolitanism, service of society, collectivism, humanitarianism, the ideal or religion of humanity are admirable aids towards our escape from our primary condition of individual, family, social, national egoism into a secondary stage in which the individual realises, as far as it can be done on the intellectual, moral and emotional level,—on that level he cannot do it entirely in the right and perfect way, the way of the integral truth of his being,—the oneness of his existence with the existence of other beings. But the thought of the Gita reaches beyond to a tertiary condition of our developing self-consciousness towards which the secondary is only a partial stage of advance." (CWSA 19: 136–137)

"An Indian system of thought like the Gita's cannot possibly fail to put first the development of the individual, the highest need of the individual, his claim to discover and exercise his largest spiritual freedom, greatness, splendour, royalty,—his aim to develop into the illumined seer and king in the spiritual sense of seerdom and kingship, which was the first great charter of the ideal humanity promulgated by the ancient Vedic sages. To exceed himself was their goal for the individual, not by losing all his personal aims in the aims of an organised human society, but by enlarging, heightening, aggrandising himself into the consciousness of the Godhead. The rule given here by the Gita is the rule for the master man, the superman, the divinised human being, the Best, not in the sense of any Nietzschean, any one-sided and lopsided, any Olympian, Apollonian or Dionysian, any angelic or demoniac supermanhood, but in that of the man whose whole personality has been offered up into the being, nature and consciousness of the one transcendent and universal Divinity and by loss of the smaller self has found its greater self, has been divinised." (CWSA 19: 137)

"In order to indicate more perfectly his meaning, the divine Teacher, the Avatar gives his own example, his own standard to Arjuna. 'I abide in the path of action,' he seems to say, 'the path that all men follow; thou too must

abide in action. In the way I act, in that way thou too must act. I am above the necessity of works, for I have nothing to gain by them; I am the Divine who possess all things and all beings in the world and I am myself beyond the world as well as in it and I do not depend upon anything or anyone in all the three worlds for any object; yet I act. This too must be thy manner and spirit of working. I, the Divine, am the rule and the standard; it is I who make the path in which men tread; I am the way and the goal. But I do all this largely, universally, visibly in part, but far more invisibly; and men do not really know the way of my workings. Thou, when thou knowest and seest, when thou hast become the divinised man, must be the individual power of God, the human yet divine example, even as I am in my avatars. Most men dwell in the ignorance, the God-seer dwells in the knowledge; but let him not confuse the minds of men by a dangerous example, rejecting in his superiority the works of the world; let him not cut short the thread of action before it is spun out, let him not perplex and falsify the stages and gradations of the ways I have hewn." (CWSA 19: 138–139)

"The whole range of human action has been decreed by me with a view to the progress of man from the lower to the higher nature, from the apparent undivine to the conscious Divine. The whole range of human works must

be that in which the God-knower shall move. All individual, all social action, all the works of the intellect, the heart and the body are still his, not any longer for his own separate sake, but for the sake of God in the world, of God in all beings and that all those beings may move forward, as he has moved, by the path of works towards the discovery of the Divine in themselves. Outwardly his actions may not seem to differ essentially from theirs; battle and rule as well as teaching and thought, all the various commerce of man with man may fall in his range; but the spirit in which he does them must be very different, and it is that spirit which by its influence shall be the great attraction drawing men upwards to his own level, the great lever lifting the mass of men higher in their ascent.

The giving of the example of God himself to the liberated man is profoundly significant; for it reveals the whole basis of the Gita's philosophy of divine works. The liberated man is he who has exalted himself into the divine nature and according to that divine nature must be his actions. But what is the divine nature? It is not entirely and solely that of the Akshara, the immobile, inactive, impersonal self; for that by itself would lead the liberated man to actionless immobility. It is not characteristically that of the Kshara, the multitudinous, the personal, the Purusha self-subjected to Prakriti; for that by itself would lead him back into subjection to his

personality and to the lower nature and its qualities. It is the nature of the Purushottama who holds both these together and by his supreme divinity reconciles them in a divine reconciliation which is the highest secret of his being, *rahasyaṁ hyetad uttamam*. ˙ He is not the doer of works in the personal sense of our action involved in Prakriti; for God works through his power, conscious nature, effective force,— Shakti, Maya, Prakriti,— but yet above it, not involved in it, not subject to it, not unable to lift himself beyond the laws, workings, habits of action it creates, not affected or bound by them, not unable to distinguish himself, as we are unable, from the workings of life, mind and body. He is the doer of works who acts not, *kartāram akartarām*. 'Know me,' says Krishna, 'for the doer of this (the fourfold law of human workings) who am yet the imperishable non-doer. Works fix not themselves on me (*na limpanti*), nor have I desire for the fruits of action.' But neither is he the inactive, impassive, unpuissant Witness and nothing else; for it is he who works in the steps and measures of his power; every movement of it, every particle of the world of beings it forms is instinct with his presence, full of his consciousness, impelled by his will, shaped by his knowledge." (CWSA 19: 139–140)

"The Gita declares that the action of the liberated man must be directed not by desire, but towards the keeping

together of the world, its government, guidance, impulsion, maintenance in the path appointed to it. This injunction has been interpreted in the sense that the world being an illusion in which most men must be kept, since they are unfit for liberation, he must so act outwardly as to cherish in them an attachment to their customary works laid down for them by the social law. If so, it would be a poor and petty rule and every noble heart would reject it to follow rather the divine vow of Amitabha Buddha, the sublime prayer of the Bhagavata, the passionate aspiration of Vivekananda. But if we accept rather the view that the world is a divinely guided movement of Nature emerging in man towards God and that this is the work in which the Lord of the Gita declares that he is ever occupied although he himself has nothing ungained that he has yet to win, then a deep and true sense will appear for this great injunction. To participate in that divine work, to live for God in the world will be the rule of the Karmayogin; to live for God in the world and therefore so to act that the Divine may more and more manifest himself and the world go forward by whatever way of its obscure pilgrimage and move nearer to the divine ideal.

How he shall do this, in what particular way, can be decided by no general rule. It must develop or define itself from within; the decision lies between God and our self, the Supreme Self and the individual self that is the

instrument of the work; even before liberation, it is from the inner self, as soon as we become conscious of it, that there rises the sanction, the spiritually determined choice. It is altogether from within that must come the knowledge of the work that has to be done. There is no particular work, no law or form or outwardly fixed or invariable way of works which can be said to be that of the liberated being." (CWSA 23: 272)

[27th Shloka of Third Chapter of the Gita]
"**While the actions are being entirely done by the modes of Nature, he whose self is bewildered by egoism thinks that it is his 'I' which is doing them**." (CWSA 19: 214)

"But man as the individual self, owing to his ignorant self-identification with the work and the becoming, as if that were all his soul and not a power of his soul, a power proceeding from it, is bewildered by the ego-sense. He thinks that it is he and others who are doing all; he does not see that Nature is doing all and that he is misrepresenting and disfiguring her works to himself by ignorance and attachment. He is enslaved by the gunas, now hampered in the dull case of tamas, now blown by the strong winds of rajas, now limited by the partial lights of sattwa, not distinguishing himself at all from the nature-mind which alone is thus modified by the gunas.

He is therefore mastered by pain and pleasure, happiness and grief, desire and passion, attachment and disgust: he has no freedom.

He must, to be free, get back from the Nature action to the status of the Akshara; he will then be *triguṇātīta*, beyond the gunas. Knowing himself as the Akshara Brahman, the unchanging Purusha, he will know himself as an immutable impersonal self, the Atman, tranquilly observing and impartially supporting the action, but himself calm, indifferent, untouched, motionless, pure, one with all beings in their self, not one with Nature and her workings." (CWSA 19: 231)

"... what it [determinism of Nature] amounts to is this that the ego from which we act is itself an instrument of the action of Prakriti and cannot therefore be free from the control of Prakriti; the will of the ego is a will determined by Prakriti, it is a part of the nature as it has been formed in us by the sum of its own past action and self-modification, and by the nature in us so formed and the will in it so formed our present action also is determined. ... We speak and act as if we were perfectly free in the pure and virgin moment to do what we will with ourselves using an absolute inward independence of choice. But there is no such absolute liberty, our choice has no such independence.

Certainly, the will in us has always to choose between a certain number of possibilities, for that is the way in which Nature always acts; even our passivity, our refusal to will, is itself a choice, itself an act of the will of Nature in us; even in the atom there is a will always at its work. The whole difference is the extent to which we associate our idea of self with the action of the will in Nature; when we so associate ourselves, we think of it as our will and say that it is a free will and that it is we who are acting." (CWSA 19: 224–225)

"But it [sense of free will] is not a sheer delusion, it is only an error of standpoint and an error of placement. The ego thinks that it is the real self and acts as if it were the true centre of action and as if all existed for its sake, and there it commits an error of standpoint and placement. It is not wrong in thinking that there is something or someone within ourselves, within this action of our nature, who is the true centre of its action and for whom all exists; but this is not the ego, it is the Lord secret within our hearts, the divine Purusha, and the Jiva, other than ego, who is a portion of his being. The self-assertion of ego-sense is the broken and distorted shadow in our minds of the truth that there is a real Self within us which is the master of all and for whom and at whose behest Nature goes about her works. So too the ego's idea of free will is a distorted and misplaced sense

of the truth that there is a free Self within us and that the will in Nature is only a modified and partial reflection of its will, modified and partial because it lives in the successive moments of Time and acts by a constant series of modifications which forget much of their own precedents and are only imperfectly conscious of their own consequences and aims. But the Will within, exceeding the moments of Time, knows all these, and the action of Nature in us is an attempt, we might say, to work out under the difficult conditions of a natural and egoistic ignorance what is foreseen in full supramental light by the inner Will and Knowledge." (CWSA 23: 225–226)

"But is the condition of the predominantly sattwic nature freedom and is this will in man a free will? That the Gita from the standpoint of a higher consciousness in which alone is true freedom, denies. The buddhi or conscious intelligent will is still an instrument of Nature and when it acts, even in the most sattwic sense, it is still Nature which acts and the soul which is carried on the wheel by Maya. At any rate, at least nine-tenths of our freedom of will is a palpable fiction; that will is created and determined not by its own self-existent action at a given moment, but by our past, our heredity, our training, our environment, the whole tremendous complex thing we call Karma, which is, behind us, the whole past action of

Nature on us and the world converging in the individual, determining what he is, determining what his will shall be at a given moment and determining, as far as analysis can see, even its action at that moment. The ego associates itself always with its Karma and it says 'I did' and 'I will' and 'I suffer', but if it looks at itself and sees how it was made, it is obliged to say of man as of the animal, 'Nature did this in me, Nature wills in me', and if it qualifies by saying 'my Nature', that only means 'Nature as self-determined in this individual creature'. It was the strong perception of this aspect of existence which compelled the Buddhists to declare that all is Karma and that there is no self in existence, that the idea of self is only a delusion of the ego-mind. When the ego thinks 'I choose and will this virtuous and not that evil action', it is simply associating itself, somewhat like the fly on the wheel, or rather as might a cog or other part of a mechanism if it were conscious, with a predominant wave or a formed current of the sattwic principle by which Nature chooses through the buddhi one type of action in preference to another." (CWSA 19: 221–222)

"Through our egoism and ignorance we are moved, thinking that we are the doers of the work, vaunting [boasting] of ourselves as the real causes of the result, and that which moves us we see only occasionally as some vague or even some human and earthly fountain of

knowledge, aspiration, force, some Principle or Light or Power which we acknowledge and adore without knowing what it is until the occasion arises that forces us to stand arrested before the Veil. And the action in which this divine figure moves is the whole wide action of man in life, not merely the inner life, but all this obscure course of the world which we can judge only by the twilight of the human reason as it opens up dimly before our uncertain advance the little span in front." (CWSA 19: 18–19)

[28th Shloka of Third Chapter of the Gita]
"**But one who knows the true principles of the divisions of the modes and of works, realises that it is the modes which are acting and reacting on each other and is not caught in them by attachment.**" (CWSA 19: 214)

"But a time must come in our progress when we are ready to open our eyes to the real truth of our being, and then the error of our egoistic free will must fall away from us. The rejection of the idea of egoistic free will does not imply a cessation of action, because Nature is the doer and carries out her action after this machinery is dispensed with even as she did before it came into usage in the process of her evolution. ... But the rejection of free will must not be a mere fatalism or idea of natural

determinism in the understanding without any vision of the real Self in us; for then the ego still remains as our sole idea of self and, as that is always the instrument of Prakriti, we still act by the ego and with our will as her instrument, and the idea in us brings no real change, but only a modification of our intellectual attitude. We shall have accepted the phenomenal truth of the determination of our egoistic being and action by Nature, we shall have seen our subjection: but we shall not have seen the unborn Self within which is above the action of the gunas; we shall not have seen wherein lies our gate of freedom. Nature and ego are not all we are; there is the free soul, the Purusha." (CWSA 19: 226–227)

"Therefore it is evident that the Gita's conception of the relations of the Purusha and Prakriti are not the Sankhya's, since the same movement leads to a quite different result, in one case to cessation of works, in the other to a great, a selfless and desireless, a divine action. In the Sankhya Soul and Nature are two different entities, in the Gita they are two aspects, two powers of one self-existent being; the Soul is not only giver of the sanction, but lord of Nature, Ishwara, through her enjoying the play of the world, through her executing divine will and knowledge in a scheme of things supported by his sanction and existing by his immanent presence, existing in his being, governed by the law of his being and by the

conscious will within it. To know, to respond to, to live in the divine being and nature of this Soul is the object of withdrawing from the ego and its action. One rises then above the lower nature of the gunas to the higher divine nature." (CWSA 19: 227–228)

[29th Shloka of Third Chapter of the Gita]
"**Those who are bewildered by the modes, get attached to the modes and their works; dull minds, not knowers of the whole, let not the knower of the whole disturb them in their mental standpoint**." (CWSA 19: 214)

[30th Shloka of Third Chapter of the Gita]
"**Giving up all thy works to Me, with thy consciousness founded in the Self, free from hope and egoism, fight delivered from the fever of thy soul**."

"Here there is the clear distinction between two levels of consciousness, two standpoints of action, that of the soul caught in the web of its egoistic nature and doing works with the idea, but not the reality of free will, under the impulsion of Nature, and that of the soul delivered from its identification with the ego, observing, sanctioning and governing the works of Nature from above her.

We speak of the soul being subject to Nature; but on the other hand the Gita in distinguishing the properties of the soul and Nature affirms that while Nature is the executrix, the soul is always the lord, *īśvara*. It speaks here of the self being bewildered by egoism, but the real Self to the Vedantin is the divine, eternally free and self-aware. What then is this self that is bewildered by Nature, this soul that is subject to her? The answer is that we are speaking here in the common parlance of our lower or mental view of things; we are speaking of the apparent self, of the apparent soul, not of the real self, not of the true Purusha. It is really the ego which is subject to Nature, inevitably, because it is itself part of Nature, one functioning of her machinery; but when the self-awareness in the mind-consciousness identifies itself with the ego, it creates the appearance of a lower self, an ego-self. And so too what we think of ordinarily as the soul is really the natural personality, not the true Person, the Purusha, but the desire-soul in us which is a reflection of the consciousness of the Purusha in the workings of Prakriti: it is, in fact, itself only an action of the three modes and therefore a part of Nature. Thus there are, we may say, two souls in us, the apparent or desire-soul, which changes with the mutations of the gunas and is entirely constituted and determined by them, and the free and eternal Purusha not limited by Nature and her gunas. We have two selves, the apparent self, which is only the

ego, that mental centre in us which takes up this mutable action of Prakriti, this mutable personality, and which says 'I am this personality, I am this natural being who am doing these works,'—but the natural being is simply Nature, a composite of the gunas,—and the true self which is, indeed, the upholder, the possessor and the lord of Nature and figured in her, but is not itself the mutable natural personality. The way to be free must then be to get rid of the desires of this desire-soul and the false self-view of this ego. 'Having become free from desire and egoism,' cries the Teacher, 'fight with all the fever of thy soul passed away from thee,'—*nirāśīr nirmamo bhūtvā*." (CWSA 19: 214–215)

[31st& 32nd Shloka of Third Chapter of the Gita]
"**Those who, full of faith and free from cavilling constantly follow this teaching of Mine, they too are released from the bondage of works. But those who find fault with My teaching and act not thereon, know thou to be of unripe mind, bewildered in all knowledge and fated to be destroyed**." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"In fact, these higher truths can only be helpful, because there only they are true to experience and can be lived, on a higher and vaster plane of consciousness and being.

To view these truths from below is to mis-see, misunderstand and probably to misuse them. It is a higher truth that the distinction of good and evil is indeed a practical fact and law valid for the egoistic human life which is the stage of transition from the animal to the divine, but on a higher plane we rise beyond good and evil, are above their duality even as the Godhead is above it. But the unripe mind, seizing on this truth without rising from the lower consciousness where it is not practically valid, will simply make it a convenient excuse for indulging its Asuric propensities, denying the distinction between good and evil altogether and falling by self-indulgence deeper into the morass of perdition, *sarva-jñāna-vimūḍhān naṣṭān acetasaḥ*. So too with this truth of the determinism of Nature; it will be mis-seen and misused, as those misuse it who declare that a man is what his nature has made him and cannot do otherwise than as his nature compels him. It is true in a sense, but not in the sense which is attached to it, not in the sense that the ego-self can claim irresponsibility and impunity for itself in its works; for it has will and it has desire and so long as it acts according to its will and desire, even though that be its nature, it must bear the reactions of its Karma. It is in a net, if you will, a snare which may well seem perplexing, illogical, unjust, terrible to its present experience, to its limited self-knowledge, but a snare of

its own choice, a net of its own weaving." (CWSA 19: 217)

[35th Shloka of Third Chapter of the Gita]
"**Better is one's own law of works, *svadharma*, though in itself faulty than an alien law well wrought out; death in one's own law of being is better, perilous is it to follow an alien law**." (CWSA 19: 217–218)

"What is precisely meant by this *svadharma* … but certainly it does not mean that we are to follow any impulse, even though evil, which what we call our nature dictates to us." (CWSA 19: 218)

"But in this inferior Prakriti in which we live, the Jiva follows the principle of selection and finite determination, and there whatever nexus of energy, whatever quality or spiritual principle he brings into birth with him or brings forward as the seed of his self-expression, becomes an operative portion of his swabhava, his law of self-becoming, and determines his swadharma, his law of action. And if that were all, there would be no perplexity or difficulty; the life of man would be a luminous unfolding of godhead. But this lower energy of our world is a nature of ignorance, of egoism, of the three gunas. Because this is a nature of egoism, the Jiva conceives of

himself as the separative ego: he works out his self-expression egoistically as a separative will to be in conflict as well as in association with the same will to be in others. He attempts to possess the world by strife and not by unity and harmony; he stresses an ego-centric discord. Because this is a nature of ignorance, a blind seeing and an imperfect or partial self-expression, he does not know himself, does not know his law of being, but follows it instinctively under the ill-understood compulsion of the world-energy, with a struggle, with much inner conflict, with a very large possibility of deviation. Because this is a nature of the three gunas, this confused and striving self-expression takes various forms of incapacity, perversion or partial self-finding." (CWSA 19: 372)

"And in Nature each of us has a principle and will of our own becoming; each soul is a force of self-consciousness that formulates an idea of the Divine in it and guides by that its action and evolution, its progressive self-finding, its constant varying self-expression, its apparently uncertain but secretly inevitable growth to fullness. That is our Swabhava, our own real nature; that is our truth of being which is finding now only a constant partial expression in our various becoming in the world. The law of action determined by this Swabhava is our right law of

self-shaping, function, working, our Swadharma." (CWSA 19: 519)

"And from this emphasis on the inner truth and not on the outer form arises the spiritual significance and power which the Gita assigns to the following of the Swadharma. That is the really important bearing of the passage. Too much has been made of its connection with the outer social order, as if the object of the Gita were to support that for its own sake or to justify it by a religio-philosophical theory. In fact it lays very little stress on the external rule and a very great stress on the internal law which the Varna system attempted to put into regulated outward practice." (CWSA 19: 514)

"This sattwic mind must be developed to its highest point where it succeeds in putting away the mixture of ego motive altogether and observes the Dharma for its own sake as an impersonal social, ethical or religious ideal, the thing disinterestedly to be done solely because it is right, *kartavyaṁ karma*.

'The real truth of all this action of Prakriti is, however, less outwardly mental and more inwardly subjective. It is this that man is an embodied soul involved in material and mental nature, and he follows in it a progressive law of his development determined by an inner law of his being; his cast of spirit makes out his cast

of mind and life, his swabhava. Each man has a swadharma, a law of his inner being which he must observe, find out and follow. The action determined by his inner nature, that is his real Dharma. To follow it is the true law of his development; to deviate from it is to bring in confusion, retardation and error. That social, ethical, religious or other law and ideal is best for him always which helps him to observe and follow out his Swadharma." (CWSA 19: 592)

"Man is not like the tiger or the fire or the storm; he cannot kill and say as a sufficient justification, 'I am acting according to my nature', and he cannot do it, because he has not the nature and not, therefore, the law of action, *svadharma*, of the tiger, storm or fire. He has a conscious intelligent will, a *buddhi*, and to that he must refer his actions. If he does not do so, if he acts blindly according to his impulses and passions, then the law of his being is not rightly worked out, *svadharmaḥ su-anuṣṭhitaḥ*, he has not acted according to the full measure of his humanity, but even as might the animal. It is true that the principle of *rajas* or the principle of *tamas* gets hold of his *buddhi* and induces it to justify any and every action he commits or any avoidance of action; but still the justification or at least the reference to the buddhi must be there either before or after the action is committed. And, besides, in man *sattva* is awake and acts

not only as intelligence and intelligent will, but as a seeking for light, for right knowledge and right action according to that knowledge, as a sympathetic perception of the existence and claims of others, as an attempt to know the higher law of his own nature, which the sattwic principle in him creates, and to obey it, and as a conception of the greater peace and happiness which virtue, knowledge and sympathy bring in their train. He knows more or less imperfectly that he has to govern his rajasic and tamasic by his sattwic nature and that thither tends the perfection of his normal humanity." (CWSA 19: 220–221)

[36th Shloka of Third Chapter of the Gita]
"**Arjuna said: But (if there is no fault in following our Nature) what is in us that drives a man to sin, as if by force, even against his own struggling will, O Varshneya?**" [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

[37th Shloka of Third Chapter of the Gita]
"**The Blessed Lord said: It is desire, it is wrath, born of Rajas, all-devouring, all-polluting, know thou this as the soul's enemy here**." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"... the Teacher replies that this is desire and its companion wrath, children of rajas, the second guna, the principle of passion, and this desire is the soul's great enemy and has to be slain. Abstention from evil-doing it declares to be the first condition for liberation, and always it enjoins self-mastery, self-control, *saṁyama*, control of the mind, senses, all the lower being." (CWSA 19: 218)

"The root of desire is the vital craving to seize upon that which we feel we have not, it is the limited life's instinct for possession and satisfaction. It creates the sense of want,—first the simpler vital craving of hunger, thirst, lust, then these psychical hungers, thirsts, lusts of the mind which are a much greater and more instant and pervading affliction of our being, the hunger which is infinite because it is the hunger of an infinite being, the thirst which is only temporarily lulled by satisfaction, but is in its nature insatiable. The psychic prana invades the sensational mind and brings into it the unquiet thirst of sensations, invades the dynamic mind with the lust of control, having, domination, success, fulfilment of every impulse, fills the emotional mind with the desire for the satisfaction of liking and disliking, for the wreaking of love and hate, brings the shrinkings and panics of fear and the strainings and disappointments of hope, imposes the tortures of grief and the brief fevers and excitements of

joy, makes the intelligence and intelligent will the accomplices of all these things and turns them in their own kind into deformed and lame instruments, the will into a will of craving and the intelligence into a partial, a stumbling and an eager pursuer of limited, impatient, militant prejudgment and opinion. Desire is the root of all sorrow, disappointment, affliction, for though it has a feverish joy of pursuit and satisfaction, yet because it is always a straining of the being, it carries into its pursuit and its getting a labour, hunger, struggle, a rapid subjection to fatigue, a sense of limitation, dissatisfaction and early disappointment with all its gains, a ceaseless morbid stimulation, trouble, disquiet, *aśānti*." (CWSA 23: 656–657)

"And first of all he must give up his desires; for desire is the most obscure and the most obscuring movement of the lower nature. Desires are motions of weakness and ignorance and they keep you chained to your weakness and to your ignorance. Men have the impression that their desires are born within; they feel as if they come out of themselves or arise within themselves; but it is a false impression. Desires are waves of the vast sea of the obscure lower nature and they pass from one person to another. Men do not generate a desire in themselves, but are invaded by these waves; whoever is open and without defence is caught in them and tossed about.

Desire by engrossing and possessing him makes him incapable of any discrimination and gives him the impression that it is part of his nature to manifest it. In reality, it has nothing to do with his true nature. It is the same with all the lower impulses, jealousy or envy, hatred or violence. These too are movements that seize you, waves that overwhelm and invade; they deform, they do not belong to the true character or the true nature; they are no intrinsic or inseparable part of yourself, but come out of the sea of surrounding obscurity in which move the forces of the lower nature. These desires, these passions have no personality, there is nothing in them or their action that is peculiar to you; they manifest in the same way in everyone." (CWM 3: 117)

VIII—Work and Action in the Fourth Chapter of the Gita, 'Jnana Yoga' or 'The Yoga of Knowledge'

[14th& 15th Shloka of Fourth Chapter of the Gita]
"**Works fix not themselves on Me, nor have I desire for the fruits of action; He who thus knows me is not bound by his works. So knowing was work done by the men of old who sought liberation; do therefore, thou also, work of that more ancient kind done by ancient men."** [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"Men therefore have to follow the fourfold law of their nature and works and on this plane of mundane action they seek the Godhead through his various qualities. But, says Krishna, though I am the doer of the fourfold works and creator of its fourfold law, yet I must be known also as the non-doer, the imperishable, the immutable Self. 'Works affect me not, nor have I desire for the fruit of works;' for God is the impersonal beyond this egoistic personality and this strife of the modes of Nature, and as the Purushottama also, the impersonal Personality, he possesses this supreme freedom even in works. Therefore the doer of divine works even while following the fourfold law has to know and live in that which is beyond, in the impersonal Self and so in the supreme Godhead. 'He who

thus knows me is not bound by his works'." (CWSA 19: 147)

"To attain to the divine birth,—a divinising new birth of the soul into a higher consciousness,—and to do divine works both as a means towards that before it is attained and as an expression of it after it is attained, is then all the Karmayoga of the Gita. The Gita does not try to define works by any outward signs through which it can be recognisable to an external gaze, measurable by the criticism of the world; it deliberately renounces even the ordinary ethical distinctions by which men seek to guide themselves in the light of the human reason. The signs by which it distinguishes divine works are all profoundly intimate and subjective; the stamp by which they are known is invisible, spiritual, supra-ethical." (CWSA 19: 177)

[16th Shloka of Fourth Chapter of the Gita]
"**What is action and what is inaction, as to this even the sages are perplexed and deluded. I will declare to thee that action by the knowledge of which thou shalt be released from all ills**."
[Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"Knowledge purifies, says the Gita, meaning the higher spiritual knowledge which comes by śruti, divine

inspiration; there is nothing in the whole world so pure as knowledge ..." (CWSA 14: 133)

[17th Shloka of Fourth Chapter of the Gita]
"**One has to understand about action as well as to understand about wrong action and about inaction one has to understand; thick and tangled is the way of works**." (CWSA 19: 177) [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"They [divine works] are recognisable only by the light of the soul from which they come. For, it says, 'what is action and what is inaction, as to this even the sages are perplexed and deluded,' because, judging by practical, social, ethical, intellectual standards, they discriminate by accidentals and do not go to the root of the matter; 'I will declare to thee that action by the knowledge of which thou shalt be released from all ills. One has to understand about action as well as to understand about wrong action and about inaction one has to understand; thick and tangled is the way of works.' Action in the world is like a deep forest, *gahana*, through which man goes stumbling as best he can, by the light of the ideas of his time, the standards of his personality, his environment, or rather of many times, many personalities, layers of thought and ethics from many social stages all inextricably confused together, temporal and conventional amidst all their claim

to absoluteness and immutable truth, empirical and irrational in spite of their aping of right reason. And finally the sage seeking in the midst of it all a highest foundation of fixed law and an original truth finds himself obliged to raise the last supreme question, whether all action and life itself are not a delusion and a snare and whether cessation from action, *akarma,* is not the last resort of the tired and disillusioned human soul. But, says Krishna, in this matter even the sages are perplexed and deluded. For by action, by works, not by inaction comes the knowledge and the release.

What then is the solution? what is that type of works by which we shall be released from the ills of life, from this doubt, this error, this grief, from this mixed, impure and baffling result even of our purest and best-intentioned acts, from these million forms of evil and suffering? No outward distinctions need be made, is the reply; no work the world needs, be shunned; no limit or hedge set round our human activities; on the contrary, all actions should be done, but from a soul in Yoga with the Divine, *yuktaḥ kṛtsna-karma-kṛt*. *Akarma*, cessation from action is not the way; the man who has attained to the insight of the highest reason, perceives that such inaction is itself a constant action, a state subject to the workings of Nature and her qualities." (CWA 19: 177–178)

[18th Shloka of Fourth Chapter of the Gita]

"**He who in action can see inaction and can see action still continuing in cessation from works, is the man of true reason and discernment among men; he is in Yoga and a many-sided universal worker**." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"He who can see inaction in action and action in inaction, he is the wise among men, he does all actions with a soul in union with God.'

From this lofty platform the great creed rises to its crowning ideas, for since we must act but neither for any human or future results of action nor for the sake of the action itself, and yet action must have some goal to which it is devoted, there is no goal left but God. We must devote then our actions to God & through that rise to complete surrender of the personality to him, whether in the idea of him manifest through Yoga or the idea of him Unmanifest through God knowledge." (CWSA 1: 326)

"The mind that takes refuge in physical inactivity, is still under the delusion that it and not Nature is the doer of works; it has mistaken inertia for liberation; it does not see that even in what seems absolute inertia greater than that of the stone or clod, Nature is at work, keeps unimpaired her hold. On the contrary in the full flood of action the soul is free from its works, is not the doer, not

bound by what is done, and he who lives in the freedom of the soul, not in the bondage of the modes of Nature, alone has release from works. This is what the Gita clearly means when it says that he who in action can see inaction and can see action still continuing in cessation from works, is the man of true reason and discernment among men." (CWA 19: 178)

"Therefore the liberated man is not afraid of action, he is a large and universal doer of all works, *kṛtsna-karma-kṛt*.; not as others do them in subjection to Nature, but poised in the silent calm of the soul, tranquilly in Yoga with the Divine. The Divine is the lord of his works, he is only their channel through the instrumentality of his nature conscious of and subject to her Lord." (CWSA 19: 179)

[19th Shloka of Fourth Chapter of the Gita]
"**Whose inceptions and undertakings are all free from the will of desire, whose works are burned up by the fire of knowledge; him the wise have called a sage**." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"By the flaming intensity and purity of this knowledge all his works are burned up as in a fire and his mind remains without any stain or disfiguring mark from them, calm, silent, unperturbed, white and clean and pure. To do all in this liberating knowledge, without the personal egoism

of the doer, is the first sign of the divine worker." (CWSA 19: 179)

[20th Shloka of Fourth Chapter of the Gita]
"**Having abandoned all attachment to the fruits of his works, ever satisfied without any kind of dependence, he does nothing even though engaged in works."** [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"The second sign is freedom from desire; for where there is not the personal egoism of the doer, desire becomes impossible; it is starved out, sinks for want of a support, dies of inanition. Outwardly the liberated man seems to undertake works of all kinds like other men, on a larger scale perhaps with a more powerful will and driving-force, for the might of the divine will works in his active nature; but from all his inceptions and undertakings the inferior concept and nether will of desire is entirely banished, *sarve samārambhāḥ kāmasaṅkalpavarjitāḥ*. He has abandoned all attachment to the fruits of his works, and where one does not work for the fruit, but solely as an impersonal instrument of the Master of works, desire can find no place,—not even the desire to serve successfully, for the fruit is the Lord's and determined by him and not by the personal will and effort, or to serve with credit and to the Master's satisfaction, for the real doer is the Lord

himself and all glory belongs to a form of his Shakti missioned in the nature and not to the limited human personality. The human mind and soul of the liberated man does nothing, *na kiñcit karoti*; even though through his nature he engages in action, it is the Nature, the executive Shakti, it is the conscious Goddess governed by the divine Inhabitant who does the work." (CWSA 19: 179)

"It does not follow that the work is not to be done perfectly, with success, with a right adaptation of means to ends: on the contrary a perfect working is easier to action done tranquilly in Yoga than to action done in the blindness of hopes and fears, lamed by the judgments of the stumbling reason, running about amidst the eager trepidations of the hasty human will: Yoga, says the Gita elsewhere, is the true skill in works, *yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam.* But all this is done impersonally by the action of a great universal light and power operating through the individual nature. The Karmayogin knows that the power given to him will be adapted to the fruit decreed, the divine thought behind the work equated with the work he has to do, the will in him,—which will not be wish or desire, but an impersonal drive of conscious power directed towards an aim not his own,—subtly regulated in its energy and direction by the divine wisdom. The result may be success, as the ordinary mind

understands it, or it may seem to that mind to be defeat and failure; but to him it is always the success intended, not by him, but by the all-wise manipulator of action and result, because he does not seek for victory, but only for the fulfilment of the divine will and wisdom which works out its ends through apparent failure as well as and often with greater force than through apparent triumph. Arjuna, bidden to fight, is assured of victory; but even if certain defeat were before him, he must still fight because that is the present work assigned to him as his immediate share in the great sum of energies by which the divine will is surely accomplished." (CWSA 19: 179–180)

[21st Shloka of Fourth Chapter of the Gita]
"**He has no personal hopes; does not seize on things as his personal possessions; his heart and self are under perfect control; performing action by the body alone, he does not incur sin**."
[Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"The liberated man has no personal hopes; he does not seize on things as his personal possessions; he receives what the divine Will brings him, covets nothing, is jealous of none: what comes to him he takes without repulsion and without attachment; what goes from him he allows to depart into the whirl of things without repining or grief or

sense of loss. His heart and self are under perfect control; they are free from reaction and passion, they make no turbulent response to the touches of outward things. His action is indeed a purely physical action, *śārīraṁ kevalaṁ karma*; for all else comes from above, is not generated on the human plane, is only a reflection of the will, knowledge, joy of the divine Purushottama. Therefore he does not by a stress on doing and its objects bring about in his mind and heart any of those reactions which we call passion and sin. For sin consists not at all in the outward deed, but in an impure reaction of the personal will, mind and heart which accompanies it or causes it; the impersonal, the spiritual is always pure, *apāpaviddham*, and gives to all that it does its own inalienable purity. This spiritual impersonality is a third sign of the divine worker. All human souls, indeed, who have attained to a certain greatness and largeness are conscious of an impersonal Force or Love or Will and Knowledge working through them, but they are not free from egoistic reactions, sometimes violent enough, of their human personality. But this freedom the liberated soul has attained; for he has cast his personality into the impersonal, where it is no longer his, but is taken up by the divine Person, the Purushottama, who uses all finite qualities infinitely and freely and is bound by none. He has become a soul and ceased to be a sum of natural qualities; and such appearance of personality as remains

for the operations of Nature, is something unbound, large, flexible, universal; it is a free mould for the Infinite, it is a living mask of the Purushottama." (CWSA 19: 180–181)

[22nd Shloka of Fourth Chapter of the Gita]
"**Satisfied with whatever gain comes to him, lifted beyond the dualities; void of jealousy, equal in failure and success, he is not bound even when he acts."** [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"Good happening and evil happening, so all-important to the human soul subject to desire, are to the desireless divine soul equally welcome since by their mingled strand are worked out the developing forms of the eternal good. He cannot be defeated, since all for him is moving towards the divine victory in the Kurukshetra of Nature, *dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre*, the field of doings which is the field of the evolving Dharma, and every turn of the conflict has been designed and mapped by the foreseeing eye of the Master of the battle, the Lord of works and Guide of the dharma." (CWSA 19: 181–182)

[23rd Shloka of Fourth Chapter of the Gita]
"**When a man liberated, free from attachment, with his mind, heart and spirit firmly founded in self-**

knowledge, does works as sacrifice, all his work is dissolved." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"By knowledge desire and its first-born child, sin, are destroyed. The liberated man is able to do works as a sacrifice because he is freed from attachment through his mind, heart and spirit being firmly founded in self-knowledge, *gata-saṅgasya jñānāvasthita-cetasaḥ*.All his work disappears completely as soon as done, suffers *laya*, as one might say, in the being of the Brahman, *pravilīyate* ; it has no reactionary consequence on the soul of the apparent doer. The work is done by the Lord through his Nature, it is no longer personal to the human instrument. The work itself becomes but power of the nature and substance of the being of the Brahman." (CWSA 19: 200)

"The Divine motives, inspires, determines the entire action; the human soul impersonal in the Brahman is the pure and silent channel of his power; that power in the Nature executes the divine movement. Such only are the works of the liberated soul, *muktasya karma*, for in nothing does he act from a personal inception; such are the actions of the accomplished Karmayogin. They rise from a free spirit and disappear without modifying it, like waves that rise and disappear on the surface of conscious, immutable depths." (CWSA 19: 187)

"But by what practical steps of self-discipline can we arrive at this consummation?

The elimination of all egoistic activity and of its foundation, the egoistic consciousness, is clearly the key to the consummation we desire. And since in the path of works action is the knot we have first to loosen, we must endeavour to loosen it where it is centrally tied, in desire and in ego; for otherwise we shall cut only stray strands and not the heart of our bondage. These are the two knots of our subjection to this ignorant and divided Nature, desire and ego-sense. And of these two desire has its native home in the emotions and sensations and instincts and from there affects thought and volition; ego-sense lives indeed in these movements, but it casts its deep roots also in the thinking mind and its will and it is there that it becomes fully self-conscious. These are the twin obscure powers of the obsessing world-wide Ignorance that we have to enlighten and eliminate.

In the field of action desire takes many forms, but the most powerful of all is the vital self's craving or seeking after the fruit of our works. The fruit we covet may be a reward of internal pleasure; it may be the accomplishment of some preferred idea or some cherished will or the satisfaction of the egoistic emotions, or else the pride of success of our highest hopes and ambitions. Or it may be an external reward, a recompense entirely material,—wealth, position, honour,

victory, good fortune or any other fulfilment of vital or physical desire. But all alike are lures by which egoism holds us. Always these satisfactions delude [deceive] us with the sense of mastery and the idea of freedom, while really we are harnessed and guided or ridden and whipped by some gross or subtle, some noble or ignoble, figure of the blind Desire that drives the world. Therefore the first rule of action laid down by the Gita is to do the work that should be done without any desire for the fruit, *niṣkāma karma*.

A simple rule in appearance, and yet how difficult to carry out with anything like an absolute sincerity and liberating entireness! In the greater part of our action we use the principle very little if at all, and then even mostly as a sort of counterpoise to the normal principle of desire and to mitigate the extreme action of that tyrant impulse. At best, we are satisfied if we arrive at a modified and disciplined egoism not too shocking to our moral sense, not too brutally offensive to others. And to our partial self-discipline we give various names and forms; we habituate ourselves by practice to the sense of duty, to a firm fidelity to principle, a stoical fortitude or a religious resignation, a quiet or an ecstatic submission to God's will. But it is not these things that the Gita intends, useful though they are in their place; it aims at something absolute, unmitigated, uncompromising, a turn, an attitude that will change the whole poise of the soul. Not

the mind's control of vital impulse is its rule, but the strong immobility of an immortal spirit.

The test it lays down is an absolute equality of the mind and the heart to all results, to all reactions, to all happenings. If good fortune and ill fortune, if respect and insult, if reputation and obloquy, if victory and defeat, if pleasant event and sorrowful event leave us not only unshaken but untouched, free in the emotions, free in the nervous reactions, free in the mental view, not responding with the least disturbance or vibration in any spot of the nature, then we have the absolute liberation to which the Gita points us, but not otherwise. The tiniest reaction is a proof that the discipline is imperfect and that some part of us accepts ignorance and bondage as its law and clings still to the old nature. Our self-conquest is only partially accomplished; it is still imperfect or unreal in some stretch or part or smallest spot of the ground of our nature. And that little pebble of imperfection may throw down the whole achievement of the Yoga!" (CWSA 23: 101–103)

"For it is certain that so great a result cannot be arrived at immediately and without any previous stages. At first we have to learn to bear the shocks of the world with the central part of our being untouched and silent, even when the surface mind, heart, life are strongly shaken; unmoved there on the bedrock of our life, we must

separate the soul watching behind or immune deep within from these outer workings of our nature. Afterwards, extending this calm and steadfastness of the detached soul to its instruments, it will become slowly possible to radiate peace from the luminous centre to the darker peripheries. In this process we may take the passing help of many minor phases; a certain stoicism, a certain calm philosophy, a certain religious exaltation may help us towards some nearness to our aim, or we may call in even less strong and exalted but still useful powers of our mental nature. In the end we must either discard or transform them and arrive instead at an entire equality, a perfect self-existent peace within and even, if we can, a total unassailable, self-poised and spontaneous delight in all our members.

But how then shall we continue to act at all? For ordinarily the human being acts because he has a desire or feels a mental, vital or physical want or need; he is driven by the necessities of the body, by the lust of riches, honours or fame, or by a craving for the personal satisfactions of the mind or the heart or a craving for power or pleasure. Or he is seized and pushed about by a moral need or, at least, the need or the desire of making his ideas or his ideals or his will or his party or his country or his gods prevail in the world. If none of these desires nor any other must be the spring of our action, it would seem as if all incentive or motive power had been

removed and action itself must necessarily cease. The Gita replies with its third great secret of the divine life. All action must be done in a more and more Godward and finally a God-possessed consciousness; our works must be a sacrifice to the Divine and in the end a surrender of all our being, mind, will, heart, sense, life and body to the One must make God-love and God-service our only motive. This transformation of the motive force and very character of works is indeed its master idea; it is the foundation of its unique synthesis of works, love and knowledge. In the end not desire, but the consciously felt will of the Eternal remains as the sole driver of our action and the sole originator of its initiative.

Equality, renunciation of all desire for the fruit of our works, action done as a sacrifice to the supreme Lord of our nature and of all nature,—these are the three first Godward approaches in the Gita's way of Karmayoga." (CWSA 23: 103–105)

"Each existence is continually giving out perforce from its stock; out of its mental receipts from Nature or its vital and physical assets and acquisitions and belongings a stream goes to all that is around it. And always again it receives something from its environment gratis or in return for its voluntary or involuntary tribute. For it is only by this giving and receiving that it can effect its own growth while at the same time it helps the sum of things.

At length, though at first slowly and partially, we learn to make the conscious sacrifice; even, in the end, we take joy to give ourselves and what we envisage as belonging to us in a spirit of love and devotion to That which appears for the moment other than ourselves and is certainly other than our limited personalities. The sacrifice and the divine return for our sacrifice then become a gladly accepted means towards our last perfection; for it is recognised now as the road to the fulfilment in us of the eternal purpose.

But, most often, the sacrifice is done unconsciously, egoistically and without knowledge or acceptance of the true meaning of the great world-rite. It is so that the vast majority of earth creatures do it; and, when it is so done, the individual derives only a mechanical minimum of natural inevitable profit, achieves by it only a slow painful progress limited and tortured by the smallness and suffering of the ego. Only when the heart, the will and the mind of knowledge associate themselves with the law and gladly follow it, can there come the deep joy and the happy fruitfulness of divine sacrifice. The mind's knowledge of the law and the heart's gladness in it culminate in the perception that it is to our own Self and Spirit and the one Self and Spirit of all that we give. And this is true even when our self-offering is still to our fellow-creatures or to lesser Powers and Principles and not yet to the Supreme." (CWSA 23: 106–107)

"For the Supreme who transcends the universe, is yet here too, however veiled, in us and in the world and in its happenings; he is there as the omniscient Witness and Receiver of all our works and their secret Master. All our actions, all our efforts, even our sins and stumblings and sufferings and struggles are obscurely or consciously, known to us and seen or else unknown and in a disguise, governed in their last result by the One. All is turned towards him in his numberless forms and offered through them to the single Omnipresence. In whatever form and with whatever spirit we approach him, in that form and with that spirit he receives the sacrifice." (CWSA 23: 110)

"The law of sacrifice travels in Nature towards its culmination in this complete and unreserved self-giving; it awakens the consciousness of one common self in the giver and the object of the sacrifice. This culmination of sacrifice is the height even of human love and devotion when it tries to become divine; for there too the highest peak of love points into a heaven of complete mutual self-giving, its summit is the rapturous fusing of two souls into one.

This profounder idea of the world-wide law is at the heart of the teaching about works given in the Gita; a spiritual union with the Highest by sacrifice, an unreserved self-giving to the Eternal is the core of its doctrine. The vulgar conception of sacrifice is an act of

painful self-immolation, austere self-mortification, difficult self-effacement; this kind of sacrifice may go even as far as self-mutilation and self-torture. These things may be temporarily necessary in man's hard endeavour to exceed his natural self; if the egoism in his nature is violent and obstinate, it has to be met sometimes by an answering strong internal repression and counterbalancing violence. But the Gita discourages any excess of violence done to oneself; for the self within is really the Godhead evolving, it is Krishna, it is the Divine; it has not to be troubled and tortured as the Titans of the world trouble and torture it, but to be increased, fostered, cherished, luminously opened to a divine light and strength and joy and wideness." " (CWSA 23: 108)

"But the true essence of sacrifice is not self-immolation, it is self-giving; its object not self-effacement, but self-fulfilment; its method not self-mortification, but a greater life, not selfmutilation, but a transformation of our natural human parts into divine members, not self-torture, but a passage from a lesser satisfaction to a greater Ananda. ... Our sacrifice is not a giving without any return or any fruitful acceptance from the other side; it is an interchange between the embodied soul and conscious Nature in us and the eternal Spirit. For even though no return is demanded, yet there is the knowledge deep within us that a marvellous return is inevitable. The soul

knows that it does not give itself to God in vain; claiming nothing, it yet receives the infinite riches of the divine Power and Presence." (CWSA 23: 109)

"The Gita's theory of sacrifice is stated in two separate passages; one we find in the third chapter, another in the fourth; the first gives it in language which might, taken by itself, seem to be speaking only of the ceremonial sacrifice; the second interpreting that into the sense of a large philosophical symbolism, transforms at once its whole significance and raises it to a plane of high psychological and spiritual truth." (CWSA 19: 114)

"To these passages we shall have to return. They are followed by a perfectly explicit and detailed interpretation of the meaning of *yajña* in the language of the Gita which leaves no doubt at all about the symbolic use of the words and the psychological character of the sacrifice enjoined by this teaching." (CWSA 19: 119)

"This elaborate explanation of the Yajna sets out with a vast and comprehensive definition in which it is declared that the act and energy and materials of the sacrifice, the giver and receiver of the sacrifice, the goal and object of the sacrifice are all the one Brahman." (CWSA 19: 120)

[24th Shloka of Fourth Chapter of the Gita]

"**Brahman is the giving, Brahman is the food-offering, by Brahman it is offered into the Brahman-fire, Brahman is that which is to be attained by samadhi in Brahman action**." (CWSA 19: 120) [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"This then is the knowledge in which the liberated man has to do works of sacrifice. It is the knowledge declared of old in the great Vedantic utterances, 'I am He', 'All this verily is the Brahman, Brahman is this Self.' It is the knowledge of the entire unity; it is the One manifest as the doer and the deed and the object of works, knower and knowledge and the object of knowledge. The universal energy into which the action is poured is the Divine; the consecrated energy of the giving is the Divine; whatever is offered is only some form of the Divine; the giver of the offering is the Divine himself in man; the action, the work, the sacrifice is itself the Divine in movement, in activity; the goal to be reached by sacrifice is the Divine. For the man who has this knowledge and lives and acts in it, there can be no binding works, no personal and egoistically appropriated action; there is only the divine Purusha acting by the divine Prakriti in His own being, offering everything into the fire of His self-conscious cosmic energy, while the knowledge and the possession of His divine existence and consciousness by

the soul unified with Him is the goal of all this God-directed movement and activity. To know that and to live and act in this unifying consciousness is to be free.

But all even of the Yogins have not attained to this knowledge." (CWSA 19: 120–121)

[25th Shloka of Fourth Chapter of the Gita]
"**Some Yogins follow after the sacrifice which is of the gods; others offer the sacrifice by the sacrifice itself into the Brahman-fire**." (CWSA 19: 121) [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"The former conceive of the Divine in various forms and powers and seek him by various means, ordinances, *dharmas*, laws or, as we might say, settled rites of action, self-discipline, consecrated works; for the latter, those who already know, the simple fact of sacrifice, of offering whatever work to the Divine itself, of casting all their activities into the unified divine consciousness and energy, is their one means, their one *dharma*. The means of sacrifice are various; the offerings are of many kinds." (CWSA 19: 121)

[26th Shloka of Fourth Chapter of the Gita]
"**Some offer hearing and other senses into the fires of control, others offer sound and the other**

objects of sense into the fires of sense." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]
[27th Shloka of Fourth Chapter of the Gita]
"**And others offer all the actions of the sense and all the actions of the vital force into the fire of the Yoga of self-control kindled by knowledge.**" [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"There is the psychological sacrifice of self-control and self-discipline which leads to the higher self-possession and self-knowledge. 'Some offer their senses into the fires of control, others offer the objects of sense into the fires of sense, and others offer all the actions of the sense and all the actions of the vital force into the fire of the Yoga of self-control kindled by knowledge.' There is, that is to say, the discipline which receives the objects of sense-perception without allowing the mind to be disturbed or affected by its sense-activities, the senses themselves becoming pure fires of sacrifice; there is the discipline which stills the senses so that the soul in its purity may appear from behind the veil of mind-action, calm and still; there is the discipline by which, when the self is known, all the actions of the sense perceptions and all the action of the vital being are received into that one still and tranquil soul." (CWSA 19: 121)

[28th Shloka of Fourth Chapter of the Gita]

"**There are some who offer in sacrifice their material possessions, others who offer the austerities of their self-discipline, others who offer their practice of some form of Yoga, and others who, firm in their vows, offer their study and knowledge.**"[Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"The offering of the striver after perfection may be material and physical, *dravya-yajña* , like that consecrated in worship by the devotee to his deity, or it may be the austerity of his self-discipline and energy of his soul directed to some high aim, *tapo-yajña*, or it may be some form of Yoga like the Pranayama of the Rajayogins and Hathayogins, or any other *yoga-yajña* ." (CWSA 19: 121)

[29th Shloka of Fourth Chapter of the Gita]

"**Others again who are devoted to controlling the breath, having restrained the Prana (the outgoing breath) and Apana (the incoming greath) pour as sacrifice Prana into Apana and Apana into Prana.**" [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

[30th Shloka of Fourth Chapter of the Gita]

"**Still others, having regulated and controlled their diet, pour as sacrifice their life-breath into life-breaths. All these are knowers of sacrifice, and by sacrifice have destroyed their sins.**" [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"All these tend to the purification of the being; all sacrifice is a way towards the attainment of the highest.

The one thing needful, the saving principle constant in all these variations, is to subordinate the lower activities, to diminish the control of desire and replace it by a superior energy, to abandon the purely egoistic enjoyment for that diviner delight which comes by sacrifice, by self-dedication, by self-mastery, by the giving up of one's lower impulses to a greater and higher aim." (CWSA 19: 121–122)

[31st Shloka of Fourth Chapter of the Gita]

"**They who enjoy the nectar of immortality left over from the sacrifice attain to the eternal Brahman; this world is not for him who doeth not sacrifice, how then any other world, O Best of the Kurus**?" [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"Sacrifice is the law of the world and nothing can be gained without it, neither mastery here, nor the

possession of heavens beyond, nor the supreme possession of all ..." (CWSA 19: 122)

[32nd Shloka of Fourth Chapter of the Gita]
"**Therefore all these and many other forms of sacrifice have been extended in the mouth of the Brahman. Know thou that all these are born of work and so knowing thou shalt become free**."
[Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"... they are all means and forms of the one great Existence in activity, means by which the action of the human being can be offered up to That of which his outward existence is a part and with which his inmost self is one. They are 'all born of work'; all proceed from and are ordained by the one vast energy of the Divine which manifests itself in the universal *karma* and makes all the cosmic activity a progressive offering to the one Self and Lord and of which the last stage for the human being is self-knowledge and the possession of the divine or Brahmic consciousness. 'So knowing thou shalt become free'." (CWSA 19: 122)

[33rd Shloka of Fourth Chapter of the Gita]
"**The sacrifice of knowledge, O Parantapa, is greater than any material sacrifice. Knowledge is that in which all actions culminate (not any lower**

knowledge, but the highest self-knowledge and God-knowledge), O Paratha!" [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"But there are gradations in the range of these various forms of sacrifice, the physical offering the lowest, the sacrifice of knowledge the highest. Knowledge is that in which all this action culminates, not any lower knowledge, but the highest, self-knowledge and God-knowledge, that which we can learn from those who know the true principles of existence, that by possessing which we shall not fall again into the bewilderment of the mind's ignorance and into its bondage to mere sense-knowledge and to the inferior activity of the desires and passions." (CWSA 19: 122)

[34th Shloka of Fourth Chapter of the Gita]

"**Learn that knowledge by prostrating (worshiping) at the feet of the teacher, by questioning and by service. The men of knowledge who have seen the true principles of things will instruct thee in that knowledge.**" [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

[35th Shloka of Fourth Chapter of the Gita]

"**When thou has known it, thou shalt not again fall into this confusion, O Pandava; for by this thou shalt see all existences without exception in the**

Self, then in Me." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"The knowledge in which all culminates is that by which 'thou shalt see all existences (becomings, *bhūtāni*) without exception in the Self, then in Me.' For the Self is that one, immutable, all-pervading, all-containing, self-existent reality or Brahman hidden behind our mental being into which our consciousness widens out when it is liberated from the ego; we come to see all beings as becomings, *bhūtāni* [the elements, the five elemental states of substance:], within that one self-existence.

But this Self or immutable Brahman we see too to be the self-presentation to our essential psychological consciousness of a supreme Being who is the source of our existence and of whom all that is mutable or immutable is the manifestation. He is God, the Divine, the Purushottama. To Him we offer everything as a sacrifice; into His hands we give up our actions; in His existence we live and move; unified with Him in our nature and with all existence in Him, we become one soul and one power of being with Him and with all beings; with His supreme reality we identify and unite our self-being. By works done for sacrifice, eliminating desire, we arrive at knowledge and at the soul's possession of itself; by works done in self-knowledge and God-knowledge we are

liberated into the unity, peace and joy of the divine existence." (CWSA 19: 122–123)

"Yoga and knowledge are, in this early part of the Gita's teaching, the two wings of the soul's ascent. By Yoga is meant union through divine works done without desire, with equality of soul to all things and all men, as a sacrifice to the Supreme, while knowledge is that on which this desirelessness, this equality, this power of sacrifice is founded. The two wings indeed assist each other's flight; acting together, yet with a subtle alternation of mutual aid, like the two eyes in a man which see together because they see alternately, they increase one another mutually by interchange of substance. As the works grow more and more desireless, equal-minded, sacrificial in spirit, the knowledge increases; with the increase of the knowledge the soul becomes firmer in the desireless, sacrificial equality of its works. The sacrifice of knowledge, says the Gita therefore, is greater than any material sacrifice." (CWSA 19: 200)

[36th Shloka of Fourth Chapter of the Gita]
"**Even if thou art the greatest doer of sin beyond all sinners, thou shalt cross over all the crookedness of evil in the ship of knowledge**." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

[37th Shloka of Fourth Chapter of the Gita]

"**As a fire kindled turns to ashes its fuel, O Arjuna, so the fire of knowledge turns all works to ashes.**" (CWSA 19: 200–201) [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"By this it is not at all meant that when knowledge is complete, there is cessation from works. What is meant is made clear by the Gita when it says that he who has destroyed all doubt by knowledge and has by Yoga given up all works and is in possession of the Self is not bound by his works, *yoga-sannyasta-karmāṇam ātmavantaṁ na karmāṇi nibadhnanti*, and that he whose self has become the self of all existences, acts and yet is not affected by his works, is not caught in them, receives from them no soul-ensnaring reaction, *kurvann api na lipyate.*" (CWSA 19: 201)

[38th Shloka of Fourth Chapter of the Gita]

"**There is nothing in the world equal in purity to knowledge, the man who is perfected by Yoga, finds it to himself in the self by course of Time**." (CWSA 19: 200) [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"The Gita in describing how we come by this knowledge, says that we get first initiation into it from the men of

knowledge who have *seen*, not those who know merely by the intellect, its essential truths; but the actuality of it comes from within ourselves: "the man who is perfected by Yoga, finds it of himself in the self by the course of Time," it grows within him, that is to say, and he grows into it as he goes on increasing in desirelessness, in equality, in devotion to the Divine. It is only of the supreme knowledge that this can altogether be said; the knowledge which the intellect of man amasses, is gathered laboriously by the senses and the reason from outside. To get this other knowledge, self-existent, intuitive, self-experiencing, self-revealing, we must have conquered and controlled our mind and senses, *saṁyatendriyaḥ*, so that we are no longer subject to their delusions, but rather the mind and senses become its pure mirror; we must have fixed our whole conscious being on the truth of that supreme reality in which all exists, *tat-paraḥ* , so that it may display in us its luminous self-existence." (CWSA 19: 204)

[41st Shloka of Fourth Chapter of the Gita]
"**He who has destroyed all doubt by knowledge and has by Yoga given up all works and is in possession of the Self is not bound by his works, O Dhananjaya**." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

[42th Shloka of Fourth Chapter of the Gita]

"**Therefore, having cut asunder with the sword of knowledge this doubt that has arisen out of ignorance and abides in thy heart, resort to Yoga and stand up, O Bharta."** [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"Finally, it is in itself a self-existent truth and would be self-evident if it were not for the sorceries of the ignorance in which we live; the doubts, the perplexities which prevent us from accepting and following it, arise from that ignorance, from the sense-bewildered, opinion-perplexed heart and mind, living as they do in a lower and phenomenal truth and therefore questioning the higher realities, *ajñāna-sambhūtaṁ hṛtsthaṁ saṁśayam*. They have to be cut away by the sword of knowledge, says the Gita, by the knowledge that realises, by resorting constantly to Yoga, that is, by living out the union with the Supreme whose truth being known all is known, *yasmin vijñāte sarvaṁ vijñātam* ." (CWSA 19: 205)

IX—Work and Action in the Fifth Chapter of the Gita, 'Karmasanaysa Yoga' or 'The Yoga of Renunciation of Action'

"In answer Krishna affirms that the Sankhya goes by knowledge and renunciation, the Yoga by works; but the real renunciation is impossible without Yoga, without works done as a sacrifice, done with equality and without desire of the fruit, with the perception that it is Nature which does the actions and not the soul; but immediately afterwards [in the closing verses of the fourth chapter Sri Krishna] he declares that the sacrifice of knowledge is the highest, all work finds its consummation in knowledge, by the fire of knowledge all works are burnt up; therefore by Yoga works are renounced and their bondage overcome for the man who is in possession of his Self. Again Arjuna is perplexed; here are desireless works, the principle of Yoga, and renunciation of works, the principle of Sankhya, put together side by side as if part of one method, yet there is no evident reconciliation between them. For the kind of reconciliation which the Teacher has already given,—in outward inaction to see action still persisting and in apparent action to see a real inaction since the soul has renounced its illusion of the worker and given up works into the hands of the Master of sacrifice,—is for the practical mind of Arjuna too slight, too subtle and expressed almost in riddling words; he has

not caught their sense or at least not penetrated into their spirit and reality. Therefore he asks again, ..." (CWSA 19: 82)

[1st Shloka of Fifth Chapter of the Gita]
"[**Arjuna said:] Thou declarest to me the renunciation of works, O Krishna, and again thou declarest to me Yoga; which one of these is the better way, that tell me with a clear decisiveness**." (CWSA 19: 82) [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"The answer is important, for it puts the whole distinction very clearly and indicates though it does not develop entirely the line of reconciliation.

[2nd Shloka of Fifth Chapter of the Gita]
"**The Blessed Lord said: Renunciation and Yoga of works both bring about the soul's salvation, but of the two the Yoga of works is distinguished above the renunciation of works**." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

[3rd Shloka of Fifth Chapter of the Gita]
"**He should be known as always a Sannyasin (even when he is doing action) who neither dislikes nor desires; for free from the dualities he is released**

easily and happily from the bondage, O mighthy-armed." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

[4th Shloka of Fifth Chapter of the Gita]
"**Children speak of Sankhya and Yoga as different from each other, not the wise; if a man applies himself integrally to one, he gets the fruit of both**." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"... he gets the fruit of both,' because in their integrality each contains the other." (CWSA 19: 83)

[5th Shloka of Fifth Chapter of the Gita]
"**The status which is attained by the Sankhyas, to that the men of the Yoga also arrive; who sees Sankhya and Yoga as one, he sees**." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

[6th Shloka of Fifth Chapter of the Gita]
"**But renunciation (Sannyasa), O mighty-armed, is difficult to attain without Yoga; the sage who has Yoga attains soon to the Brahman**." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"The painful process of outward Sannyasa, *duḥkham āptum,* is an unnecessary process. It is perfectly true that all actions, as well as the fruit of action, have to be given

up, to be renounced, but inwardly, not outwardly, not into the inertia of Nature, but to the Lord in sacrifice, into the calm and joy of the Impersonal from whom all action proceeds without disturbing his peace. The true Sannyasa of action is the reposing of all works on the Brahman." (CWSA 19: 185)

[7th Shloka of Fifth Chapter of the Gita]
"**He who is in Yoga, the pure soul, the master of his self, who has conquered the senses, whose self becomes the self of all existences, even though he does works, he is not involved in them**." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"He knows that the actions are not his, but Nature's and by that very knowledge he is free; he has renounced works, does no actions, though actions are done through him; he becomes the Self, the Brahman, *brahmabhūta* , he sees all existences as becomings (*bhūtāni*) of that self-existent Being, his own only one of them, all their actions as only the development of cosmic Nature working through their individual nature and his own actions also as a part of the same cosmic activity." (CWSA 19: 83)

[8th& 9th Shloka of Fifth Chapter of the Gita]
"**The man who knows the principles of things thinks, his mind in Yoga (with the inactive**

Impersonal), 'I am doing nothing'; when he sees, hears, touches, smells, eats, moves, sleeps, breathes, speaks, takes, ejects, opens his eyes or closes them, he holds that it is only the senses acting upon the objects of the senses." (CWSA 19: 186) [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"Pure, infinite, inviolable, immutable, he is no longer affected; no longer does he imagine himself to be modified by her workings. By complete identification with the Impersonal he can, too, release himself from the necessity of returning by birth into her movement.

And yet this liberation does not at all prevent him from acting. Only, he knows that it is not he who is active, but the modes, the qualities of Nature, her triple *guṇas.*" (CWSA 19: 186)

"He himself, safe in the immutable, unmodified soul, is beyond the grip of the three gunas, *triguṇātīta*; he is neither sattwic, rajasic nor tamasic; he sees with a clear untroubled spirit the alternations of the natural modes and qualities in his action, their rhythmic play of light and happiness, activity and force, rest and inertia." (CWSA 19: 186)

[10th Shloka of Fifth Chapter of the Gita]
"He who, having abandoned attachment, acts reposing his works on the Brahman, *brahmaṇyādhāya karmāṇi*, is not stained by sin even as water clings not to the lotus-leaf." (CWSA 19: 185) [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

[11th Shloka of Fifth Chapter of the Gita]
"**Therefore the Yogins, having abandoned attachment, perform works with the body, mind, understanding, or even merely with the for self-purification**." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

[12th Shloka of Fifth Chapter of the Gita]
"**Having abandoned attachment to the fruits of works, the soul in union with Brahman attains to peace of rapt foundation in Brahman, but the soul not in union is attached to the fruit and bound by the action of desire**." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"The first step on this long path is to consecrate all our works as a sacrifice to the Divine in us and in the world; this is an attitude of the mind and heart, not too difficult to initiate, but very difficult to make absolutely sincere and all-pervasive. The second step is to renounce

attachment to the fruit of our works; for the only true, inevitable and utterly desirable fruit of sacrifice—the one thing needful—is the Divine Presence and the Divine Consciousness and Power in us, and if that is gained, all else will be added. This is a transformation of the egoistic will in our vital being, our desire-soul and desire-nature, and it is far more difficult than the other. The third step is to get rid of the central egoism and even the ego-sense of the worker. That is the most difficult transformation of all and it cannot be perfectly done if the first two steps have not been taken; but these first steps too cannot be completed unless the third comes in to crown the movement and, by the extinction of egoism, eradicates the very origin of desire." (CWSA 23: 247)

[13th Shloka of Fifth Chapter of the Gita]
"**The embodied soul who has controlled his nature, having renounced all its actions by the mind, sits serenely in its nine gated city, neither doing nor causing to be done**." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"The foundation, the purity, the peace once attained, the embodied soul perfectly controlling its nature, having renounced all its actions by the mind, inwardly, not outwardly, 'sits in its nine gated city neither doing nor causing to be done.' For this soul is the one impersonal

Soul in all, the all-pervading Lord, *prabhu*, *vibhu*, who, as the impersonal, neither creates the works of the world, nor the mind's idea of being the doer, *na kartṛtvaṁ na karmāṇi*, nor the coupling of works to their fruits, the chain of cause and effect. All that is worked out by the Nature in the man, *svabhāva*, his principle of self-becoming, as the word literally means." (CWSA 19: 185)

"By itself the idea might lead to a doctrine of the mechanical determinism of Nature and the perfect aloofness and irresponsibility of the soul; but the Gita effectively avoids this fault of an insufficient thought by its illumining supertheistic idea of the Purushottama. It makes it clear that it is not in the end Nature which mechanically determines its own action; it is the will of the Supreme which inspires her; he who has already slain the Dhritarashtrians, he of whom Arjuna is only the human instrument, a universal Soul, a transcendent Godhead is the master of her labour. The reposing of works in the Impersonal is a means of getting rid of the personal egoism of the doer, but the end is to give up all our actions to that great Lord of all, *sarva-loka-maheśvara*." (CWSA 19: 186)

[16th Shloka of Fifth Chapter of the Gita]
"**Verily, in whom ignorance is destroyed by self-knowledge, in them knowledge lights up like a sun**

the Supreme Self." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"This knowledge of which the Gita speaks, is not an intellectual activity of the mind; it is a luminous growth into the highest state of being by the outshining of the light of the divine sun of Truth, 'that Truth, the Sun lying concealed in the darkness' of our ignorance of which the Rigveda speaks, *tat satyaṁ sūryaṁ tamasi kṣiyantam*. The immutable Brahman is there in the spirit's skies above this troubled lower nature of the dualities, untouched either by its virtue or by its sin, accepting neither our sense of sin nor our self-righteousness, untouched by its joy and its sorrow, indifferent to our joy in success and our grief in failure, master of all, supreme, all-pervading, *prabhu vibhu*, calm, strong, pure, equal in all things, the source of Nature, not the direct doer of our works, but the witness of Nature and her works, not imposing on us either the illusion of being the doer, for that illusion is the result of the ignorance of this lower Nature. But this freedom, mastery, purity we cannot see; we are bewildered by the natural ignorance which hides from us the eternal self-knowledge of the Brahman secret within our being. But knowledge comes to its persistent seeker and removes the natural self-ignorance; it shines out like a long-hidden sun and lights up to our vision that self-being supreme beyond the dualities of this lower

existence, *ādityavat prakāśayati tat param*." (CWSA 19: 201–202)

[17th Shloka of Fifth Chapter of the Gita]
"**Turning their discerning mind to That, directing their whole conscious being to That, making That their whole aim and the sole object of their devotion, they reach a state from which there is no return, their sins washed away by waters of knowledge.**" [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"By a long whole-hearted endeavour, by directing our whole conscious being to that, by making that our whole aim, by turning it into the whole object of our discerning mind and so seeing it not only in ourselves but everywhere, we become one thought and self with that, *tad-buddhayas tad-ātmānaḥ*, we are washed clean of all the darkness and suffering of the lower man by the waters of knowledge, *jñāna-nirdhūta-kalmaṣāḥ*.

The result is, says the Gita, a perfect equality to all things and all persons; and then only can we repose our works completely in the Brahman."" (CWSA 19: 202)

"The Rigveda so speaks of the streams of the Truth, the waters that have perfect knowledge, the waters that are full of the divine sunlight, *ṛtasya dhārāḥ, āpo vicetasaḥ,*

svarvatīr apaḥ. What are here metaphors, are there concrete symbols." (CWSA 19: 202)

X—Work and Action in the Sixth Chapter of the Gita, 'Atmasayam Yoga' or 'The Yoga of Self-Subdual'

[1st Shloka of Sixth Chapter of the Gita]
"**The Blessed Lord said: Whoever does the work to be done without resort to its fruits, he is the Sannyasin and the Yogin, not the man who lights not the sacrificial fire and does not the works**." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

[2nd Shloka of Sixth Chapter of the Gita]
"**What they have called renunciation (Sannyasa), know to be in truth Yoga, O Pandava; for none becomes a Yogin who has not renounced the desire-will in the mind**." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"First the Teacher emphasises—and this is very significant—his often repeated asseveration about the real essence of Sannyasa, that it is an inward, not an outward renunciation. ... Works are to be done, but with what purpose and in what order?" (CWSA 19: 240)

[3rd Shloka of Sixth Chapter of the Gita]
"**For a sage who is ascending the hill of Yoga, action is the cause; for the same sage when he has**

got to the top of Yoga, self-mastery is the cause."
[Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"First the Teacher emphasises—and this is very significant—his often repeated asseveration about the real essence of Sannyasa, that it is an inward, not an outward renunciation. 'Whoever does the work to be done without resort to its fruits, he is the Sannyasin and the Yogin, not the man who lights not the sacrificial fire and does not the works. What they have called renunciation (Sannyasa), know to be in truth Yoga; for none becomes a Yogin who has not renounced the desire-will in the mind.' Works are to be done, but with what purpose and in what order? They are first to be done while ascending the hill of Yoga, for then works are the cause, *kāraṇam*. The cause of what? The cause of self-perfection, of liberation, of nirvana in the Brahman; for by doing works with a steady practice of the inner renunciation this perfection, this liberation, this conquest of the desire-mind and the ego-self and the lower nature are easily accomplished.

But when one has got to the top? Then works are no longer the cause; the calm of self-mastery and self-possession gained by works becomes the cause. Again, the cause of what? Of fixity in the Self, in the Brahman-consciousness and of the perfect equality in which the

divine works of the liberated man are done." (CWSA 19: 240)

[4th Shloka of Sixth Chapter of the Gita]
"**When one does not get attached to the objects of sense or to works and has renounced all will of desire in the mind, then is he said to have ascended to the top of Yoga**." [Translated from Sanskrit Shloka of the Gita]

"That, as we know already, is the spirit in which the liberated man does works; he does them without desire and attachment, without the egoistic personal will and the mental seeking which is the parent of desire. He has conquered his lower self, reached the perfect calm in which his highest self is manifest to him, that highest self always concentrated in its own being, *samāhita,* in Samadhi, not only in the trance of the inward-drawn consciousness, but always, in the waking state of the mind as well, in exposure to the causes of desire and of the disturbance of calm, to grief and pleasure, heat and cold, honour and disgrace, all the dualities, *śītoṣṇa-sukhaduḥkheṣu tathā mānāpamānayoḥ*. This higher self is the Akshara, *kūṭastha*, which stands above the changes and the perturbations of the natural being; and the Yogin is said to be in Yoga with it when he also is like it, *kūṭastha*, when he is superior to all appearances and

mutations, when he is satisfied with self-knowledge, when he is equal-minded to all things and happenings and persons." (CWSA 19: 240–241)

XI—Why Give Up All Desire for the Fruits of One's Works

1.

"Arjuna has been therefore called upon first to give up all desire of the fruits of his works and become simply the desireless impartial doer of whatever has to be done,—leaving the fruit to whatever power may be the master of the cosmic workings. For he very evidently is not the master; it is not for the satisfaction of his personal ego that Nature was set upon her ways, not for the fulfilment of his desires and preferences that the universal Life is living, not for the justification of his intellectual opinions, judgments and standards that the universal Mind is working, nor is it to that petty tribunal that it has to refer its cosmic aims or its terrestrial method and purposes. These claims can only be made by the ignorant souls who live in their personality and see everything from that poor and narrow standpoint. He must stand back first from his egoistic demand on the world and work only as one among the millions who contributes his share of effort and labour to a result determined not by himself, but by the universal action and purpose. But he has to do yet more, he has to give up the idea of being the doer and to see, freed from all personality, that it is the universal intelligence, will, mind, life that is at work in him and in all others. Nature is the universal worker; his works are

hers, even as the fruits of her works in him are part of the grand sum of result guided by a greater Power than his own. If he can do these two things spiritually, then the tangle and bondage of his works will fall far away from him; for the whole knot of that bondage lay in his egoistic demand and participation. Passion and sin and personal joy and grief will fade away from his soul, which will now live within, pure, large, calm, equal to all persons and all things. Action will produce no subjective reaction and will leave no stain nor any mark on his spirit's purity and peace." (CWSA 19: 303–304)

2.

"Then the way is simple, to do all actions for the sake of the Lord of the action, so that every outward-going movement of the mind shall be associated with the inner spiritual truth of the being and called back even in the very movement to the eternal reality and connected with its source. Then the presence of the Purushottama will grow upon the natural man till he is filled with it and becomes a godhead and a spirit; all life will become a constant remembering of God and perfection too will grow and the unity of the whole existence of the human soul with the supreme Existence.

But it may be that even this constant remembering of God and lifting up of our works to him is felt to be beyond the power of the limited mind, because in its

forgetfulness it turns to the act and its outward object and will not remember to look within and lay our every movement on the divine altar of the Spirit. Then the way is to control the lower self in the act and do works without desire of the fruit. All fruit has to be renounced, to be given up to the Power that directs the work, and yet the work has to be done that is imposed by It on the nature. For by this means the obstacle steadily diminishes and easily disappears; the mind is left free to remember the Lord and to fix itself in the liberty of the divine consciousness. And here the Gita gives an ascending scale of potencies and assigns the palm of excellence to this Yoga of desireless action. *Abhyāsa*, practice of a method, repetition of an effort and experience is a great and powerful thing; but better than this is knowledge, the successful and luminous turning of the thought to the Truth behind things. This thought-knowledge too is excelled by a silent complete concentration on the Truth so that the consciousness shall eventually live in it and be always one with it. But more powerful still is the giving up of the fruit of one's works, because that immediately destroys all causes of disturbance and brings and preserves automatically an inner calm and peace, and calm and peace are the foundation on which all else becomes perfect and secure in possession by the tranquil spirit. Then the consciousness can be at ease, happily fix itself in the Divine and rise undisturbed to perfection.

Then too knowledge, will and devotion can lift their pinnacles from a firm soil of solid calm into the ether of Eternity." (CWSA 19: 402–403)

3.

"The first error of the human mind is to suppose that because our emotions, our desires, our personal will have an apparent effect upon event & fruit of action, they are themselves the real determinants of those events & the sufficient winners of that fruit; they are neither of these things; they are only one spring of the machinery, only one subordinate working of the universal Will. It is what the universal Will beyond all mentality decides & works out, not what the personally acting will in the material brain & heart hungers after, that determines event. Karmanyevádhikáras te, says the Gita, má phaleshu kadáchana, Thou hast a right to action, but no claim at all on the fruits of action; for the fruits belong to God, they belong to the world working, they belong to the universal will, they belong to the great purposes of the cosmos & not to any clamorous individual hunger." (CWSA 17: 521)

XII—To Give Up Attachment to the Work

1.

"But, even if one is free from any clinging to the fruit, there may be an attachment to the work itself, either for its own sake, the essential rajasic bond, or owing to a lax subjection to the drive of Nature, the tamasic, or for the sake of the attracting rightness of the thing done, which is the sattwic attaching cause powerful on the virtuous man or the man of knowledge. And here evidently the resource is in that other injunction of the Gita, to give up the action itself to the Lord of works and be only a desireless and equal-minded instrument of his will. To see that the modes of Nature are the whole agency and cause of our works and to know and turn to that which is supreme above the gunas, is the way to rise above the lower nature. Only so can we attain to the movement and status of the Divine, *mad-bhāva,* by which free from subjection to birth and death and their concomitants, decay, old age and suffering, the liberated soul shall enjoy in the end immortality and all that is eternal." (CWSA 19: 432)

2.

"This is no more than the first step on the path. For you must be not only unattached to results, but unattached also toyour labour. Cease to regard your works as your

own; as you have abandoned the fruits of your work, so you must surrender the work also to the Lord of action and sacrifice. Recognise that your nature determines your action; your nature rules the immediate motion of your Swabhava and decides the expressive turn and development of your spirit in the paths of the executive force of Prakriti. Bring in no longer any self-will to confuse the steps of your mind in following the Godward way. Accept the action proper to your nature. Make of all you do from the greatest and most unusual effort to the smallest daily act, make of each act of your mind, each act of your heart, each act of your body, of every inner and outer turn, of every thought and will and feeling, of every step and pause and movement, a sacrifice to the Master of all sacrifice and Tapasya." (CWSA 19: 586–587)

3.

"As for the detachment of which you speak, it comes by attaining the poise of the Spirit, the equality of which the Gita speaks always, but also by sight, by knowledge." (CWSA 29: 133)

XIII—The Will of Entire Self-Giving Brings the Descent of the Godhead

1.

"Man and woman find their equal right before God; for the divine Spirit is no respecter of persons or of social distinctions and restrictions: all can go straight to him without intermediary or shackling condition. 'If' says the divine Teacher 'even a man of very evil conduct turns to me with a sole and entire love, he must be regarded as a saint, for the settled will of endeavour in him is a right and complete will. Swiftly he becomes a soul of righteousness and obtains eternal peace.' In other words a will of entire self-giving opens wide all the gates of the spirit and brings in response an entire descent and self-giving of the Godhead to the human being, and that at once reshapes and assimilates everything in us to the law of the divine existence by a rapid transformation of the lower into the spiritual nature. The will of self-giving forces away by its power the veil between God and man; it annuls every error and annihilates every obstacle. Those who aspire in their human strength by effort of knowledge or effort of virtue or effort of laborious self-discipline, grow with much anxious difficulty towards the Eternal; but when the soul gives up its ego and its works to the Divine, God himself comes to us and takes up our burden. To the ignorant he brings the light of the divine

knowledge, to the feeble the power of the divine will, to the sinner the liberation of the divine purity, to the suffering the infinite spiritual joy and Ananda. Their weakness and the stumblings of their human strength make no difference. 'This is my word of promise,' cries the voice of the Godhead to Arjuna, 'that he who loves me shall not perish.' Previous effort and preparation, the purity and the holiness of the Brahmin, the enlightened strength of the king-sage great in works and knowledge have their value, because they make it easier for the imperfect human creature to arrive at this wide vision and self-surrender; but even without this preparation all who take refuge in the divine Lover of man, the Vaishya once preoccupied with the narrowness of wealth getting and the labour of production, the Shudra hampered by a thousand hard restrictions, woman shut in and stunted in her growth by the narrow circle society has drawn around her self-expansion, those too, *pāpa-yonayah*, on whom their past Karma has imposed even the very worst of births, the outcaste, the Pariah, the Chandala, find at once the gates of God opening before them. In the spiritual life all the external distinctions of which men make so much because they appeal with an oppressive force to the outward mind, cease before the equality of the divine Light and the wide omnipotence of an impartial Power." (CWSA 19: 334–335)

XIV—Sacrifice—Tamasic, Rajasic, Sattwic, and Beyond

1.

"But, remembering the very wide sense which the Gita itself gives to the idea of sacrifice, we may well enlarge the surface meaning of these hints and open them to a freer significance. And it will be convenient to take them in the reverse order, from tamas to sattwa, since we are considering how we go upward out of our lower nature through a certain sattwic culmination and self-exceeding to a divine nature and action beyond the three gunas.

The tamasic sacrifice is work which is done without faith, without, that is to say, any full conscious idea and acceptance and will towards the thing Nature yet compels us to execute. It is done mechanically, because the act of living demands it, because it comes in our way, because others do it, to avoid some other greater difficulty which may arise from not doing it, or from any other tamasic motive. And it is apt to be done, if we have in the full this kind of temperament, carelessly, perfunctorily, in the wrong way. It will not be performed by the *vidhi* or right rule of the Shastra, will not be led in its steps according to the right method laid down by the art and science of life and the true science of the thing to be done. There will be no giving of food in the sacrifice,—and that act in the Indian ritual is symbolic of the element of helpful

giving inherent in every action that is real sacrifice, the indispensable giving to others, the fruitful help to others, to the world, without which our action becomes a wholly self-regarding thing and a violation of the true universal law of solidarity and interchange. The work will be done without the dakshina, the much-needed giving or self-giving to the leaders of the sacrificial action, whether to the outward guide and helper of our work or to the veiled or manifest godhead within us. It will be done without the mantra, without the dedicating thought which is the sacred body of our will and knowledge lifted upwards to the godheads we serve by our sacrifice. The tamasic man does not offer his sacrifice to the gods, but to inferior elemental powers or to those grosser spirits behind the veil who feed upon his works and dominate his life with their darkness.

The rajasic man offers his sacrifice to lower godheads or to perverse powers, the Yakshas, the keepers of wealth, or to the Asuric and the Rakshasic forces. His sacrifice may be performed outwardly according to the Shastra, but its motive is ostentation, pride or a strong lust after the fruit of his action, a vehement demand for the reward of his works. All work therefore that proceeds from violent or egoistic personal desire or from an arrogant will intent to impose itself on the world for personal objects is of the rajasic nature, even if it mask itself with the insignia of the light, even if

it be done outwardly as a sacrifice. Although it is ostensibly given to God or to the gods, it remains essentially an Asuric action. It is the inner state, motive and direction which give their value to our works, and not merely the apparent outer direction, the divine names we may call to sanction them or even the sincere intellectual belief which seems to justify us in the performance. Wherever there is a dominating egoism in our acts, there our work becomes a rajasic sacrifice." (CWSA 19: 485–487)

2.

"The true sattwic sacrifice on the other hand is distinguished by three signs that are the quiet seal of its character. First, it is dictated by the effective truth, executed according to the *vidhi,* the right principle, the exact method and rule, the just rhythm and law of our works, their true functioning, their dharma; that means that the reason and enlightened will are the guides and determinants of their steps and their purpose. Secondly, it is executed with a mind concentrated and fixed on the idea of the thing to be done as a true sacrifice imposed on us by the divine law that governs our life and therefore performed out of a high inner obligation or imperative truth and without desire for the personal fruit,—the more impersonal the motive of the action and the temperament of the force put out in it, the more

sattwic is its nature. And finally it is offered to the gods without any reservation; it is acceptable to the divine powers by whom—for they are his masks and personalities— the Master of existence governs the universe.

This sattwic sacrifice comes then very near to the ideal and leads directly towards the kind of action demanded by the Gita; but it is not the last and highest ideal, it is not yet the action of the perfected man who lives in the divine nature. For it is carried out as a fixed dharma, and it is offered as a sacrifice or service to the gods, to some partial power or aspect of the Divine manifested in ourselves or in the universe. Work done with a disinterested religious faith or selflessly for humanity or impersonally from devotion to the Right or the Truth is of this nature, and action of that kind is necessary for our perfection; for it purifies our thought and will and our natural substance. The culmination of the sattwic action at which we have to arrive is of a still larger and freer kind; it is the high last sacrifice offered by us to the supreme Divine in his integral being and with a seeking for the Purushottama or with the vision of Vasudeva in all that is, the action done impersonally, universally, for the good of the world, for the fulfilment of the divine will in the universe. That culmination leads to its own transcending, to the immortal Dharma. For then comes a freedom in which there is no personal action at

all, no sattwic rule of dharma, no limitation of Shastra; the inferior reason and will are themselves overpassed and it is not they but a higher wisdom that dictates and guides the work and commands its objective. There is no question of personal fruit; for the will that works is not our own but a supreme Will of which the soul is the instrument. There is no self-regarding and no selflessness; for the Jiva, the eternal portion of the Divine, is united with the highest Self of his existence and he and all are one in that Self and Spirit. There is no personal action, for all actions are given up to the Master of our works and it is he that does the action through the divinised Prakriti. There is no sacrifice,—unless we can say that the Master of sacrifice is offering the works of his energy in the Jiva to himself in his own cosmic form. This is the supreme self-surpassing state arrived at by the action that is sacrifice, this the perfection of the soul that has come to its full consciousness in the divine nature." (CWSA 19: 487–488)

3.

"He [man] is enslaved by the gunas, now hampered in the dull case of tamas, now blown by the strong winds of rajas, now limited by the partial lights of sattwa, not distinguishing himself at all from the nature-mind which alone is thus modified by the gunas. He is therefore mastered by pain and pleasure, happiness and grief,

desire and passion, attachment and disgust: he has no freedom.

He must, to be free, get back from the Nature action to the status of the Akshara [the immutable]; he will then be *triguṇātīta*, beyond the gunas. Knowing himself as the Akshara Brahman, the unchanging Purusha, he will know himself as an immutable impersonal self, the Atman, tranquilly observing and impartially supporting the action, but himself calm, indifferent, untouched, motionless, pure, one with all beings in their self, not one with Nature and her workings. ... By going back into the impersonal self the soul gets back into a greater self-knowledge and is liberated from the bondage of the works of Nature, untouched by her gunas, free from her shows of good and evil, suffering and happiness. The natural being, the mind, body, life, still remain, Nature still works; but the inner being does not identify himself with these, nor while the gunas play in the natural being, does he rejoice or grieve. He is the calm and free immutable Self observing all.

Is this the last state, the utmost possibility, the highest secret? It cannot be, since this is a mixed or divided, not a perfectly harmonised status, a double, not a unified being, a freedom in the soul, an imperfection in the Nature. It can only be a stage. What then is there beyond it? One solution is that of the Sannyasin who

rejects the nature, the action altogether, so far at least as action can be rejected, so that there may be an unmixed undivided freedom; but this solution, though admitted, is not preferred by the Gita. The Gita also insists on the giving up of actions, *sarva-karmāṇi sannyasya*, but inwardly to the Brahman. Brahman in the Kshara [mobile, mutable] supports wholly the action of Prakriti, Brahman in the Akshara, even while supporting, dissociates itself from the action, preserves its freedom; the individual soul, unified with the Brahman in the Akshara, is free and dissociated, yet, unified with the Brahman in the Kshara, supports but is not affected. This it can do best when it sees that both are aspects of the one Purushottama. The Purushottama, inhabiting all existences as the secret Ishwara, controls the Nature and by his will, now no longer distorted and disfigured by the ego-sense, the Nature works out the actions by the swabhava; the individual soul makes the divinised natural being an instrument of the divine Will, *nimitt-mātram*. He remains even in action*triguṇātīta*, beyond the gunas, free from the gunas, *nistraiguṇya*, he fulfils entirely at last the early injunction of the Gita, *nistraiguṇyo bhavārjuna*. He is indeed still the enjoyer of the gunas, as is the Brahman, though not limited by them,*nirguṇaṁ guṇabhoktṛ ca*, unattached, yet all-supporting, even as is that Brahman, *asaktaṁ sarvabhṛt*: but the action of the gunas within him is quite changed; it is lifted above their egoistic

character and reactions. For he has unified his whole being in the Purushottama, has assumed the divine being and the higher divine nature of becoming, *madbhāva*, has unified even his mind and natural consciousness with the Divine, *manmanā maccittaḥ.* This change is the final evolution of the nature and the consummation of the divine birth, *rahasyam uttamam*. When it is accomplished, the soul is aware of itself as the master of its nature and, grown a light of the divine Light and will of the divine Will, is able to change its natural workings into a divine action." (CWSA 19: 231–233)

XV—Action Tamasic, Rajasic and Sattwic, and Freedom from the Modes of Nature

1.

"What acts in us is still the will of the natural being seizing upon the touches of the external world to satisfy the different phases of its personality, and the will in this seizing is always a will of desire and passion and attachment to our works and their results, the will of Nature in us; our personal will, we say, but our ego personality is a creation of Nature, it is not and cannot be our free self, our independent being. The whole is the action of the modes of Nature. It may be a tamasic action, and then we have an inert personality subject to and satisfied with the mechanical round of things, incapable of any strong effort at a freer action and mastery. Or it may be the rajasic action, and then we have the restless active personality which throws itself upon Nature and tries to make her serve its needs and desires, but does not see that its apparent mastery is a servitude, since its needs and desires are those of Nature, and while we are subject to them, there can be for us no freedom. Or it may be a sattwic action, and then we have the enlightened personality which tries to live by reason or to realise some preferred ideal of good, truth or beauty; but this reason is still subject to the appearances of Nature and these ideals are only changing phases of

our personality in which we find in the end no sure rule or permanent satisfaction. We are still carried on a wheel of mutation, obeying in our circlings through the ego some Power within us and within all this, but not ourselves that Power or in union and communion with it. Still there is no freedom, no real mastery." (CWSA 19: 254)

2.

"There are again three things, the doer, the instrument and the work done, that hold the action together and make it possible. And here again it is the difference of the gunas that determines the character of each of these elements. The sattwic mind that seeks always for a right harmony and right knowledge is the governing instrument of the sattwic man and moves all the rest of the machine. An egoistic will of desire supported by the desire-soul is the dominant instrument of the rajasic worker. An ignorant instinct or the unenlightened impulsion of the physical mind and the crude vital nature is the chief instrumental force of the tamasic doer of action. The instrument of the liberated man is a greater spiritual light and power, far higher than the highest sattwic intelligence, and it works in him by an enveloping descent from a supraphysical centre and uses as a clear channel of its force a purified and receptive mind, life and body.

Tamasic action is that done with a confused, deluded and ignorant mind, in mechanical obedience to

the instincts, impulsions and unseeing ideas, without regarding the strength or capacity or the waste and loss of blind misapplied effort or the antecedent and consequence and right conditions of the impulse, effort or labour. Rajasic action is that which a man undertakes under the dominion of desire, with his eyes fixed on the work and its hoped-for fruit and nothing else, or with an egoistic sense of his own personality in the action, and it is done with inordinate effort, with a passionate labour, with a great heaving and straining of the personal will to get at the object of its desire. Sattwic action is that which a man does calmly in the clear light of reason and knowledge and with an impersonal sense of right or duty or the demand of an ideal, as the thing that ought to be done whatever may be the result to himself in this world or another, a work performed without attachment, without liking or disliking for its spur or its drag, for the sole satisfaction of his reason and sense of right, of the lucid intelligence and the enlightened will and the pure disinterested mind and the high contented spirit. At the line of culmination of sattwa it will be transformed and become a highest impersonal action dictated by the spirit within us and no longer by the intelligence, an action moved by the highest law of the nature, free from the lower ego and its light or heavy baggage and from limitation even by best opinion, noblest desire, purest personal will or loftiest mental ideal. There will be none of

these impedimenta; in their place there will stand a clear spiritual self-knowledge and illumination and an imperative intimate sense of an infallible power that acts and of the work to be done for the world and for the world's Master." (CWSA 19: 500–501)

3.

"In tamasic equality by itself there is no real liberation; but it can be made a powerful starting-point, if, as in Indian asceticism, it is turned into the sattwic by the perception of the greater existence, the truer power, the higher delight of the immutable Self above Nature. The natural turn of such a movement, however, is towards Sannyasa, the renunciation of life and works, rather than to that union of inner renunciation of desire with continued activity in the world of Nature which the Gita advocates. The Gita, however, admits and makes room for this movement; it allows as a recoiling starting-point the perception of the defects of the world-existence, birth and disease and death and old age and sorrow, the historic starting-point of the Buddha, *janma-mṛtyu-jarā-vyādhi-duḥkha-doṣānudarśanam*, and it accepts the effort of those whose self-discipline is motived by a desire for release, even in this spirit, from the curse of age and death*, jarā-maraṇa-mokṣāya mām āśritya yatanti ye*. But that, to be of any profit, must be accompanied by the sattwic perception of a higher state and the taking delight

and refuge in the existence of the Divine, *mām āśritya*. Then the soul by its recoil comes to a greater condition of being, lifted beyond the three gunas and free from birth and death and age and grief, and enjoys the immortality of its self-existence, *janma-mṛtyu-jarā-duḥkhair vimukto 'mṛtam aśnute*. The tamasic unwillingness to accept the pain and effort of life is indeed by itself a weakening and degrading thing, and in this lies the danger of preaching to all alike the gospel of asceticism and world-disgust, that it puts the stamp of a tamasic weakness and shrinking on unfit souls, confuses their understanding, *buddhibhedaṁ janayet*, diminishes the sustained aspiration, the confidence in living, the power of effort which the soul of man needs for its salutary, its necessary rajasic struggle to master its environment, without really opening to it—for it is yet incapable of that—a higher goal, a greater endeavour, a mightier victory. But in souls that are fit this tamasic recoil may serve a useful spiritual purpose by slaying their rajasic attraction, their eager preoccupation with the lower life which prevents the sattwic awakening to a higher possibility. Seeking then for a refuge in the void they have created, they are able to hear the divine call, 'O soul that findest thyself in this transient and unhappy world, turn and put thy delight in Me,' *nityam asukhaṁ lokam imaṁ prāpya bhajasva mām*." (CWSA 19: 193–194)

—Freedom from the modes of action

4.

"But then there is the question, how does our infinite and imperishable spirit, even involved in Nature, come thus to confine itself to the lower action of Prakriti and undergo this bondage and how is it not, like the supreme spirit of which it is a portion, free in its infinity even while enjoying the self-limitations of its active evolution? The reason, says the Gita, is our attachment to the gunas and to the result of their workings. Sattwa, it says, attaches to happiness, rajas attaches to action, tamas covers up the knowledge and attaches to negligence of error and inaction. Or again, 'sattwa binds by attachment to knowledge and attachment to happiness, rajas binds the embodied spirit by attachment to works, tamas binds by negligence and indolence and sleep.' In other words, the soul by attachment to the enjoyment of the gunas and their results concentrates its consciousness on the lower and outward action of life, mind and body in Nature, imprisons itself in the form of these things and becomes oblivious of its own greater consciousness behind in the spirit, unaware of the free power and scope of the liberating Purusha. Evidently, in order to be liberated and perfect, we must get back from these things, away from the gunas and above them and return to the power of

that free spiritual consciousness above Nature." (CWSA 19: 431)

5.

"For, as the Gita points out, the sattwa binds, as much as the other gunas, and binds just in the same way, by desire, by ego; a nobler desire, a purer ego,—but so long as in any form these two hold the being, there is no freedom. The man of virtue, of knowledge, has his ego of the virtuous man, his ego of knowledge, and it is that sattwic ego which he seeks to satisfy; for his own sake he seeks virtue and knowledge. Only when we cease to satisfy the ego, ... then is there a real freedom. In other words, freedom, highest self-mastery begin when above the natural self we see and hold the supreme Self of which the ego is an obstructing veil and a blinding shadow. And that can only be when we see the one Self in us seated above Nature and make our individual being one with it in being and consciousness and in its individual nature of action only an instrument of a supreme Will, the one Will that is really free. For that we must rise high above the three gunas, become *triguṇātīta*; for that Self is beyond even the sattwic principle. We have to climb to it through the sattwa, but we attain to it only when we get beyond sattwa; we reach out to it from the ego, but only reach it by leaving the ego." (CWSA 19: 223)

6.

"But this would seem to imply a cessation of all doing, since all natural action is done by the gunas, by Nature through her modes. The soul cannot act by itself, it can only act through Nature and her modes. And yet the Gita, while it demands freedom from the modes, insists upon the necessity of action. Here comes in the importance of its insistence on the abandonment of the fruits; for it is the desire of the fruits which is the most potent cause of the soul's bondage and by abandoning it the soul can be free in action. Ignorance is the result of tamasic action, pain the consequence of rajasic works, pain of reaction, disappointment, dissatisfaction or transience, and therefore in attachment to the fruits of this kind of activity attended as they are with these undesirable accompaniments there is no profit. But of works rightly done the fruit is pure and sattwic, the inner result is knowledge and happiness." (CWSA 19: 431–432)

XVI—Works Must Be Done as a Sacrifice to the Lord of Works

1.

"Works must be done as a sacrifice to this Lord of our works, and we must by growing into the Self realise our oneness with him in our being and see our personality as a partial manifestation of him in Nature. One with him in being, we grow one with all beings in the universe and do divine works, not as ours, but as his workings through us for the maintenance and leading of the peoples." (CWSA 19: 257)

2.

"A continual resort to meditation, *dhyanā-yoga-paro nityam*, is the firm means by which the soul of man can realise its self of Power and its self of silence. And yet there must be no abandonment of the active life for a life of pure meditation; action must always be done as a sacrifice to the supreme Spirit." (CWSA 19: 535)

3.

"Even what we do, we are to do not for our sake, but for God's sake, not for our personal & self-regarding aims, but for what we see, rightly or wrongly, in the light we have, to be His aim in us, concentrating on the action, not reaching out to its fruit. This rule of life is the

greatest we are capable of while still at work in the ignorance and moving subject to the dualities; but if we wish to go beyond, we must proceed to a yet more unsparing sacrifice. The Gita begins with the sacrifice to God of our desires and the fruits of our action; but it goes on to the giving up *into* God, mayi sannyasya, of action itself and even the least internal or external movement towards action, sarvarambhah; it insists, above all & to the end, on the supreme renunciation of the ego-sense, the ahankara, as the one all-satisfying and divine sacrifice demanded by the ego-transcendent Universal Being from the ego-besieged and ego-ridden human soul. We must, in this consummation, fall perfectly passive in mind, life & body & allow the Divine Power to use them from above, as a man uses a machine, wields a sword or hurls a ball to its mark. These formulae of the Gita are, also, the true sense of the inner sacrifice imposed on the seeker by the Isha Upanishad. It is the sacrifice of the lower or motional parts of our being to the higher or divine part—the offering of jagat into the Lord." (CWSA 17: 454)

4.

"Ordinary religion is a sacrifice to partial godheads other than the integral Divinity. The Gita takes its direct examples from the old Vedic religion on its exoteric side as it had then developed; it describes this outward worship as a sacrifice to other godheads, *anya-devatāḥ* ,

to the gods, or to the divinised Ancestors, or to elemental powers and spirits, *devān, pitṝn, bhūtāni*. Men consecrate their life and works ordinarily to partial powers or aspects of the divine Existence as they see or conceive them—mostly powers and aspects that ensoul to them things prominent in Nature and man or else reflect to them their own humanity in a divine exceeding symbol. If they do this with faith, then their faith is justified; for the Divine accepts whatever symbol, form or conception of himself is present to the mind of the worshipper, *yāṁ yāṁ tanuṁ śraddhayā arcati*, as it is said elsewhere, and meets him according to the faith that is in him. All sincere religious belief and practice is really a seeking after the one supreme and universal Godhead; for he always is the sole master of man's sacrifice and askesis and infinite enjoyer of his effort and aspiration. However small or low the form of the worship, however limited the idea of the godhead, however restricted the giving, the faith, the effort to get behind the veil of one's own ego-worship and limitation by material Nature, it yet forms a thread of connection between the soul of man and the All-soul and there is a response. Still the response, the fruit of the adoration and offering is according to the knowledge, the faith and the work and cannot exceed their limitations, and therefore from the point of view of the greater God-knowledge, which alone gives the entire truth of being and becoming, this inferior offering is not given according

to the true and highest law of the sacrifice. It is not founded on a knowledge of the supreme Godhead in his integral existence and the true principles of his self-manifestation, but attaches itself to external and partial appearances,—*na mām abhijānanti tattvena*. Therefore its sacrifice too is limited in its object, largely egoistic in its motive, partial and mistaken in its action and its giving,*yajanti avidhi-pūrvakam*. An entire seeing of the Divine is the condition of an entire conscious self-surrender; the rest attains to things that are incomplete and partial, and has to fall back from them and return to enlarge itself in a greater seeking and wider God-experience. But to follow after the supreme and universal Godhead alone and utterly is to attain to all knowledge and result which other ways acquire, while yet one is not limited by any aspect, though one finds the truth of him in all aspects. This movement embraces all forms of divine being on its way to the supreme Purushottama." (CWSA 19: 332–333)

5.

"This absolute self-giving, this one-minded surrender is the devotion which the Gita makes the crown of its synthesis. All action and effort are by this devotion turned into an offering to the supreme and universal Godhead. 'Whatever thou doest, whatever thou enjoyest, whatever thou sacrificest, whatever thou givest, whatever energy

of tapasya, of the soul's will or effort thou puttest forth, make it an offering unto Me.' Here the least, the slightest circumstance of life, the most insignificant gift out of oneself or what one has, the smallest action assumes a divine significance and it becomes an acceptable offering to the Godhead who makes it a means for his possession of the soul and life of the God-lover. The distinctions made by desire and ego then disappear. As there is no straining after the good result of one's action, no shunning of unhappy result, but all action and result are given up to the Supreme to whom all work and fruit in the world belong for ever, there is no farther bondage. For by an absolute self-giving all egoistic desire disappears from the heart and there is a perfect union between the Divine and the individual soul through an inner renunciation of its separate living. All will, all action, all result become that of the Godhead, work divinely through the purified and illumined nature and no longer belong to the limited personal ego. The finite nature thus surrendered becomes a free channel of the Infinite; the soul in its spiritual being, uplifted out of the ignorance and the limitation, returns to its oneness with the Eternal. The Divine Eternal is the inhabitant in all existences; he is equal in all and the equal friend, father, mother, creator, lover, supporter of all creatures. He is the enemy of none and he is the partial lover of none; none has he cast out, none has he eternally condemned, none has he favoured

by any despotism of arbitrary caprice: all at last equally come to him through their circlings in the ignorance. But it is only this perfect adoration that can make this indwelling of God in man and man in God a conscious thing and an engrossing and perfect union. Love of the Highest and a total self-surrender are the straight and swift way to this divine oneness." (CWSA 19: 333–334)

6.

"Therefore has he to do works as a sacrifice, because that is the truth of his works and of all works. Nature is the worker and not ego, but Nature is only a power of the Being who is the sole master of all her works and energisms and of all the aeons of the cosmic sacrifice. Therefore since his works are that Being's, he has to give up all his actions to the Godhead in him and the world by whom they are done in the divine mystery of Nature. This is the double condition of the divine birth of the soul, of its release from the mortality of the ego and the body into the spiritual and eternal,—knowledge first of one's timeless immutable self and union through it with the timeless Godhead, but knowledge too of that which lives behind the riddle of cosmos, the Godhead in all existences and their workings. Thus only can we aspire through the offering of all our nature and being to a living union with the One who has become in Time and Space all that is. Here is the place of bhakti in the scheme of the

Yoga of an integral self-liberation. It is an adoration and aspiration towards that which is greater than imperishable self or changing Nature. All knowledge then becomes an adoration and aspiration, but all works too become an adoration and aspiration. Works of nature and freedom of soul are unified in this adoration and become one self-uplifting to the one Godhead. The final release, a passing away from the lower nature to the source of the higher spiritual becoming, is not an extinction of the soul,—only its form of ego becomes extinct,—but a departure of our whole self of knowledge, will and love to dwell no longer in his universal, but in his supracosmic reality, a fulfilment, not an annullation." (CWSA 19: 306–307)

7.

"We see, at the same time, the Vedic origin of the central idea in the Gita, the offering of our lives & actions in a perfect sacrifice to God." (CWSA 14: 135)

XVII—The Real Sacrifice Is Inner Oblation

1.

"The way of works too turns into an adoration and a devotion of self-giving because it is an entire sacrifice of all our will and its activities to the one Purushottama. The outward Vedic rite is a powerful symbol, effective for a slighter though still a heavenward purpose; but the real sacrifice is that inner oblation [things offered to the Divine] in which the Divine All becomes himself the ritual action, the sacrifice and every single circumstance of the sacrifice. All the working and forms of that inner rite are the self-ordinance and self-expression of his power in us mounting by our aspiration towards the source of its energies. The Divine Inhabitant becomes himself the flame and the offering, because the flame is the Godward will and that will is God himself within us. And the offering too is form and force of the constituent Godhead in our nature and being; all that has been received from him is given up to the service and the worship of its own Reality, its own supreme Truth and Origin. The Divine Thinker becomes himself the sacred mantra; it is the Light of his being that expresses itself in the thought directed Godward and is effective in the revealing word of splendour that enshrines the thought's secret and in the rhythm that repeats for man the rhythms of the Eternal. The illumining Godhead is himself the Veda and that

which is made known by the Veda. He is both the knowledge and the object of the knowledge. The Rik, the Yajur, the Sama, the word of illumination which lights up the mind with the rays of knowledge, the word of power for the right ordaining of action, the word of calm and harmonious attainment for the bringing of the divine desire of the spirit, are themselves the Brahman, the Godhead. The mantra of the divine Consciousness brings its light of revelation, the mantra of the divine Power its will of effectuation, the mantra of the divine Ananda its equal fulfilment of the spiritual delight of existence. All word and thought are an outflowering of the great OM,—OM, the Word, the Eternal. Manifest in the forms of sensible objects, manifest in that conscious play of creative self conception of which forms and objects are the figures, manifest behind in the self-gathered superconscient power of the Infinite, OM is the sovereign source, seed, womb of thing and idea, form and name,—it is itself, integrally, the supreme Intangible, the original Unity, the timeless Mystery self-existent above all manifestation in supernal being. This sacrifice is therefore at once works and adoration and knowledge.” (CWSA 19: 328–329)

XVIII—The Concept of *Kartavyaṁ Karma* (the Work We Have to Do) in the Gita

1.

"And when we try to be, to live and to do according to the Shastra, we proceed by a persistent act of *śraddhā* which belongs, supposing it to be not a routine faith, to a sattwic tendency that is constantly labouring to impose itself on our rajasic and tamasic parts. When we leave both these things and try to be, to live and to do according to some ideal or novel conception of truth of our own finding or our own individual acceptance, that too is a persistent act of *śraddhā* which may be dominated by any one of these three qualities that constantly govern our every thought, will, feeling and act. And again when we try to be, to live and to do according to the divine nature, then too we must proceed by a persistent act of *śraddhā*, which must be according to the Gita the faith of the sattwic nature when it culminates and is preparing to exceed its own clear-cut limits. But all and any of these things implies some kinesis or displacement of nature, all suppose an inner or outer or ordinarily both an inner and an outer action. And what then will be the character of this action? The Gita states three main elements of the work we have to do, *kartavyaṁ karma*, and these three are sacrifice, giving and askesis [tapasya]. For when questioned by Arjuna on

the difference between the outer and inner renunciation, *sannyasā and tyāga*, Krishna insists that these three things ought not to be renounced at all but ought altogether to be done, for they are the work before us, *kartavyaṁ karma*, and they purify the wise. In other words these acts constitute the means of our perfection. But at the same time they may be done unwisely or less wisely by the unwise. All dynamic action may be reduced in its essential parts to these three elements. For all dynamic action, all kinesis of the nature involves a voluntary or an involuntary tapasya or askesis, an energism and concentration of our forces or capacities or of some capacity which helps us to achieve, to acquire or to become something, *tapas*. All action involves a giving of what we are or have, an expenditure which is the price of that achievement, acquisition or becoming, *dāna.* All action involves too a sacrifice to elemental or to universal powers or to the supreme Master of our works." (CWSA 19: 484)

2.

"All action on the normal level is determined by the gunas; the action which is to be done, *kartavyaṁ karma*, takes the triple form of giving, askesis and sacrifice, and any or all of these three may assume the character of any of the gunas." (CWSA 19: 508)

3.

"This sattwic mind must be developed to its highest point where it succeeds in putting away the mixture of ego motive altogether and observes the Dharma for its own sake as an impersonal social, ethical or religious ideal, the thing disinterestedly to be done solely because it is right, *kartavyaṁ karma*." (CWSA 19: 592)

4.

"The sattwic principle of renunciation is to withdraw not from action, but from the personal demand, the ego factor behind it. It is to do works not dictated by desire but by the law of right living or by the essential nature, its knowledge, its ideal, its faith in itself and the Truth it sees, its *śraddhā* . Or else, on a higher spiritual plane, they are dictated by the will of the Master and done with the mind in Yoga, without any personal attachment either to the action or to the fruit of the action. There must be a complete renunciation of all desire and of all self-regarding egoistic choice and impulse and finally of that much subtler egoism of the will which either says, 'The work is mine, I am the doer', or even 'The work is God's, but I am the doer.' There must be no attachment to pleasant, desirable, lucrative or successful work and no doing of it because it has that nature; but that kind of work too has to be done,—done totally, selflessly, with the assent of the spirit,—when it is the action demanded

from above and from within us, *kartavyaṁ karma*. There must be no aversion to unpleasant, undesirable or ungratifying action or work that brings or is likely to bring with it suffering, danger, harsh conditions, inauspicious consequences; for that too has to be accepted, totally, selflessly, with a deep understanding of its need and meaning, when it is the work that should be done, *kartavyaṁ karma*. The wise man puts away the shrinkings and hesitations of the desire-soul and the doubts of the ordinary human intelligence, that measure by little personal, conventional or otherwise limited standards. He follows in the light of the full sattwic mind and with the power of an inner renunciation lifting the soul to impersonality, towards God, towards the universal and eternal the highest ideal law of his nature or the will of the Master of works in his secret spirit. He will not do action for the sake of any personal result or for any reward in this life or with any attachment to success, profit or consequence: neither will his works be undertaken for the sake of a fruit in the invisible hereafter or ask for a reward in other births or in worlds beyond us, the prizes for which the half-baked religious mind hungers. The three kinds of result, pleasant, unpleasant and mixed, in this or other worlds, in this or another life are for the slaves of desire and ego; these things do not cling to the free spirit. The liberated worker who has given up his works by the inner sannyasa to a greater

Power is free from Karma. Action he will do, for some kind of action, less or more, small or great, is inevitable, natural, right for the embodied soul,—action is part of the divine law of living, it is the high dynamics of the spirit. The essence of renunciation, the true Tyaga, the true Sannyasa is not any rule of thumb of inaction but a disinterested soul, a selfless mind, the transition from ego to the free impersonal and spiritual nature. The spirit of this inner renunciation is the first mental condition of the highest culminating sattwic discipline." (CWSA 19: 496–497)

5.

".. but Arjuna the liberated soul need care for none of these things, he has only to know the *kartavyaṁ karma*, the work which the supreme Self demands from him, and to do that and leave the result to the Lord of his actions." (CWSA 19: 182)

XIX—Working in Ignorance and Working in Self-knowledge

1.

"He has been shown that there are two opposed ways of working and living, one in the ignorance of the ego, one in the clear self-knowledge of a divine being. He may act with desire, with passion, an ego driven by the qualities of the lower Nature, subject to the balance of virtue and sin, joy and sorrow, preoccupied with the fruits and consequences of his works, success and defeat, good result and evil result, bound on the world machine, caught up in a great tangle of action and inaction and perverse action which perplex the heart and mind and soul of man with their changing and contrary masks and appearances. But he is not utterly tied down to the works of the ignorance; he may do if he will the works of knowledge. He may act here as the higher thinker, the knower, the Yogin, the seeker of freedom first and afterwards the liberated spirit. To perceive that great possibility and to keep his will and intelligence fixed on the knowledge and self-vision which will realise and make it effectual, is the path of escape from his sorrow and bewilderment, the way out of the human riddle.

There is a spirit within us calm, superior to works, equal, not bound in this external tangle, surveying it as its supporter, source, immanent witness, but not involved

in it. Infinite, containing all, one self in all, it surveys impartially the whole action of nature and it sees that it is only the action of Nature, not its own action. It sees that the ego and its will and its intelligence are all a machinery of Nature and that all their activities are determined by the complexity of her triple modes and qualities. The eternal spirit itself is free from these things. It is free from them because it knows; it knows that Nature and ego and the personal being of all these creatures do not make up the whole of existence. For existence is not merely a glorious or a vain, a wonderful or a dismal panorama of a constant mutation of becoming. There is something eternal, immutable, imperishable, a timeless self-existence; that is not affected by the mutations of Nature. It is their impartial witness, neither affecting nor affected, neither acting nor acted upon, neither virtuous nor sinful, but always pure, complete, great and unwounded. Neither grieving nor rejoicing at all that afflicts and attracts the egoistic being, it is the friend of none, the enemy of none, but one equal self of all. ... To become spirit, no longer merely a mind and ego, is the opening word of this message of liberation." (CWSA 19: 302–303)

2.

"Any work can be done as a field for the practice of the spirit of the Gita." (CWSA 29: 238)

3.

"Work here and work done in the world are of course not the same thing. The work there is not in any way a divine work in special—it is ordinary work in the world. But still one must take it as a training and do it in the spirit of karmayoga—what matters there is not the nature of the work in itself but the spirit in which it is done. It must be in the spirit of the Gita, without desire, with detachment, without repulsion, but doing it as perfectly as possible, not for the sake of the family or promotion or to please the superiors, but simply because it is the thing that has been given in the hand to do. It is a field of inner training, nothing more. One has to learn in it three things, equality, desirelessness, dedication. It is not the work as a thing for its own sake, but one's doing of it and one's way of doing it that one has to dedicate to the Divine. Done in that spirit it does not matter what the work is. If one trains oneself spiritually like that, then one will be ready to do in the true way whatever special work directly for the Divine (such as the Asram work) one may any day be given to do." (CWSA 29: 240–241) (CWSA 35: 753–754)

4.

"The ordinary life consists in work for personal aim and satisfaction of desire under some mental or moral control, touched sometimes by a mental ideal. The Gita's Yoga

consists in the offering of one's work as a sacrifice to the Divine, the conquest of desire, egoless and desireless action, bhakti for the Divine, an entering into the cosmic consciousness, the sense of unity with all creatures, oneness with the Divine. This Yoga adds the bringing down of the supramental Light and Force (its ultimate aim) and the transformation of the nature." (CWSA 29: 238)

5.

"There is one thing only that could work in a direction which would help you to something which is not that, but still not the whole Yoga for which you intimate that you are not wholly ready. It is if you get the spirit of the Yoga of works as it is indicated in the Gita—forget yourself and your miseries in the aspiration to a larger consciousness, feel the greater Force working in the world and make yourself an instrument for a work to be done, however small it may be. But, whatever the way may be, you must accept it wholly and put your whole will into it—with a divided and wavering will you cannot hope for success in anything, neither in life nor in Yoga." (CWSA 29: 237–238)

XX—Internal Difference Between the Working of the Ordinary Man and the Working of the Yogin

1.

"The idea of works, in the thought of the Gita, is the widest possible. All action of Nature in man is included, whether it be internal or external, operate in the mind or use the body, seem great or seem little. From the toil of the hero to the toil of the cobbler, from the labour of the sage to the simple physical act of eating, all is included. The seeking of the Self by thought, the adoration of the Highest by the emotions of the heart, the gathering of means and material and capacity and the use of them for the service of God and man stand here on an equal footing. Buddha sitting under the Bo-tree and conquering the illumination, the ascetic silent and motionless in his cave, Shankara storming through India, debating with all men and preaching most actively the gospel of inaction are all from this point of view doing great and forceful work. But while the outward action may be the same, there is a great internal difference between the working of the ordinary man and the working of the Yogin,—a difference in the state of the being, a difference in the power and the faculty, a difference in the will and temperament.

What we do, arises out of what we are. The existent is conscious of what he is; that consciousness

formulates itself as knowledge and power; works are the result of this twofold force of being in action. Mind, life and body can only operate out of that which is contained in the being of which they are forces. This is what we mean when we say that all things act according to their nature. The divine Existence is pure and unlimited being in possession of all itself, it is *sat*; whatever it puts forth in its limitless purity of self-awareness is truth of itself, *satya*; the divine knowledge is knowledge of the Truth, the divine Will is power of the Truth, the divine workings are words and ideas of the Truth realising themselves in manifold forms and through many stages and in infinite relations. But God is not limited or bound by any particular working or any moment of time or any field of space or any law of relation, because He is universal and infinite. Nor is He limited by the universe; for His infinity is not cosmic, but supracosmic." (CWSA 13: 120)

2.

"Gentlemen, today I will speak a few words on the Gita. ... We are driven into action because we are ignorant of our true selves, of the true nature of the world. We identify ourselves with our bodies, our desires, our sorrows, and not our spirits. We lose ourselves in our happiness, griefs and pleasures.

By these motives we are driven into action. This life is a chain of bondage which keeps us revolving. We are

surrounded on all sides by forces which we cannot control. As man has a perpetual desire for freedom, he is driven by forces he cannot control. Under the influence of these forces within or without, action takes place. The object of Hindu philosophy is to make man no longer a slave, but to escape from bondage and to make human beings free. Hindu philosophy tries to go into the root of things." (CWSA 8: 48)

3.

"Srikrishna ... says that the whole of our life is determined by *maya* which is of three kinds—*sattwa, rajas*, and *tamas.* Their nature is this. *Sattwa* leads to knowledge, *rajas* leads to action, and *tamas* leads to inaction and ignorance. These are the qualities of nature which govern the world. The *swabhava* which leads you to work is determined by the three *gunas*. Action is determined by *swabhava*. All action leads to bondage and is full of defects." (CWSA 8: 50)

4.

"How can I act, yet be free from bondage? The Gita says that the man who has knowledge has to do exactly what other men do. He has to live as a man in his family, race and nation. But there is a difference which is internal and not external. By the internal difference he acts in communion with God; others act in pursuance of their

desires. He knows by experience how a man can act when he is free from desire. This force of action is the force of God Himself. He is not troubled by the result of action; he gets eternal bliss.

This is the whole teaching of the Gita. It is *yoga* which gives utter perfection in action. The man who works for God is not shaken by doubts.

The teaching of the Gita is a teaching for life, and not a teaching for the life of a closet. It is a teaching which means perfection of action. It makes man great. It gives him the utter strength, the utter bliss which is the goal of life in the world." (CWSA 8: 53)

5.

"What it does see readily, and to that it attaches itself with passion, is only the life of the ego hunting after finite things for their own sake and for the satisfaction of the earthly hunger of the intellect, body, senses. Those who have given themselves up too entirely to this outward drive of the mentality, fall into the hands of the lower nature, cling to it and make it their foundation. They become a prey to the nature of the Rakshasa in man who sacrifices everything to a violent and inordinate satisfaction of his separate vital ego and makes that the dark godhead of his will and thought and action and enjoyment. Or they are hurried onward in a fruitless cycle by the arrogant self-will, self-sufficient thought, self-

regarding act, self-satisfied and yet ever unsatisfied intellectualised appetite of enjoyment of the Asuric nature. But to live persistently in this separative ego-consciousness and make that the centre of all our activities is to miss altogether the true self-awareness. The charm it throws upon the misled instruments of the spirit is an enchantment that chains life to a profitless circling. All its hope, action, knowledge are vain things when judged by the divine and eternal standard, for it shuts out the great hope, excludes the liberating action, banishes the illuminating knowledge. It is a false knowledge that sees the phenomenon but misses the truth of the phenomenon, a blind hope that chases after the transient but misses the eternal, a sterile action whose every profit is annulled by loss and amounts to a perennial labour of Sisyphus.

The great-souled who open themselves to the light and largeness of the diviner nature of which man is capable, are alone on the path narrow in the beginning, inexpressibly wide in the end that leads to liberation and perfection. The growth of the god in man is man's proper business; the steadfast turning of this lower Asuric and Rakshasic into the divine nature is the carefully hidden meaning of human life. As this growth increases, the veil falls and the soul comes to see the greater significance of action and the real truth of existence. The eye opens to the Godhead in man, to the Godhead in the world; it sees

inwardly and comes to know outwardly the infinite Spirit, the Imperishable from whom all existences originate and who exists in all and by him and in him all exist always. Therefore when this vision, this knowledge seizes on the soul, its whole life-aspiration becomes a surpassing love and fathomless adoration of the Divine and Infinite. The mind attaches itself singly to the eternal, the spiritual, the living, the universal, the Real; it values nothing but for its sake, it delights only in the all-blissful Purusha. All the word and all the thought become one hymning of the universal greatness, Light, Beauty, Power and Truth that has revealed itself in its glory to the human spirit and a worship of the one supreme Soul and infinite Person. All the long stress of the inner self to break outward becomes a form now of spiritual endeavour and aspiration to possess the Divine in the soul and realise the Divine in the nature. All life becomes a constant Yoga and unification of that Divine and this human spirit. This is the manner of the integral devotion; it creates a single uplifting of our whole being and nature through sacrifice by the dedicated heart to the eternal Purushottama." (CWSA 19: 326–327)

6.

"The Gita tells us that equality of soul and mind is Yoga and that this equality is the foundation of the Brahman-state, that high infinite consciousness to which the Yogin

aspires. Now equality of mind means universality; for without universality of soul there may be a state of indifference or an impartial self-control or a well-governed equality of temperament, but these are not the thing that is meant. The equality spoken of is not indifference or impartiality or equability, but a fundamental oneness of attitude to all persons and all things and happenings because of the perception of all as the One. Such equality, it is erroneously thought, is incompatible with action. By no means; this is the error of the animal and the intellectual man who thinks that action is solely possible when dictated by his hopes, fears and passions or by the self-willed preferences of the emotion and the intellect justifying themselves by the illusions of the reason. That might be the fact if the individual were the real actor and not merely an instrument or secondary agent; but we know well enough, for Science and Philosophy assure us of the same truth, that the universal is the Force which acts through the simulacrum of our individuality. The individual mind, pretending to choose for itself with a sublime ignorance and disregard of the universal, is obviously working on the basis of a falsehood and by means of an error and not in the knowledge and the will of the Truth. It cannot have any real skill in works; for to start from a falsehood or half-truth and work by means of blunders and arrive at another falsehood or half-truth which we have immediately to

change, and all the while to weep and struggle and suffer and have no sure resting-place, cannot surely be called skill in works. But the universal is equal in all and therefore its determinations are not self-willed preferences but are guided by the truth of the divine will and knowledge which is unlimited and not subject to incapacity or error." (CWSA 13: 122–123)

7.

"Therefore that state of the being by which the Yogin differs from the ordinary man, is that by which he rises from the foundation of a perfect equality to the consciousness of the one existence in all and embracing all and lives in that existence and not in the walls of his body or personal temperament or limited mind. Mind and life and body he sees as small enough things which happen and change and develop in his being. Nay, the whole universe is seen by him as happening within himself, not in his small ego or mind, but within this vast and infinite self with which he is now constantly identified. All action in the universe he sees as arising in this being, out of the divine Existence and under the stress of the divine Truth, Knowledge, Will and Power. He begins to participate consciously in its working and to see all things in the light of that divine truth and governance; and even when his own actions move on certain lines rather than others, he is not bound by them or shut to

the truth of all the rest by his own passions and preferences, gropings and seekings and revolts. It is evident that such an increasing wideness of vision must mean an increasing knowledge. And if it be true that knowledge is power, it must mean also an increasing force for works. Certainly, it would not be so, if the Yogin continued to act by the light of his individual reason and imagination and will; for the intellect and all that depends on it can only work by virtue of rigid limitations and exclusive determinations. Accordingly, the continued activity of the unillumined intellect and its servants conflicts with the new state of consciousness and knowledge which arises out of this larger existence, and so long as they remain active, it cannot be perfect or assured; for the consciousness is being continually pulled down to the lower field of ego-habit by the claim of their narrow workings. But the Yogin ceases, progressively, to act by the choice of his intellectual or emotional nature. Another light dawns, another power and presence intervenes, other faculties awake in the place of the old human-animal combination.

As the state of being changes, the will and temperament must necessarily be modified. Even from an early stage the Yogin begins to subordinate his personal will or it becomes naturally subordinate to the sense of the supreme Will which is attracting him upward. Ignorantly, imperfectly, blunderingly it moves at first,

with many recoils and relapses into personal living and personal action, but in time it becomes more in tune with its Source and eventually the personal will merges upward and all ways into the universal and infinite and obeys implicitly the transcendent. Nor does this change and ascension and expanding mean any annihilation of the will-power working in the individual, as the intellectual man might imagine; but rather it increases it to an immense forcefulness while giving it an infinite calm and an eternal patience. The temperament also is delivered from all leash of straining and desire, from all urge of passion and pain of wilful self-delusion. Desire, even the best, turns always to limitation and obscuration, to some eager exclusive choice and pressure, to some insistent exclusion of what should not be excluded and impatient revolt against the divine denials and withholdings. It generates anger and grief and passion and obstinacy, and these bring about the soul's loss of its divine memory or steadfast consciousness of itself and its self-knowledge and its equal vision of the truth of things. Therefore desire and its brood are incompatible with skill in works and their persistence is the sign of an imperfect Yoga." (CWSA 13: 123–124)

8.

"But at any rate when the Yoga is attained, ... In all states, in waking and in sleeping, in food and play and

action, the Yogin will then be in Yoga with the Divine, and all will be done by him in the consciousness of the Divine as the self and as the All and as that which supports and contains his own life and his action. Desire and ego and personal will and the thought of the mind are the motives of action only in the lower nature; when the ego is lost and the Yogin becomes Brahman, when he lives in and is, even, a transcendent and universal consciousness, action comes spontaneously out of that, luminous knowledge higher than the mental thought comes out of that, a power other and mightier than the personal will comes out of that to do for him his works and bring its fruits: personal action has ceased, all has been taken up into the Brahman and assumed by the Divine, *mayi sannyasya karmāṇi*." (CWSA 19: 243–244)

9.

"The perfect sage, the Gita more than once repeats, is ever engaged with a large equality in doing good to all creatures and makes that his occupation and delight, *sarvabhūtahite rataḥ* .. The perfect Yogin is no solitary musing on the Self in his ivory tower of spiritual isolation, but*yuktaḥ kṛtsna-karma-kṛt,*a many-sided universal worker for the good of the world, for God in the world. For he is a *bhakta*, a lover and devotee of the Divine, as well as a sage and a Yogin, a lover who loves God wherever he finds Him and who finds Him everywhere;

and what he loves, he does not disdain to serve, nor does action carry him away from the bliss of union, since all his acts proceed from the One in him and to the One in all they are directed. The equality of the Gita is a large synthetic equality in which all is lifted up into the integrality of the divine being and the divine nature." (CWSA 19: 199)

XXI—Integral Work for the Sake of the Divine

1.

"But when the Godlover is also the God-knower, the lover becomes one self with the Beloved; for he is the chosen of the Most High and the elect of the Spirit. Develop in yourself this God-engrossed love; the heart spiritualised and lifted beyond the limitations of its lower nature will reveal to you most intimately the secrets of God's immeasurable being, bring into you the whole touch and influx and glory of his divine Power and open to you the mysteries of an eternal rapture. It is perfect love that is the key to a perfect knowledge.

'This integral God-love demands too an integral work for the sake of the Divine in yourself and in all creatures. The ordinary man does works in obedience to some desire sinful or virtuous, some vital impulse low or high, some mental choice common or exalted or from some mixed mind and life motive. But the work done by you must be free and desireless; work done without desire creates no reaction and imposes no bondage. Done in a perfect equality and an unmoved calm and peace, but without any divine passion, it is at first the fine yoke of a spiritual obligation, *kartavyaṁ karma*, then the uplifting of a divine sacrifice; at its highest it can be the expression of a calm and glad acquiescence in active oneness. The oneness in love will do much more: it will

replace the first impassive calm by a strong and deep rapture, not the petty ardour of egoistic desire but the ocean of an infinite Ananda. It will bring the moving sense and the pure and divine passion of the presence of the Beloved into your works; there will be an insistent joy of labour for God in yourself and for God in all beings. Love is the crown of works and the crown of knowledge.

'This love that is knowledge, this love that can be the deep heart of your action, will be your most effective force for an utter consecration and complete perfection. An integral union of the individual's being with the Divine Being is the condition of a perfect spiritual life. Turn then altogether towards the Divine; make one with him by knowledge, love and works all your nature. Turn utterly towards him and give up ungrudgingly into his hands your mind and your heart and your will, all your consciousness and even your very senses and body. Let your consciousness be sovereignly moulded by him into a flawless mould of his divine consciousness. Let your heart become a lucid or flaming heart of the Divine. Let your will be an impeccable action of his will. Let your very sense and body be the rapturous sensation and body of the Divine. Adore and sacrifice to him with all you are; remember him in every thought and feeling, every impulsion and act. Persevere until all these things are wholly his and he has taken up even in most common and outward things as in the inmost sacred chamber of

your spirit his constant transmuting presence." (CWSA 19: 589–590)

2.

"*Yoga* means freedom from *dwandwa*. The Yogin is free from the bondage of pleasure and pain, of anger and hatred and attachment, of liking and disliking, because he looks with equal eyes on all. He does not shrink from misfortune or misery, happiness or unhappiness. He rises above the bondage of the body, because no man can give him pleasure or pain, because he has his own source of strength, of delight and happiness. This is the freedom which the Gita says the *yoga* gives, the freedom which we ordinarily mean by *mukti*. This is the freedom which the Gita promises. He says if you act in *yoga*, you rise above grief and pain, even above all things. You are free from fear or sin, because you do not act for yourself. You do not act because you will get pleasure, but for the sake of God; that is how you are to reach *yoga*. If you wish to be happy, you must give up all your works to God. You must do all your work for His sake, and therefore sin does not touch you. It is only because of selfishness that sin touches you. If you realise that Narayana is in all, it follows that you lose the smaller, the individual limited self. You look to wider things. You see yourself in the family, in the community, race, humanity, and all things in the world. You forget yourself altogether. You work for

the race and others, for mankind. It is not God's work when you follow after your selfishness. The Gita says: 'Your welfare is God's business.' If you work for Him you have no fear, because God stretches out His hand of mercy to you. It is to that which the *yoga* leads. The teaching of the Gita, if it is followed, delivers you from all possibility of sin, of sorrow. He says: 'Take refuge in me. I shall free you from all evil. Do everything as a sacrifice to me.' That is the goal towards which you move. The name of Hari will free you from all evil." (CWSA 8: 51–52)

XXII—Liberating Action

1.

"And it then becomes evident how action continual and unceasing and of all kinds without diminution or abandonment of any part of the activities of life can be not only quite consistent with a supreme spiritual experience, but as forceful a means of reaching this highest spiritual condition as bhakti or knowledge. Nothing can be more positive than the Gita's statement in this matter. 'And by doing also all actions always lodged in Me he attains by my grace the eternal and imperishable status.' This liberating action is of the character of works done in a profound union of the will and all the dynamic parts of our nature with the Divine in ourself and the cosmos. It is done first as a sacrifice with the idea still of our self as the doer. It is done next without that idea and with a perception of the Prakriti as the sole doer. It is done last with the knowledge of that Prakriti as the supreme power of the Divine and a renunciation, a surrender of all our actions to him with the individual as a channel only and an instrument. Our works then proceed straight from the Self and Divine within us, are a part of the indivisible universal action, are initiated and performed not by us but by a vast transcendent Shakti. All that we do is done for the sake of the Lord seated in the heart of all, for the Godhead in the

individual and for the fulfilment of his will in us, for the sake of the Divine in the world, for the good of all beings, for the fulfilment of the world action and the world purpose, or in one word for the sake of the Purushottama and done really by him through his universal Shakti. These divine works, whatever their form or outward character, cannot bind, but are rather a potent means for rising out of this lower Prakriti of the three gunas to the perfection of the supreme, divine and spiritual nature. Disengaged from these mixed and limited dharmas we escape into the immortal Dharma which comes upon us when we make ourselves one in all our consciousness and action with the Purushottama." (CWSA 19: 538)

XXIII—The Gita's Spirit of Works Can Move Towards the Divine

1.

"I may say however that I do not regard business as something evil or tainted, any more than it was so regarded in ancient spiritual India. If I did, I would not be able to receive money from *X* or from those of our disciples who in Bombay trade with East Africa; nor could we then encourage them to go on with their work but would have to tell them to throw it up and attend to their spiritual progress alone. How are we to reconcile *X*'s seeking after spiritual light and his mill? Ought I not to tell him to leave his mill to itself and to the devil and go into some Ashram to meditate? Even if I myself had had the command to do business as I had the command to do politics I would have done it without the least spiritual or moral compunction. All depends on the spirit in which a thing is done, the principle on which it is built and use to which it is turned. I have done politics and the most violent kind of revolutionary politics, *ghoraṁ karma*, and I have supported war and sent men to it, even though politics is not always or often a very clean occupation nor can war be called a spiritual line of action. But Krishna calls upon Arjuna to carry on war of the most terrible kind and by his example encourage men to do every kind of human work, *sarvakarmāṇi*. Do you contend that Krishna

was an unspiritual man and that his advice to Arjuna was mistaken or wrong in principle? Krishna goes farther and declares that a man by doing in the right way and in the right spirit the work dictated to him by his fundamental nature, temperament and capacity and according to his and its dharma can move towards the Divine. He validates the function and dharma of the Vaishya as well as of the Brahmin and Kshatriya. It is in his view quite possible for a man to do business and make money and earn profits and yet be a spiritual man, practise Yoga, have an inner life. The Gita is constantly justifying works as a means of spiritual salvation and enjoining a Yoga of works as well as of Bhakti and Knowledge. Krishna, however, superimposes a higher law also that work must be done without desire, without attachment to any fruit or reward, without any egoistic attitude or motive, as an offering or sacrifice to the Divine. This is the traditional Indian attitude towards these things, that all work can be done if it is done according to the dharma and, if it is rightly done, it does not prevent the approach to the Divine or the access to spiritual knowledge and the spiritual life." (CWSA 29: 248–249) (CWSA 35: 769–770)

XXIV—The Supreme Law of Action Beyond Shastra

A—Desire controlled by Shastra

1.

"The Gita has made a distinction between action according to the licence of personal desire and action done according to the Shastra. We must understand by the latter the recognised science and art of life which is the outcome of mankind's collective living, its culture, religion, science, its progressive discovery of the best rule of life,—but mankind still walking in the ignorance and proceeding in a half light towards knowledge. The action of personal desire belongs to the unregenerated state of our nature and is dictated by ignorance or false knowledge and an unregulated or ill-regulated kinetic or rajasic egoism. The action controlled by Shastra is an outcome of intellectual, ethical, aesthetic, social and religious culture; it embodies an attempt at a certain right living, harmony and right order and is evidently an effort, more or less advanced according to circumstances, of the sattwic element in man to overtop, regulate and control or guide, where it must be admitted, his rajasic and tamasic egoism. It is the means to a step in advance, and therefore mankind must first proceed through it and make this Shastra its law of action rather than obey the impulsion of its personal desires. This is a general rule

which humanity has always recognised wherever it has arrived at any kind of established and developed society; it has an idea of an order, a law, a standard of its perfection, something other than the guidance of its desires or the crude direction of its raw impulses. This greater rule the individual finds usually outside himself in some more or less fixed outcome of the experience and wisdom of the race, which he accepts, to which his mind and the leading parts of his being give their assent or sanction and which he tries to make his own by living it in his mind, will and action. And this assent of the being, its conscious acceptance and will to believe and realise, may be called by the name which the Gita gives to it, his faith, *śraddhā*. The religion, the philosophy, the ethical law, the social idea, the cultural idea in which I put my faith, gives me a law for my nature and its works, an idea of relative right or an idea of relative or absolute perfection and in proportion as I have a sincerity and completeness of faith in it and an intensity of will to live according to that faith, I can become what it proposes to me, I can shape myself into an image of that right or an exemplar of that perfection." (CWSA 19: 477–478)

B—Search for another law beyond Shastra

1.

"But we see also that there is a freer tendency in man other than the leading of his desires and other than his will to accept the Law, the fixed idea, the safe governing rule of the Shastra. The individual frequently enough, the community at any moment of its life is seen to turn away from the Shastra, becomes impatient of it, loses that form of its will and faith and goes in search of another law which it is now more disposed to accept as the right rule of living and regard as a more vital or higher truth of existence. This may happen when the established Shastra ceases to be a living thing and degenerates or stiffens into a mass of customs and conventions. Or it may come because it is found that the Shastra is imperfect or no longer useful for the progress demanded; a new truth, a more perfect law of living has become imperative. If that does not exist, it has to be discovered by the effort of the race or by some great and illumined individual mind who embodies the desire and seeking of the race. The Vedic law becomes a convention and a Buddha appears with his new rule of the eightfold path and the goal of Nirvana; and it may be remarked that he propounds it not as a personal invention, but as the true rule of Aryan living constantly rediscovered by the Buddha, the enlightened mind, the awakened spirit. But this practically means that

there is an ideal, an eternal Dharma which religion, philosophy, ethics and all other powers in man that strive after truth and perfection are constantly endeavouring to embody in new statements of the science and art of the inner and outer life, a new Shastra. The Mosaic law of religious, ethical and social righteousness is convicted of narrowness and imperfection and is now besides a convention; the law of Christ comes to replace it and claims at once to abrogate and to fulfil, to abrogate the imperfect form and fulfil in a deeper and broader light and power the spirit of the thing which it aimed at, the divine rule of living. And the human search does not stop there, but leaves these formulations too, goes back to some past truth it had rejected or breaks forward to some new truth and power, but is always in search of the same thing, the law of its perfection, its rule of right living, its complete, highest and essential self and nature." (CWSA 19: 478–479)

C—The Shastra is not in all its forms and spirit the ideal rule of fulfilment of the Self or the eternal law of the Master of our nature

1.

"This movement begins with the individual, who is no longer satisfied with the law because he finds that it no longer corresponds to his idea and largest or intensest experience of himself and existence and therefore he can no longer bring to it the will to believe and practise. It does not correspond to his inner way of being, it is not to him *sat,* the thing that truly is, the right, the highest or best or real good; it is not the truth and law of his or of all being. The Shastra is something impersonal to the individual, and that gives it its authority over the narrow personal law of his members; but at the same time it is personal to the collectivity and is the outcome of its experience, its culture or its nature. It is not in all its form and spirit the ideal rule of fulfilment of the Self or the eternal law of the Master of our nature, although it may contain in itself in small or larger measure indications, preparations, illuminating glimpses of that far greater thing. And the individual may have gone beyond the collectivity and be ready for a greater truth, a wider walk, a deeper intention of the Life-Spirit. The leading in him that departs from the Shastra may not indeed be always a higher movement; it may take the form of a revolt of

the egoistic or rajasic nature seeking freedom from the yoke of something which it feels to be cramping to its liberty of self-fulfilment and self-finding. But even then it is often justified by some narrowness or imperfection of the Shastra or by the degradation of the current rule of living into a merely restricting or lifeless convention. And so far it is legitimate, it appeals to a truth, it has a good and just reason for existence: for though it misses the right path, yet the free action of the rajasic ego, because it has more in it of liberty and life, is better than the dead and hidebound tamasic following of a convention. The rajasic is always stronger, always more forcefully inspired and has more possibilities in it than the tamasic nature. But also this leading may be sattwic at its heart; it may be a turn to a larger and greater ideal which will carry us nearer to a more complete and ample truth of our self and universal existence than has yet been seen and nearer therefore to that highest law which is one with the divine freedom. And in effect this movement is usually an attempt to lay hold on some forgotten truth or to move on to a yet undiscovered or unlived truth of our being. It is not a mere licentious movement of the unregulated nature; it has its spiritual justification and is a necessity of our spiritual progress. And even if the Shastra is still a living thing and the best rule for the human average, the exceptional man, spiritual, inwardly developed, is not bound by that standard. He is called upon to go beyond

the fixed line of the Shastra. For this is a rule for the guidance, control and relative perfection of the normal imperfect man and he has to go on to a more absolute perfection: this is a system of fixed dharmas and he has to learn to live in the liberty of the Spirit.” (CWSA 19: 479–480)

D—The guiding light on which the new movement of adventure into the unknown can depend is in man's sraddha, his faith

1.

"But what then shall be the secure base of an action which departs both from the guidance of desire and from the normal law? For the rule of desire has an authority of its own, no longer safe or satisfactory to us as it is to the animal or as it might have been to a primitive humanity, but still, so far as it goes, founded on a very living part of our nature and fortified by its strong indications; and the law, the Shastra has behind it all the authority of long established rule, old successful sanctions and a secure past experience. But this new movement is of the nature of a powerful adventure into the unknown or partly known, a daring development and a new conquest, and what then is the clue to be followed, the guiding light on which it can depend or its strong basis in our being? The answer is that the clue and support is to be found in man's *śraddhā*, his faith, his will to believe, to live what he sees or thinks to be the truth of himself and of existence. In other words this movement is man's appeal to himself or to something potent and compelling in himself or in universal existence for the discovery of his truth, his law of living, his way to fullness and perfection. And everything depends on the nature of his faith, the

thing in himself or in the universal soul—of which he is a portion or manifestation—to which he directs it and on how near he gets by it to his real self and the Self or true being of the universe. If he is tamasic, obscure, clouded, if he has an ignorant faith, an inept will, he will reach nothing true and will fall away to his lower nature. If he is lured by false rajasic lights, he can be carried away by self-will into bypaths that may lead to morass or precipice. In either case his only chance of salvation lies in a return of sattwa upon him to impose a new enlightened order and rule upon his members which will liberate him from the violent error of his self-will or the dull error of his clouded ignorance. If on the other hand he has the sattwic nature and a sattwic faith and direction for his steps, he will arrive in sight of a higher yet unachieved ideal rule which may lead him even in rare instances beyond the sattwic light some way at least towards a highest divine illumination and divine way of being and living. For if the sattwic light is so strong in him as to bring him to its own culminating point, then he will be able advancing from that point to make out his gate of entrance into some first ray of that which is divine, transcendent and absolute. In all effort at self-finding these possibilities are there; they are the conditions of this spiritual adventure." (CWSA 19: 480–481)

(E)—Supreme Law of Action

1.

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

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

Here it is necessary to state the Gita's view of the fundamental opposition on which like all Indian teaching it takes its position. This finding of the true self, this knowledge of the Godhead within us and all is not an easy thing; nor is it an easy thing either to turn this knowledge, even though seen by the mind, into the stuff of our consciousness and the whole condition of our action. All action is determined by the effective state of our being, and the effective state of our being is determined by the state of our constant self-seeing will and active consciousness and by its basis of kinetic movement. It is what we see and believe with our whole active nature ourselves to be and our relations with the world to mean, it is our faith, our *śraddhā*, that makes us

what we are. But the consciousness of man is of a double kind and corresponds to a double truth of existence; for there is a truth of the inner reality and a truth of the outer appearance. According as he lives in one or the other, he will be a mind dwelling in human ignorance or a soul founded in divine knowledge.” (CWSA 19: 572–573)

XXV—The Foundation for the Surrender of Action

1.

"The best foundation for the surrender of action is the realisation that Prakriti is doing all our actions at God's command and God through our *svabhāva* determines the action. From that moment the action belongs to him, it is not yours nor the responsibility yours; there is indeed no responsibility, no bondage of Karma, for God has no responsibility, but is in every way master and free. Our actions become not only like the Shastric man's svabhāvaniyata, regulated by nature and therefore *dharma*, but the *svabhāva* itself is controlled like a machine by God." (CWSA 13: 80)

2.

"It is not easy for us, full as we are of the Sanskaras of ignorance, to arrive at this stage of knowledge, but there are three stages by which it can be rapidly done. The first is to live in the spirit of the [Gita's]*śloka*

...

'According as I am appointed by Thee, O Hrishikesha! seated in my heart, so I act.' When this has entered into your daily life, it will be easier to accomplish the second stage and live in the knowledge of the Gita,

...

'God stands in the heart of all beings, whirling round all, as on a wheel, by the Maya of the three *guṇas*.' You will then be able to perceive the action of the three *guṇas* in you and watch the machinery at its work, no longer saying, *tathā karomi* , I do, but *guṇā vartanta eva*, it is merely the gun. as that work. One great difficulty in these stages, especially before you can distinguish the action of the *guṇas*, is the perception of the impurity of the *svabhāva*, the haunting idea of sin and virtue. You must always remember that, since you have put yourself in God's hands, he will work out the impurities and you have only to be careful, as you cannot be attached either to *pāpa*or *puṇya*, sin or virtue. For he has repeatedly given the *abhaya vacana*, the assurance of safety. '*Pratijānīhi* ,' he says in the Gita, '*na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati*,' , he who is devoted to Me cannot perish.'

The third stage comes out of the second, by full realisation of God, or of itself by the grace of God. Not only will the Purusha stand apart and be *triguṇātīta* , beyond the three *guṇas*, but the Prakriti, though using the *guṇas*, will be free from their bondage. Sattwa, as we know it, will disappear into pure *prakāśa* and *jyotiḥ*, and the nature will live in a pure, free and infinite self-existing illumination. Tamas, as we know it, will disappear into pure *śama*or *śānti*, and the nature will take its firm stand on an infinite and ineffable rest and peace. Rajas, as we

know it, will disappear into pure *tapas*, and the nature will flow a free and infinite ocean of divine force. On that foundation of calm and in that heaven of light, action will occur as the spontaneous objective expression of God's knowledge, which is one with God's will. This is the condition of infinity, *ānantya*, in which this struggle of bound and limited sattwa, rajas and tamas is replaced by a mighty harmony of free *prakāśa*, *tapas* and *śama*." (CWSA 13: 80–82)

3.

"To the soul that thus knows, adores, offers up all its workings in a great self-surrender of its being to the Eternal, God is all and all is the Godhead. It knows God as the Father of this world who nourishes and cherishes and watches over his children. It knows God as the divine Mother who holds us in her bosom, lavishes upon us the sweetness of her love and fills the universe with her forms of beauty. It knows him as the first Creator from whom has originated all that originates and creates in space and time and relation. It knows him as the Master and ordainer of all universal and of every individual dispensation. The world and fate and uncertain eventuality cannot terrify, the aspect of suffering and evil cannot bewilder the man who has surrendered himself to the Eternal. God to the soul that sees is the path and God is the goal of his journey, a path in which there is no self

losing and a goal to which his wisely guided steps are surely arriving at every moment. He knows the Godhead as the master of his and all being, the upholder of his nature, the husband of the nature-soul, its lover and cherisher, the inner witness of all his thoughts and actions. God is his house and country, the refuge of his seekings and desires, the wise and close and benignant friend of all beings." (CWSA 19: 329–330)

4.

"And even before you reach that condition [the condition of infinity, *ānantya*], on the way to it, you will find that some mighty force not your own, not situated in your body though possessing and occupying it, is thinking for you, feeling for you, acting for you, your very body as well as your mind and heart being moved by that force and not by yourself. You will enjoy that thought, feeling, action, but will neither possess nor be possessed by it, — *karmāṇi pravilīyante*, your actions will disappear without leaving in you mark or trace, as a wave disappears from the surface of the sea, as water falls from the lotus leaf. Your mind, heart, body will not be yours, but God's; you yourself will be only a centre of being, knowledge and bliss through which God works in that Adhar. This is the condition in which one is utterly *taccittaḥ*, given up in all his conscious being to God, in which there is utter fulfilment of the description,

...

'One whose state of being is free from egoism and whose understanding receives no stain.' This is the surrender of action to which Sri Krishna gives so much importance." (CWSA 13: 81–82)

XXVI—The Inner Surrender of All Our Actions to the Divinity Within Us

1.

"The Gita at its cryptic close may seem by its silence to stop short of that solution for which we are seeking; it pauses at the borders of the highest spiritual mind and does not cross them into the splendours of the supramental Light. And yet its secret of dynamic, and not only static, identity with the inner Presence, its highest mystery of absolute surrender to the Divine Guide, Lord and Inhabitant of our nature, is the central secret. This surrender is the indispensable means of the supramental change and, again, it is through the supramental change that the dynamic identity becomes possible." (CWSA 23: 94–95)

2.

"The whole action of the world is the business of the Lord of the universe, the concern of the self-existent Spirit of whom it is the unceasing creation, the progressive becoming, the significant manifestation and living symbol in Nature. The fruits are his, the results are those determined by him and our personal action is only a minor contribution ruled or overruled, so far as its motive is an egoistic claim, by this Self and Spirit in us who is the Self and Spirit in all and governs things for the universal

end and good and not for the sake of our ego. To work impersonally, desirelessly and without attachment to the fruits of our work, for the sake of God and the world and the greater Self and the fulfilment of the universal will,—this is the first step towards liberation and perfection.

But beyond this step there lies that other greater motion, the inner surrender of all our actions to the Divinity within us." " (CWSA 19: 458)

3.

"And what is this Divine, whom Krishna declares himself to be? It is the Purushottama beyond the Self that acts not, beyond the Prakriti that acts, foundation of the one, master of the other, the Lord of whom all is the manifestation, who even in our present subjection to Maya sits in the heart of His creatures governing the works of Prakriti, He by whom the armies on the field of Kurukshetra have already been slain while yet they live and who uses Arjuna only as an instrument or immediate occasion of this great slaughter. Prakriti is only His executive force. The disciple has to rise beyond this Force and its three modes or *guṇas*; he has to become *triguṇātīta*. Not to her has he to surrender his actions, over which he has no longer any claim or 'right', but into the being of the Supreme. Reposing his mind and understanding, heart and will in Him, with self knowledge, with God-knowledge, with world-knowledge,

with a perfect equality, a perfect devotion, an absolute self-giving, he has to do works as an offering to the Master of all self energisings and all sacrifice. Identified in will, conscious with that consciousness, That shall decide and initiate the action. This is the solution which the Divine Teacher offers to the disciple." (CWSA 19: 36–37)

4.

"What the great, the supreme word of the Gita is, its *mahāvākya*, we have not to seek; for the Gita itself declares it in its last utterance, the crowning note of the great diapason. 'With the Lord in thy heart take refuge with all thy being; by His grace thou shalt attain to the supreme peace and the eternal status. So have I expounded to thee a knowledge more secret than that which is hidden. Further hear the most secret, the supreme word that I shall speak to thee. Become my-minded, devoted to Me, to Me do sacrifice and adoration; infallibly, thou shalt come to Me, for dear to me art thou. Abandoning all laws of conduct seek refuge in Me alone. I will release thee from all sin; do not grieve.' " (CWSA 19: 37)

XXVII—The Gita's Solution for Arjuna to Fight the Battle of Kurukshetra

1.

"Incidentally, a synthetic Yoga or psychological method of arriving at spiritual liberation and perfection has been developed and certain metaphysical affirmations have been put forward, certain truths of our being and nature on which the validity of this Yoga reposes. But the original preoccupation remains throughout, the original difficulty and problem, how Arjuna, dislodged by a strong revulsion of thought and feeling from the established natural and rational foundations and standards of action, is to find a new and satisfying spiritual norm of works, or how he is to live in the truth of the Spirit—since he can no longer act according to the partial truths of the customary reason and nature of man—and yet to do his appointed work on the battle-field of Kurukshetra. To live inwardly calm, detached, silent in the silence of the impersonal and universal Self and yet do dynamically the works of dynamic Nature, and more largely, to be one with the Eternal within us and to do all the will of the Eternal in the world expressed through a sublimated force, a divine height of the personal nature uplifted, liberated, universalised, made one with God-nature,—this is the Gita's solution." (CWSA 19: 450–451)

2.

"Its [Gita's] teaching sets out at the beginning to propose a new source and level for our action in the world; that was the starting point and that motives also the conclusion. Its initial object was not precisely to propose a way of liberation, *mokṣa*, but rather to show the compatibility of works with the soul's effort towards liberation and of spiritual freedom itself when once attained with continued action in the world, *muktasya karma.*" (CWSA 19: 450)

3.

"Let us see what this comes to in the most plain and positive terms and from the standpoint of the problem which is at the root of Arjuna's difficulty and refusal. His duty as a human being and a social being is the discharge of the high function of the Kshatriya without which the frame of society cannot be maintained, the ideals of the race cannot be vindicated, the harmonious order of right and justice cannot be upheld against the anarchic violence of oppression, wrong and injustice. And yet the appeal to duty by itself can no longer satisfy the protagonist of the struggle because in the terrible actuality of Kurukshetra it presents itself in harsh, perplexed and ambiguous terms. The discharge of his social duty has suddenly come to signify assent to an enormous result of sin and sorrow and suffering; the

customary means of maintaining social order and justice is found to lead instead to a great disorder and chaos. The rule of just claim and interest, that which we call rights, will not serve him here; for the kingdom he has to win for himself and his brothers and his side in the war is indeed rightly theirs and its assertion an overthrow of Asuric tyranny and a vindication of justice, but a blood-bespattered justice and a kingdom possessed in sorrow and with the stain on it of a great sin, a monstrous harm done to society, a veritable crime against the race. Nor will the rule of Dharma, of ethical right, serve any better; for there is here a conflict of dharmas. A new and greater yet unguessed rule is needed to solve the problem, but what is that rule?" (CWSA 19: 451)

4.

"For to withdraw from his work, to take refuge in a saintly inactivity and leave the imperfect world with its unsatisfying methods and motives to take care of itself is one possible solution easy to envisage, easy to execute, but this is the very cutting of the knot that has been insistently forbidden by the Teacher. Action is demanded of man by the Master of the world who is the master of all his works and whose world is a field of action, whether done through the ego and in the ignorance or partial light of the limited human reason or initiated from a higher and more largely seeing plane of vision and motive.

Again, to abandon this particular action as evil would be another kind of solution, the ready resort of the shortsighted moralising mind, but to this evasion too the Teacher refuses his assent. Arjuna's abstention would work a much greater sin and evil: it would mean, if it had any effect at all, the triumph of wrong and injustice and the rejection of his own mission as an instrument of the divine workings. A violent crisis in the destinies of the race has been brought about not by any blind motion of forces or solely by the confused clash of human ideas, interests, passions, egoisms, but by a Will which is behind these outward appearances. This truth Arjuna must be brought to see; he must learn to act impersonally, imperturbably as the instrument not of his little personal desires and weak human shrinkings, but of a vaster and more luminous Power, a greater all-wise divine and universal Will. He must act impersonally and universally in a high union of his soul with the inner and outer Godhead, *yukta*, in a calm Yoga with his own supreme Self and the informing Self of the universe." (CWSA 19: 451–452)

5.

"But this truth cannot be rightly seen and this kind of action cannot be rightly undertaken, cannot become real as long as man is governed by the ego, even by the half-enlightened unillumined sattwic ego of the reason and the

mental intelligence. For this is a truth of the spirit, this is an action from a spiritual basis. A spiritual, not an intellectual knowledge is the indispensable requisite for this way of works, its sole possible light, medium, incentive. First, therefore, the Teacher points out that all these ideas and feelings which trouble, perplex and baffle Arjuna, joy and sorrow, desire and sin, the mind's turn towards governing action by the outward results of action, the human shrinking from what seems terrible and formidable in the dealings of the universal Spirit with the world, are things born of the subjection of our consciousness to a natural ignorance, the way of working of a lower nature in which the soul is involved and sees itself as a separate ego returning to the action of things upon it dual reactions of pain and pleasure, virtue and vice, right and wrong, good happening and evil fortune. These reactions create a tangled web of perplexity in which the soul is lost and bewildered by its own ignorance; it has to guide itself by partial and imperfect solutions that serve ordinarily with a stumbling sufficiency in the normal life, but fail when brought to the test of a wider seeing and a profounder experience. To understand the real sense of action and existence one must retreat behind all these appearances into the truth of the spirit; one must found self-knowledge before one can have the basis of a right world-knowledge." (CWSA 19: 452–453)

6.

"The first requisite is to shake the wings of the soul free from desire and passion and troubling emotion and all this perturbed and distorting atmosphere of human mind and arrive into an ether of dispassionate equality, a heaven of impersonal calm, an egoless feeling and vision of things. For only in that lucid upper air, reaches free from all storm and cloud, can self-knowledge come and the law of the world and the truth of Nature be seen steadily and with an embracing eye and in an undisturbed and all-comprehending and all-penetrating light. Behind this little personality which is a helpless instrument, a passive or vainly resistant puppet of Nature and a form figured in her creations, there is an impersonal self one in all which sees and knows all things; there is an equal, impartial, universal presence and support of creation, a witnessing consciousness that suffers Nature to work out the becoming of things in their own type, *svabhāva*, but does not involve and lose itself in the action she initiates. To draw back from the ego and the troubled personality into this calm, equal, eternal, universal, impersonal Self is the first step towards a seeing action in Yoga done in conscious union with the divine Being and the infallible Will that, however obscure now to us, manifests itself in the universe." (CWSA 19: 453)

7.

"When we live tranquilly poised in this self of impersonal wideness, then because that is vast, calm, quiescent, impersonal, our other little false self, our ego of action disappears into its largeness and we see that it is Nature that acts and not we, that all action is the action of Nature and can be nothing else. And this thing we call Nature is a universal executive Power of eternal being in motion which takes different shapes and forms in this or that class of its creatures and in each individual of the species according to its type of natural existence and the resultant function and law of its works. According to its nature each creature must act and it cannot act by anything else. Ego and personal will and desire are nothing more than vividly conscious forms and limited natural workings of a universal Force that is itself formless and infinite and far exceeds them; reason and intelligence and mind and sense and life and body, all that we vaunt or take for our own, are Nature's instruments and creations. But the impersonal Self does not act and is not part of Nature: it observes the action from behind and above and remains lord of itself and a free and impassive knower and witness. The soul that lives in this impersonality is not affected by the actions of which our nature is an instrument; it does not reply to them or their effects by grief and joy, desire and shrinking, attraction and repulsion or any of the hundred

dualities that draw and shake and afflict us. It regards all men and all things and all happenings with equal eyes, watches the modes or qualities of Nature acting on the modes or qualities, sees the whole secret of the mechanism, but is itself beyond these modes and qualities, a pure absolute essential being, impassive, free, at peace. Nature works out her action and the soul impersonal and universal supports her but is not involved, is not attached, is not entangled, is not troubled, is not bewildered. If we can live in this equal self, we too are at peace; our works continue so long as Nature's impulsion prolongs itself in our instruments, but there is a spiritual freedom and quiescence." (CWSA 19: 453–454)

8.

"This duality of Self and Nature, quiescent Purusha, active Prakriti, is not, however, the whole of our being; these are not really the two last words in the matter. ... But even this dualism of Self and Prakriti or Maya ... is not the whole philosophic creed of the Gita. It goes beyond them to the supreme all-embracing oneness of a highest Purusha, Purushottama." (CWSA 19: 454–455)

9.

"The Gita affirms that there is a supreme Mystery, a highest Reality that upholds and reconciles the truth of these two different manifestations. There is an utmost

supreme Self, Lord and Brahman, one who is both the impersonal and the personal, but other and greater than either of them and other and greater than both of them together. He is Purusha, Self and soul of our being, but he is also Prakriti; for Prakriti is the power of the All Soul, the power of the Eternal and Infinite self-moved to action and creation. ... Each soul is a partial being of this self-existent One, an eternal soul of this All-Soul, a partial manifestation of this supreme Lord and his universal Nature. All here is this Divine, this Godhead, Vasudeva; for by Nature and the soul in Nature he becomes all that is and everything proceeds from him and lives in or by him, though he himself is greater than any widest manifestation, any deepest spirit, any cosmic figure. This is the complete truth of existence and this all the secret of the universal action that we have seen disengaging itself from the later chapters of the Gita." (CWSA 19: 455–456)

10.

"But how does this greater truth modify or how affect the principle of spiritual action? It modifies it to begin with in this fundamental matter that the whole meaning of the relation of Self and soul and Nature gets changed, opens out to a new vision, fills in the blanks that were left, acquires a greater amplitude, assumes a true and spiritually positive, a flawlessly integral significance. The

world is no longer a purely mechanical qualitative action and determination of Nature set over against the quiescence of an impersonal self-existence which has no quality or power of self-determination, no ability or impulse to create. The chasm left by this unsatisfactory dualism is bridged and an uplifting unity revealed between knowledge and works, the soul and Nature. The quiescent impersonal Self is a truth,—it is the truth of the calm of the Godhead, the silence of the Eternal, the freedom of the Lord of all birth and becoming and action and creation, his calm infinite freedom of self-existence not bound, troubled or affected by his creation, not touched by the action and reaction of his Nature. Nature itself is now no inexplicable illusion, no separated and opposite phenomenon, but a movement of the Eternal, all her stir and activity and multiplicity founded and supported on the detached and observing tranquillity of an immutable self and spirit. The Lord of Nature remains that immutable self even while he is at the same time the one and multiple soul of the universe and becomes in a partial manifestation all these forces, powers, consciousnesses, gods, animals, things, men. Nature of the gunas is a lower self-limited action of his power; it is nature of imperfectly conscious manifestation and therefore of a certain ignorance. The truth of the self, even as the truth of the Divine, is held back from her surface force absorbed here in its outer action—much as

man's deeper being is held back from the knowledge of his surface consciousness—until the soul in her turns to find out this hidden thing, gets inside itself and discovers its own real verities, its heights and its depths. That is why it has to draw back from its little personal and egoistic to its large and impersonal, immutable and universal Self in order to become capable of self-knowledge. But the Lord is there, not only in that self, but in Nature. He is in the heart of every creature and guides by his presence the turnings of this great natural mechanism. He is present in all, all lives in him, all is himself because all is a becoming of his being, a portion or a figure of his existence. But all proceeds here in a lower partial working that has come out of a secret, a higher and greater and completer nature of Divinity, the eternal infinite nature or absolute self-power of the Godhead, *devātmaśakti*. The perfect, integrally conscious soul hidden in man, an eternal portion of Deity, a spiritual being of the eternal Divine Being, can open in us and can too open us to him if we live constantly in this true truth of his action and our existence. The seeker of Godhead has to get back to the reality of his immutable and eternal impersonal self and at the same time he has to see everywhere the Divine from whom he proceeds, to see him as all, to see him in the whole of this mutable Nature and in every part and result of her and in all her workings, and there too to make himself one with God,

there too to live in him, to enter there too into the divine oneness. He unites in that integrality the divine calm and freedom of his deep essential existence with a supreme power of instrumental action in his divinised self of Nature." (CWSA 19: 456–457)

11.

"But how is this to be done? It can be done first by a right spirit in our will of works. The seeker has to regard all his action as a sacrifice to the Lord of works who is the eternal and universal Being and his own highest Self and the Self of all others and the supreme all-inhabiting, all-containing, all-governing Godhead in the universe. The whole action of Nature is such a sacrifice,—offered at first indeed to the divine Powers that move her and move in her, but these powers are only limited forms and names of the One and Illimitable. Man ordinarily offers his sacrifice openly or under a disguise to his own ego; his oblation is the false action of his own self-will and ignorance. Or he offers his knowledge, action, aspiration, works of energy and effort to the gods for partial, temporal and personal aims. The man of knowledge, the liberated soul offers on the contrary all his activities to the one eternal Godhead without any attachment to their fruit or to the satisfaction of his lower personal desires. He works for God, not for himself, for the universal welfare, for the Soul of the world and not for any

particular object which is of his own personal creation or for any construction of his mental will or object of his vital longings, as a divine agent, not as a principal and separate profiteer in the world commerce. And this, it must be noted, is a thing that cannot be really done except in proportion as the mind arrives at equality, universality, wide impersonality, and a clear freedom from every disguise of the insistent ego: for without these things the claim to be thus acting is a pretension or an illusion. The whole action of the world is the business of the Lord of the universe, the concern of the self-existent Spirit of whom it is the unceasing creation, the progressive becoming, the significant manifestation and living symbol in Nature. The fruits are his, the results are those determined by him and our personal action is only a minor contribution ruled or overruled, so far as its motive is an egoistic claim, by this Self and Spirit in us who is the Self and Spirit in all and governs things for the universal end and good and not for the sake of our ego. To work impersonally, desirelessly and without attachment to the fruits of our work, for the sake of God and the world and the greater Self and the fulfilment of the universal will,—this is the first step towards liberation and perfection." (CWSA 19: 457–458)

12.

"But beyond this step there lies that other greater motion, the inner surrender of all our actions to the Divinity within us. For it is infinite Nature that impels our works and a divine Will in and above her that demands action of us; the choice and turn our ego gives to it is a contribution of our tamasic, rajasic, sattwic quality, a deformation in the lower Nature. The deformation comes by the ego thinking of itself as the doer; the character of the act takes the form of the limited personal nature and the soul is bound up with that and its narrow figures and does not allow the act to proceed freely and purely from the infinite power within it. And the ego is chained to the act and its outcome; it must suffer the personal consequence and reaction even as it claims the responsible origination and personal will of the doing. The free perfect working comes first by referring and finally by surrendering altogether the action and its origination to the divine Master of our existence; for we feel it progressively taken up by a supreme Presence within us, the soul drawn into deep intimacy and close unity with an inner Power and Godhead and the work originated directly from the greater Self, from the all-wise, infinite, universal force of an eternal being and not from the ignorance of the little personal ego. The action is chosen and shaped according to the nature, but entirely by the divine Will in the nature, and it is therefore free and perfect within, whatever its

outward appearance; it comes stamped with the inward spiritual seal of the Infinite as the thing to be done, the movement and the step of the movement decreed in the ways of the omniscient Master of action, *kartavyaṁ karma*. The soul of the liberated man is free in its impersonality, even while he contributes to the action as its means and its occasion his instrumental personal self-creation and the special will and power in his nature. That will and power is now not separately, egoistically his own, but a force of the suprapersonal Divine who acts in this becoming of his own self, this one of his myriad personalities by means of the characteristic form of the natural being, the swabhava. This is the high secret and mystery, *uttamaṁ rahasyam*, of the action of the liberated man. It is the result of a growing of the human soul into a divine Light and of the union of its nature with a highest universal nature." (CWSA 19: 458–459)

13.

"This change cannot come about except by knowledge. There is necessary a right knowledge of self and God and world and a living and growing into the greater consciousness to which that knowledge admits us. We know now what the knowledge is. It is sufficient to remember that it reposes on another and wider vision than the human mental, a changed vision and experience by which one is first of all liberated from the limitations of

the ego sense and its contacts and feels and sees the one self in all, all in God, all beings as Vasudeva, all as vessels of the Godhead and one's self too as a significant being and soul-power of that one Godhead; it treats in a spiritual uniting consciousness all the happenings of the lives of others as if they were happenings of one's own life; it allows no wall of separation and lives in a universal sympathy with all existences, while amidst the world movement one still does the work that has to be done for the good of all, *sarva-bhūta-hite*, according to the way appointed by the Divine and in the measures imposed by the command of the Spirit who is Master of Time. Thus living and acting in this knowledge the soul of man becomes united with the Eternal in personality and in impersonality, lives in the Eternal though acting in Time, even as the Eternal acts, and is free, perfect and blissful whatever may be the form and determination of the work done in Nature." (CWSA 19: 459–460)

14.

"The liberated man has the complete and total knowledge, *kṛtsnavid,* and does all works without any of the restrictions made by the mind, *kṛtsna-karma-kṛt,* according to the force and freedom and infinite power of the divine will within him. And since he is united with the Eternal, he has too the pure spiritual and illimitable joy of his eternal existence. He turns with adoration to the Self

of whom he is a portion, the Master of his works and divine Lover of his soul and nature. He is not an impassive calm spectator only; he lifts not only his knowledge and will to the Eternal, but his heart also of love and adoration and passion. For without that uplifting of the heart his whole nature is not fulfilled and united with God; the ecstasy of the spirit's calm needs to be transformed by the ecstasy of the soul's Ananda. Beyond the personal Jiva and the impersonal Brahman or Atman he reaches the supracosmic Purushottama who is immutable in impersonality and fulfils himself in personality and draws us to him through these two different attractions. The liberated seeker rises personally to that highest Numen by his soul's love and joy in God and the adoration of the will in him for the Master of its works; the peace and largeness of his impersonal universal knowledge is perfected by delight in the self-existent integral close and intimate reality of this surpassing and universal Godhead. This delight glorifies his knowledge and unites it with the eternal delight of the Spirit in its self and its manifestation; this perfects too his personality in the superperson of the divine Purusha and makes his natural being and action one with eternal beauty, eternal harmony, eternal love and Ananda." (CWSA 19: 460–461)

15.

"But all this change means a total passing from the lower human to the higher divine nature. It is a lifting of our whole being or at least of the whole mental being that wills, knows and feels beyond what we are into some highest spiritual consciousness, some satisfying fullest power of existence, some deepest widest delight of the spirit. And this may well be possible by a transcendence of our present natural life, it may well be possible in some celestial state beyond the earthly existence or still beyond in a supracosmic superconscience; it may happen by transition to an absolute and infinite power and status of the Spirit." (CWSA 19: 461)

16.

"The whole Yoga is revealed, the great word of the teaching is given, and Arjuna the chosen human soul is once more turned, no longer in his egoistic mind but in this greatest self-knowledge, to the divine action. The Vibhuti is ready for the divine life in the human, his conscious spirit for the works of the liberated soul, *muktasya karma.* Destroyed is the illusion of the mind; the soul's memory of its self and its truth concealed so long by the misleading shows and forms of our life has returned to it and become its normal consciousness: all doubt and perplexity gone, it can turn to the execution of the command and do faithfully whatever work for God

and the world may be appointed and apportioned to it by the Master of our being, the Spirit and Godhead self-fulfilled in Time and universe." (CWSA 19: 561)

XXVIII—In the Gita, Renunciation of Action Is a Preparation

1.

"This movement of recoil in the path of Sannyasa prepares an absorbed disappearance of the individual in the Eternal, and renunciation of action and life in the world is an indispensable step in the process. But in the Gita's path of Tyaga it is a preparation rather for the turning of our whole life and existence and of all action into an integral oneness with the serene and immeasurable being, consciousness and will of the Divine, and it preludes and makes possible a vast and total passing upward of the soul out of the lower ego to the inexpressible perfection of the supreme spiritual nature, *parā prakṛiti.*" (CWSA 19: 535)

2.

"The liberating activity of the sattwic self-discipline must no doubt be pervaded by a spirit of renunciation,—that is an essential element: but what renunciation and in what manner of the spirit? Not the renunciation of work in the world, not any outward asceticism or any ostentation of a visible giving up of enjoyment, but a renunciation, a leaving, *tyagā,*of vital desire and ego, a total laying aside, *sannyāsa*, of the separate personal life of the desire soul and ego-governed mind and rajasic vital nature. That is

the true condition for entering into the heights of Yoga whether through the impersonal self and Brahmic oneness or through universal Vasudeva or inwardly into the supreme Purushottama. More conventionally taken, Sannyasa in the standing terminology of the sages means the physical depositing or laying aside of desirable actions: Tyaga—this is the Gita's distinction—is the name given by the wise to a mental and spiritual renunciation, an entire abandonment of all attached clinging to the fruit of our works, to the action itself or to its personal initiation or rajasic impulse. In that sense Tyaga, not Sannyasa, is the better way. It is not the desirable actions that must be laid aside, but the desire which gives them that character has to be put away from us. The fruit of the action may come in the dispensation of the Master of works, but there is to be no egoistic demand for that as a reward and condition of doing works. Or the fruit may not at all come and still the work has to be performed as the thing to be done, *kartavyaṁ karma*, the thing which the Master within demands of us. The success, the failure are in his hands and he will regulate them according to his omniscient will and inscrutable purpose. Action, all action has indeed to be given up in the end, not physically by abstention, by immobility, by inertia, but spiritually to the Master of our being by whose power alone can any action be accomplished. There has to be a renunciation of the false idea of ourselves as the doer; for in reality it is the

universal Shakti that works through our personality and our ego. The spiritual transference of all our works to the Master and his Shakti is the real Sannyasa in the teaching of the Gita." (CWSA 19: 494–495)

3.

"As a matter of fact, when people talk of Tyaga, of renunciation, it is always the physical renunciation of the world which they understand by the word or at least on which they lay emphasis, while the Gita takes absolutely the opposite view that the real Tyaga has action and living in the world as its basis and not a flight to the monastery, the cave or the hill-top. The real Tyaga is action with a renunciation of desire and that too is the real Sannyasa." (CWSA 19: 494)

4.

"The Gita insists repeatedly on the difference between the inward and the outward renunciation, *tyagā* and *sannyāsa*. The latter, it says, is valueless without the former, hardly possible even to attain without it, and unnecessary when there is the inward freedom. In fact *tyagā* itself is the real and sufficient Sannyasa. 'He should be known as the eternal Sannyasin who neither hates nor desires; free from the dualities he is happily and easily released from all bondage.' The painful process of

outward Sannyasa, *duḥkham āptum*, is an unnecessary process.” (CWSA 19: 184–185)

XXIX—To Renounce Works Is Not a Right Movement

1.

[7th Shloka of Eighteenth Chapter of the Gita]

"**Verily, renunciation of rightly regulated action is not proper; to renounce them out of delusion is declared to be tamasic**."

"The question still arises, what works are to be done? Those even who stand for a final physical renunciation are not at one in this difficult matter. Some would have it that all works must be excised from our life, as if that were possible. But it is not possible so long as we are in the body and alive; nor can salvation consist in reducing our active selves by trance to the lifeless immobility of the clod and the pebble. The silence of Samadhi does not abrogate the difficulty, for as soon as the breath comes again into the body, we are once more in action and have toppled down from the heights of this salvation by spiritual slumber. But the true salvation, the release by an inner renunciation of the ego and union with the Purushottama remains steady in whatever state, persists in this world or out of it or in whatever world or out of all world, is self-existent, *sarvathā vartamāno'pi*, and does not depend upon inaction or action. What then are the actions to be done? The thoroughgoing ascetic answer,

not noted by the Gita—it was perhaps not altogether current at the time—might be that solely begging, eating and meditation are to be permitted among voluntary activities and otherwise only the necessary actions of the body. But the more liberal and comprehensive solution was evidently to continue the three most sattwic activities, sacrifice, giving and askesis. And these certainly are to be done, says the Gita, for they purify the wise. But more generally, and understanding these three things in their widest sense, it is the rightly regulated action, *niyataṁ karma,*that has to be done, action regulated by the Shastra, the science and art of right knowledge, right works, right living, or regulated by the essential nature, *svabhāva-niyataṁ karma*, or, finally and best of all, regulated by the will of the Divine within and above us. The last is the true and only action of the liberated man, *muktasya karma*. To renounce these works is not a right movement—the Gita lays that down plainly and trenchantly in the end, *niyatasya tusannyāsaḥ karmaṇonopapadyate* [the renunciation of rightly regulated actions is not proper]. To renounce them from an ignorant confidence in the sufficiency of that withdrawal for the true liberation is a tamasic renunciation. The gunas follow us, we see, into the renunciation of works as well as into works. A renunciation with attachment to inaction, *saṅgo akarmaṇi*, would be equally a tamasic withdrawal. And to

give them up because they bring sorrow or are a trouble to the flesh and a weariness to the mind or in the feeling that all is vanity and vexation of spirit, is a rajasic renunciation and does not bring the high spiritual fruit; that too is not the true Tyaga. It is a result of intellectual pessimism or vital weariness, it has its roots in ego. No freedom can come from a renunciation governed by this self-regarding principle." (CWSA 19: 495–496)

2.

"We see increasing upon it through the centuries the doom announced in the grave warnings of the Gita against the consequences of inaction, 'utsideyur ime lokah [these worlds would crumble to pieces] . . sarirayatrapi akarmanah [even the maintenance of physical life cannot be effected without action]. . sankarasya cha karta syam upahanyam imah prajah [I should be the creator of confusion and slay these creatures, Gita 3:24] ..." (CWSA 17: 373)

3.

"No man, as the Gita clearly teaches, can abstain from works, for even the state of withdrawal of the ascetic, even the self-collected existence of the silent Yogin is an act and an act of tremendous effect & profoundest import. So long as we are in manifest existence, so long we are in the jagati using, influencing & impressing

ourselves on the jagat and we cannot escape from the necessity self-imposed on Himself by God within us. And it is so imposed for the reason already stated, because He has made this world for His habitation & as a means for His enjoyment & a thing for His delight—&this his great will & purpose no man can be allowed to frustrate. The wise mind, the illumined soul knowing this truth makes no vain attempt to square this circle; he accepts that which God intends fully & frankly and only seeks the best way to fulfil God in this existence which he occupies on the way to another. For he knows that bondage and freedom are states of the outer mind, not of the inner spirit; for there is none free & none bound, none panting after liberation & none fleeing from bondage, but only the Eternal rejoicing secretly or manifestly in His innumerable habitations." (CWSA 17: 383–384)

4.

"Remember always that you too are Brahman and the divine Shakti is working in you; reach out always to the realisation of God's omnipotence and his delight in the Lila. He bids Arjuna work *lokasaṅgrāharthāya*, for keeping the world together, for he does not wish the world to sink back into Prakriti, but insists on your acting as he acts, 'These worlds would be overpowered by tamas and sink into Prakriti if I did not do actions.' To be attached to

inaction is to give up our action not to God but to our tamasic *ahankara*." (CWSA 13: 84-85)

5.

"Where is the release here, where the full elevation and transformation to the higher spiritual nature, the immortal Dharma, the law proper to the infinite purity and power of a divine being? If this change cannot be effected while in the body, then so it must be said, that the whole nature cannot be transformed and there must remain an unreconciled duality until the mortal type of existence drops off like a discarded shell from the spirit. But in that case the gospel of works cannot well be the right or at least cannot be the ultimate gospel: a perfect quiescence or at least as perfect a quiescence as possible, a progressive Sannyasa and renunciation of works would seem still to be the true counsel of perfection,—as indeed the Mayavadin contends, who says that the Gita's way is no doubt the right way so long as we remain in action, but still all works are an illusion and quiescence the highest path. To act in this spirit is well, but only as a transition to a renunciation of all works, to cessation, to an absolute quiescence.

This is the difficulty which the Gita has still to meet in order to justify works to the seeker after the Spirit. Otherwise it must say to Arjuna, 'Act temporarily in this fashion, but afterwards seek the higher way of

renunciation of works.' But on the contrary it has said that not the cessation of works, but renunciation of desire is the better way; it has spoken of the action of the liberated man, *muktasya karma*. It has even insisted on doing all actions, *sarvāṇi karmāni, kṛtsna-karmakṛt*; it has said that in whatever way the perfected Yogin lives and acts, he lives and acts in God. This can only be, if the nature also in its dynamics and workings becomes divine, a power imperturbable, intangible, inviolate, pure and untroubled by the reactions of the inferior Prakriti." (CWSA 19: 462)

XXX—The Gita Does Not Rule Out the Renunciation of Works If the Call Is Strong Within

1.

"Nay, although the Gita prefers action to inaction, it does not rule out the renunciation of works, but accepts it as one of the ways to the Divine. If that can only be attained by renouncing works and life and all duties and the call is strong within us, then into the bonfire they must go, and there is no help for it. The call of God is imperative and cannot be weighed against any other considerations." (CWSA 19: 33)

XXXI—Karma Is the Name Given to the Creative Impulse and Energy

1.

"Karma, it says, is the name given to the creative impulse and energy, ..." (CWSA 19: 292)

2.

"All this bringing out and continual change from state to state is Karma, is action of Nature, is the energy of Prakriti, the worker, the goddess of processes. It is first a loosing forth of the *svabhāva* into its creative action, *visargaḥ*. The creation is of existences in the becoming, *bhūta-karaḥ*, and of all that they subjectively or otherwise become, *bhāva-karaḥ*. All taken together, it is a constant birth of things in Time, *udbhava*, of which the creative energy of Karma is the principle. All this mutable becoming emerges by a combination of the powers and energies of Nature, *adhibhūta*, which constitutes the world and is the object of the soul's consciousness." (CWSA 19: 293)

3.

"The power or the energy of that self-becoming looses forth into universal action, Karma, all that is thus determined in the spirit. All creation is this action, is this working of the essential nature, is Karma. But it is

developed here in a mutable Nature of intelligence, mind, life, sense and form-objectivity of material phenomenon actually cut off from the absolute light and limited by the Ignorance.” (CWSA 19: 308–309)

XXXII—Equality and Oneness Are the Key Principles Laid Down by Karmayoga of the Gita

1.

"What then are the lines of Karmayoga laid down by the Gita? Its key principle, its spiritual method, can be summed up as the union of two largest and highest states or powers of consciousness, equality and oneness. The kernel of its method is an unreserved acceptance of the Divine in our life as in our inner self and spirit. An inner renunciation of personal desire leads to equality, accomplishes our total surrender to the Divine, supports a delivery from dividing ego which brings us oneness. But this must be a oneness in dynamic force and not only in static peace or inactive beatitude. The Gita promises us freedom for the spirit even in the midst of works and the full energies of Nature, if we accept subjection of our whole being to that which is higher than the separating and limiting ego. It proposes an integral dynamic activity founded on a still passivity; a largest possible action irrevocably based on an immobile calm is its secret,—free expression out of a supreme inward silence.

All things here are the one and indivisible eternal transcendent and cosmic Brahman that is in its seeming divided in things and creatures; in seeming only, for in truth it is always one and equal in all things and creatures and the division is only a phenomenon of the surface. As

long as we live in the ignorant seeming, we are the ego and are subject to the modes of Nature. Enslaved to appearances, bound to the dualities, tossed between good and evil, sin and virtue, grief and joy, pain and pleasure, good fortune and ill fortune, success and failure, we follow helplessly the iron or gilt and iron round of the wheel of Maya. At best we have only the poor relative freedom which by us is ignorantly called free-will. But that is at bottom illusory, since it is the modes of Nature that express themselves through our personal will; it is force of Nature, grasping us, ungrasped by us that determines what we shall will and how we shall will it. Nature, not an independent ego, chooses what object we shall seek, whether by reasoned will or unreflecting impulse, at any moment of our existence. If, on the contrary, we live in the unifying reality of the Brahman, then we go beyond the ego and overstep Nature. For then we get back to our true self and become the spirit; in the spirit we are above the impulsion of Nature, superior to her modes and forces. Attaining to a perfect equality in the soul, mind and heart, we realise our true self of oneness, one with all beings, one too with That which expresses itself in them and in all that we see and experience. This equality and this oneness are the indispensable twin foundation we must lay down for a divine being, a divine consciousness, a divine action. Not one with all, we are not spiritual, not divine. Not equal-

souled to all things, happenings and creatures, we cannot see spiritually, cannot know divinely, cannot feel divinely towards others. The Supreme Power, the one Eternal and Infinite is equal to all things and to all beings; and because it is equal, it can act with an absolute wisdom according to the truth of its works and its force and according to the truth of each thing and of every creature." (CWSA 23: 95–96)

2.

"These are the conditions of our effort and they point to an ideal which can be expressed in these or in equivalent formulae.

To live in God and not in the ego; to move, vastly founded, not in the little egoistic consciousness, but in the consciousness of the All-Soul and the Transcendent.

To be perfectly equal in all happenings and to all beings, and to see and feel them as one with oneself and one with the Divine; to feel all in oneself and all in God; to feel God in all, oneself in all.

To act in God and not in the ego. And here, first, not to choose action by reference to personal needs and standards, but in obedience to the dictates of the living highest Truth above us. Next, as soon as we are sufficiently founded in the spiritual consciousness, not to act any longer by our separate will or movement, but more and more to allow action to happen and develop

under the impulsion and guidance of a divine Will that surpasses us. And last, the supreme result, to be exalted into an identity in knowledge, force, consciousness, act, joy of existence with the Divine Shakti; to feel a dynamic movement not dominated by mortal desire and vital instinct and impulse and illusive mental free-will, but luminously conceived and evolved in an immortal self-delight and an infinite self-knowledge. For this is the action that comes by a conscious subjection and merging of the natural man into the divine Self and eternal Spirit; it is the Spirit that for ever transcends and guides this world-Nature." (CWSA 23: 101)

XXXIII—The Karmayoga in the Gita

1.

"The greatest gospel of spiritual works ever yet given to the race, the most perfect system of Karmayoga known to man in the past, is to be found in the Bhagavad Gita. In that famous episode of the Mahabharata the great basic lines of Karmayoga are laid down for all time with an incomparable mastery and the infallible eye of an assured experience." (CWSA 23: 94)

2.

"But what is the essence of this self-control, what is meant by action done as Yoga, *Karmayoga*? It is non-attachment, it is to do works without clinging with the mind to the objects of sense and the fruit of the works. Not complete inaction, which is an error, a confusion, a self-delusion, an impossibility, but action full and free done without subjection to sense and passion, desireless and unattached works, are the first secret of perfection." (CWSA 19: 108–109)

3.

"Yoga, on the other hand, proceeds by works; it is in its first principle Karmayoga; but it is evident from the whole teaching of the Gita and its later definitions that the word *karma* is used in a very wide sense and that by Yoga is

meant the selfless devotion of all the inner as well as the outer activities as a sacrifice to the Lord of all works, offered to the Eternal as Master of all the soul's energies and austerities." (CWSA 19: 70)

4.

"The *Essays on the Gita* explain the ordinary karmayoga as developed in the Gita, in which the work done is the ordinary work of human life with only an inward change." (CWSA 31: 277) (CWSA 35: 99)

5.

"To do works in a close union and deep communion with the Divine in us, the Universal around us and the Transcendent above us, not to be shut up any longer in the imprisoned and separative human mind, the slave of its ignorant dictates and narrow suggestions, this is Karmayoga.

To work in obedience to a divine command, an eternal Will, a transcendent and universal impulsion, not to run under the whips of ego and need and passion and desire, and not to be goaded by the pricks of mental and vital and physical preference, but to be moved by God only, by the highest Truth only, this is Karmayoga.

To live and act no longer in human ignorance, but in divine Knowledge, conscient of individual nature and

universal forces and responsive to a transcendent governance, this is Karmayoga.

To live, be and act in a divine, illimitable and luminous universal consciousness open to that which is more than universal, no longer to grope and stumble in the old narrowness and darkness, this is Karmayoga.

Whosoever is weary of the littlenesses that are, whosoever is enamoured of the divine greatnesses that shall be, whosoever has any glimpse of the Supreme within him or above him or around him let him hear the call, let him follow the path. The way is difficult, the labour heavy and arduous and long, but its reward is habitation in an unimaginable glory, a fathomless felicity, a happy and endless vastness." (CWSA 12: 353)

6.

"This is the Karmayoga as it is laid down in the Gita as I have developed it for the integral spiritual life. It is founded not on speculation and reasoning but on experience. It does not exclude meditation and it certainly does not exclude bhakti, for the self-offering to the Divine, the consecration of all oneself to the Divine which is the essence of this Karmayoga are essentially a movement of bhakti. Only it does exclude a life-fleeing exclusive meditation or an emotional bhakti shut up in its own inner dream taken as the whole movement of the Yoga. One may have hours of pure absorbed meditation

or of the inner motionless adoration and ecstasy, but they are not the whole of the integral Yoga." (CWSA 29: 218)

7.

"So too, in the Gita, while laying stress on Jnana & Bhakti, he will by no means banish Karma nor relegate it to an inferior place; the most significant portion of the Gita is its eulogy of Karmayoga and inspired exposition of its nature & principles. Jnana, of course, is indispensable; Jnana is first & best. Works without knowledge will not save a man but only plunge him deeper & deeper into bondage. The Upanishad, before it speaks of the necessity of works, takes care first to insist that you must realise the presence of the Lord enveloping this universe & each object that it contains. When you have got this Jnana that all is the One Brahman and your actions are but the dramatic illusions unrolled by Prakriti for the delight of the Purusha, you will then be able to do works without desire or illusion, abandoning the world that you may enjoy it, as the Upanishad tells you, or as Sri Krishna advises, giving up all hankering for the fruits of your work. You will devote all your actions to the Lord; not to the lower false self, which feels pleasure & pain in the results of your actions, but to the Brahman in you which works *lokasaṅgrāharthā*, for the keeping together of the peoples, so that instead of the uninstructed multitudes being bewildered and led astray by your inactivity, the

world may be rather helped, strengthened and maintained by the godlike character of your works. And your works must be godlike if they are done without desire or attachment to their fruits. For this is how God works." (CWSA 17: 199)

8.

"But in actual *sadhana* one has to advance from stage to stage, leaving many things, indeed the greatest things to arise subsequently and solve themselves fully by the light of the advance we have made in spiritual experience. The Gita follows to a certain extent this curve of experience and puts first a sort of large preliminary basis of works and knowledge which contains an element leading up to bhakti and to a greater knowledge, but not yet fully arriving. The [first] six chapters present us with that basis." (CWSA 19: 248)

9.

"The Gita's solution is to rise above our natural being and normal mind, above our intellectual and ethical perplexities into another consciousness with another law of being and therefore another standpoint for our action; where personal desire and personal emotions no longer govern it; where the dualities fall away; where the action is no longer our own and where therefore the sense of personal virtue and personal sin is exceeded; where the

universal, the impersonal, the divine spirit works out through us its purpose in the world; where we are ourselves by a new and divine birth changed into being of that Being, consciousness of that Consciousness, power of that Power, bliss of that Bliss, and, living no longer in our lower nature, have no works to do of our own, no personal aim to pursue of our own, but if we do works at all,—and that is the one real problem and difficulty left,—do only the divine works, those of which our outward nature is only a passive instrument and no longer the cause, no longer provides the motive; for the motive-power is above us in the will of the Master of our works. And this is presented to us as the true solution, because it goes back to the real truth of our being and to live according to the real truth of our being is evidently the highest solution and the sole entirely true solution of the problems of our existence. Our mental and vital personality is a truth of our natural existence, but a truth of the ignorance, and all that attaches itself to it is also truth of that order, practically valid for the works of the ignorance, but no longer valid when we get back to the real truth of our being. But how can we actually be sure that this is the truth? We cannot so long as we remain satisfied with our ordinary mental experience; for our normal mental experience is wholly that of this lower nature full of the ignorance. We can only know this greater truth by living it, that is to say, by passing beyond

the mental into the spiritual experience, by Yoga. For the living out of spiritual experience until we cease to be mind and become spirit, until, liberated from the imperfections of our present nature, we are able to live entirely in our true and divine being is what in the end we mean by Yoga." (CWSA 19: 249–250)

10.

"This upward transference of our centre of being and the consequent transformation of our whole existence and consciousness, with a resultant change in the whole spirit and motive of our action, the action often remaining precisely the same in all its outward appearances, makes the gist of the Gita's Karmayoga. Change your being, be reborn into the spirit and by that new birth proceed with the action to which the Spirit within has appointed you, may be said to be the heart of its message. Or again, put otherwise, with a deeper and more spiritual import,—make the work you have to do here your means of inner spiritual rebirth, the divine birth, and, having become divine, do still divine works as an instrument of the Divine for the leading of the peoples. Therefore there are here two things which have to be clearly laid down and clearly grasped, the way to the change, to this upward transference, this new divine birth, and the nature of the work or rather the spirit in which it has to be done, since the outward form of it need not at all change, although

really its scope and aim become quite different. But these two things are practically the same, for the elucidation of one elucidates the other. The spirit of our action arises from the nature of our being and the inner foundation it has taken, but also this nature is itself affected by the trend and spiritual effect of our action; a very great change in the spirit of our works changes the nature of our being and alters the foundation it has taken; it shifts the centre of conscious force from which we act. If life and action were entirely illusory, as some would have it, if the Spirit had nothing to do with works or life, this would not be so; but the soul in us develops itself by life and works and, not indeed so much the action itself, but the way of our soul's inner force of working determines its relations to the Spirit. This is, indeed, the justification of Karmayoga as a practical means of the higher self-realisation." (CWSA 19: 250–251)

11.

"... we may say that there are two lives we can lead, the life of the soul engrossed in the workings of its active nature, identified with its psychological and physical instruments, limited by them, bound by its personality, subject to Nature, and the life of the Spirit, superior to these things, large, impersonal, universal, free, unlimited, transcendent, supporting with an infinite equality its natural being and action, but exceeding them by its

freedom and infinity. We may live in what is now our natural being or we may live in our greater and spiritual being. This is the first great distinction on which the Karmayoga of the Gita is founded." (CWSA 19: 253)

12.

"The whole question and the whole method lie then in the liberation of the soul from the limitations of our present natural being. In our natural life the first dominating fact is our subjection to the forms of material Nature, the outward touches of things. These present themselves to our life through the senses, and the life through the senses immediately returns upon these objects to seize upon them and deal with them, desires, attaches itself, seeks for results. The mind in all its inner sensations, reactions, emotions, habitual ways of perceiving, thinking and feeling obeys this action of the senses; the reason too carried away by the mind gives itself up to this life of the senses, this life in which the inner being is subject to the externality of things and cannot for a moment really get above it or outside the circle of its action upon us and its psychological results and reactions within us. It cannot get beyond them because there is the principle of ego by which the reason differentiates the sum of the action of Nature upon our mind, will, sense, body from her action in other minds, wills, nervous organisms, bodies; and life to us means only the way she affects our ego and the

way our ego replies to her touches. We know nothing else, we seem to be nothing else; the soul itself seems then only a separate mass of mind, will, emotional and nervous reception and reaction. We may enlarge our ego, identify ourselves with the family, clan, class, country, nation, humanity even, but still the ego remains in all these disguises the root of our actions, only it finds a larger satisfaction of its separate being by these wider dealings with external things." (CWSA 19: 253–254)

13.

"What acts in us is still the will of the natural being seizing upon the touches of the external world to satisfy the different phases of its personality, and the will in this seizing is always a will of desire and passion and attachment to our works and their results, the will of Nature in us; our personal will, we say, but our ego personality is a creation of Nature, it is not and cannot be our free self, our independent being. The whole is the action of the modes of Nature. It may be a tamasic action, and then we have an inert personality subject to and satisfied with the mechanical round of things, incapable of any strong effort at a freer action and mastery. Or it may be the rajasic action, and then we have the restless active personality which throws itself upon Nature and tries to make her serve its needs and desires, but does not see that its apparent mastery is a

servitude, since its needs and desires are those of Nature, and while we are subject to them, there can be for us no freedom. Or it may be a sattwic action, and then we have the enlightened personality which tries to live by reason or to realise some preferred ideal of good, truth or beauty; but this reason is still subject to the appearances of Nature and these ideals are only changing phases of our personality in which we find in the end no sure rule or permanent satisfaction. We are still carried on a wheel of mutation, obeying in our circlings through the ego some Power within us and within all this, but not ourselves that Power or in union and communion with it. Still there is no freedom, no real mastery." (CWSA 19: 254)

14.

"Yet freedom is possible. For that we have to get first away into ourselves from the action of the external world upon our senses; that is to say, we have to live inwardly and be able to hold back the natural running of the senses after their external objects. A mastery of the senses, an ability to do without all that they hanker after, is the first condition of the true soul-life; only so can we begin to feel that there is a soul within us which is other than the mutations of mind in its reception of the touches of outward things, a soul which in its depths goes back to something self-existent, immutable, tranquil, self-possessed, grandiose, serene and august, master of itself

and unaffected by the eager runnings of our external nature. But this cannot be done so long as we are subject to desire. For it is desire, the principle of all our superficial life, which satisfies itself with the life of the senses and finds its whole account in the play of the passions. We must get rid then of desire and, that propensity of our natural being destroyed, the passions which are its emotional results will fall into quietude; for the joy and grief of possession and of loss, success and failure, pleasant and unpleasant touches, which entertain them, will pass out of our souls. A calm equality will then be gained. And since we have still to live and act in the world and our nature in works is to seek for the fruits of our works, we must change that nature and do works without attachment to their fruits, otherwise desire and all its results remain. But how can we change this nature of the doer of works in us? By dissociating works from ego and personality, by seeing through the reason that all this is only the play of the gunas of Nature, and by dissociating our soul from the play, by making it first of all the observer of the workings of Nature and leaving those works to the Power that is really behind them, the something in Nature which is greater than ourselves, not our personality, but the Master of the universe. But the mind will not permit all this; its nature is to run out after the senses and carry the reason and will with it. Then we must learn to still the mind. We must attain that absolute

peace and stillness in which we become aware of the calm, motionless, blissful Self within us which is eternally untroubled and unaffected by the touches of things, is sufficient to itself and finds there alone its eternal satisfaction." (CWSA 19: 254–255)

15.

"This Self is our self-existent being. It is not limited by our personal existence. It is the same in all existences, pervasive, equal to all things, supporting the whole universal action with its infinity, but unlimited by all that is finite, unmodified by the changings of Nature and personality. When this Self is revealed within us, when we feel its peace and stillness, we can grow into that; we can transfer the poise of our soul from its lower immergence in Nature and draw it back into the Self. We can do this by the force of the things we have attained, calm, equality, passionless impersonality. For as we grow in these things, carry them to their fullness, subject all our nature to them, we are growing into this calm, equal, passionless, impersonal, all-pervading Self. Our senses fall into that stillness and receive the touches of the world on us with a supreme tranquillity; our mind falls into stillness and becomes the calm, universal witness; our ego dissolves itself into this impersonal existence. All things we see in this self which we have become in ourself; and we see this self in all; we become one being

with all beings in the spiritual basis of their existence. By doing works in this selfless tranquillity and impersonality, our works cease to be ours, cease to bind or trouble us with their reactions. Nature and her gunas weave the web of her works, but without affecting our griefless self-existent tranquillity. All is given up into that one equal and universal Brahman." (CWSA 19: 255–256)

16.

"But here there are two difficulties. First, there seems to be an antinomy between this tranquil and immutable Self and the action of Nature. How then does the action at all exist or how can it continue once we have entered into the immutable Self existence? Where in that is the will to works which would make the action of our nature possible? If we say with the Sankhya that the will is in Nature and not in the Self, still there must be a motive in Nature and the power in her to draw the soul into its workings by interest, ego and attachment, and when these things cease to reflect themselves in the soul-consciousness, her power ceases and the motive of works ceases with it. But the Gita does not accept this view, which seems indeed to necessitate the existence of many Purushas and not one universal Purusha, otherwise the separate experience of the soul and its separate liberation while millions of others are still involved, would not be intelligible. Nature is not a separate principle, but the

power of the Supreme going forth in cosmic creation. But if the Supreme is only this immutable Self and the individual is only something that has gone forth from him in the Power, then the moment it returns and takes its poise in the self, everything must cease except the supreme unity and the supreme calm. Secondly, even if in some mysterious way action still continues, yet since the Self is equal to all things, it cannot matter whether works are done or, if they are done, it cannot matter what work is done. Why then this insistence on the most violent and disastrous form of action, this chariot, this battle, this warrior, this divine charioteer?" (CWSA 19: 256–257)

17.

"The Gita answers by presenting the Supreme as something greater even than the immutable Self, more comprehensive, one who is at once this Self and the Master of works in Nature. But he directs the works of Nature with the eternal calm, the equality, the superiority to works and personality which belong to the immutable. This, we may say, is the poise of being from which he directs works, and by growing into this we are growing into his being and into the poise of divine works. From this he goes forth as the Will and Power of his being in Nature, manifests himself in all existences, is born as Man in the world, is there in the heart of all men, reveals himself as the Avatar, the divine birth in man; and as

man grows into his being, it is into the divine birth that he grows. Works must be done as a sacrifice to this Lord of our works, and we must by growing into the Self realise our oneness with him in our being and see our personality as a partial manifestation of him in Nature. One with him in being, we grow one with all beings in the universe and do divine works, not as ours, but as his workings through us for the maintenance and leading of the peoples." (CWSA 19: 257)

18.

"This is the essential thing to be done, and once this is done, the difficulties which present themselves to Arjuna will disappear. The problem is no longer one of our personal action, for that which makes our personality becomes a thing temporal and subordinate, the question is then only one of the workings of the divine Will through us in the universe. To understand that we must know what this supreme Being is in himself and in Nature, what the workings of Nature are and what they lead to, and the intimate relation between the soul in Nature and this supreme Soul, of which bhakti with knowledge is the foundation. The elucidation of these questions is the subject of the rest of the Gita." (CWSA 19: 257–258)

19.

"Only by a growth into a greater superhuman and supramental consciousness whose very nature is to be

attuned to the Divine can we achieve the true and supreme Karma Yoga.

This transformation is only possible after certain steps of a divine ascent have been mastered and to climb these steps is the object of the Yoga of Works as it is conceived by the Gita. The extirpation of desire, a wide and calm equality of the mind, the life soul and the spirit, annihilation of the ego, an inner quietude and expulsion or transcendence of ordinary Nature, the Nature of the three gunas and a total surrender to the Supreme are the successive steps of this preliminary change. Only after all this has been done, can we live securely in an infinite consciousness not bound like our mental human nature. And only then can we receive the Light, know perfectly the will of the Supreme, attune all our movements to the rhythm of its Truth and execute perfectly from moment to moment its imperative commandments. Till then there is no firm achievement, but only an endeavour, seeking and aspiration, all the stress and struggle of a great and uncertain spiritual adventure. Only when these things are accomplished is there for the dynamic parts of our nature the beginning of a divine security in its acts and a transcendent peace." (CWSA 12: 352)

20.

"This *sanātana* dharma has many scriptures, Veda, Vedanta, Gita, Upanishad, Darshana, Purana, Tantra, nor

could it reject the Bible or the Koran; but its real, most authoritative scripture is in the heart in which the Eternal has His dwelling. It is in our inner spiritual experiences that we shall find the proof and source of the world's Scriptures, the law of knowledge, love and conduct, the basis and inspiration of Karmayoga." (CWSA 8: 26) (CWSA 13: 6)

XXXIV—Unfortunately, the Gita's Insistence on Work Could Not Prevail in India Against Ascetic Illusionism

1.

"But for the Yoga of the Gita, as for the Vedantic Yoga of works, action is not only a preparation but itself the means of liberation; and it is the justice of this view which the Gita seeks to bring out with such an unceasing force and insistence,—an insistence, unfortunately, which could not prevail in India against the tremendous tide of Buddhism, was lost afterwards in the intensity of ascetic illusionism and the fervour of world-shunning saints and devotees and is only now beginning to exercise its real and salutary influence on the Indian mind. Renunciation is indispensable, but the true renunciation is the inner rejection of desire and egoism; without that the outer physical abandoning of works is a thing unreal and ineffective, with it it ceases even to be necessary, although it is not forbidden." (CWSA 19: 85–86)

XXXV—One-Sided Misrepresentations of the Gita Have to Be Avoided

1.

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

the background or making them a subordinate and auxiliary teaching, to turn it into a partisan of our own doctrine or dogma." (CWSA 19: 29)

2.

"Thus, there are those who make the Gita teach, not works at all, but a discipline of preparation for renouncing life and works: the indifferent performance of prescribed actions or of whatever task may lie ready to the hands, becomes the means, the discipline; the final renunciation of life and works is the sole real object. It is quite easy to justify this view by citations from the book and by a certain arrangement of stress in following out its argument, especially if we shut our eyes to the peculiar way in which it uses such a word as *sannyāsa*, renunciation; but it is quite impossible to persist in this view on an impartial reading in face of the continual assertion to the very end that action should be preferred to inaction and that superiority lies with the true, the inner renunciation of desire by equality and the giving up of works to the supreme Purusha." (CWSA 19: 29–30)

3.

"Others again speak of the Gita as if the doctrine of devotion were its whole teaching and put in the background its monistic elements and the high place it gives to quietistic immergence in the one self of all. And

undoubtedly its emphasis on devotion, its insistence on the aspect of the Divine as Lord and Purusha and its doctrine of the Purushottama, the Supreme Being who is superior both to the mutable Being and to the Immutable and who is what in His relation to the world we know as God, are the most striking and among the most vital elements of the Gita. Still, this Lord is the Self in whom all knowledge culminates and the Master of sacrifice to whom all works lead as well as the Lord of Love into whose being the heart of devotion enters, and the Gita preserves a perfectly equal balance, emphasising now knowledge, now works, now devotion, but for the purposes of the immediate trend of the thought, not with any absolute separate preference of one over the others. He in whom all three meet and become one, He is the Supreme Being, the Purushottama." (CWSA 19: 30)

4.

"But at the present day, since in fact the modern mind began to recognise and deal at all with the Gita, the tendency is to subordinate its elements of knowledge and devotion, to take advantage of its continual insistence on action and to find in it a scripture of the Karmayoga, a Light leading us on the path of action, a Gospel of Works. ... and not at all of works as they are understood by the modern mind, not at all an action dictated by egoistic and altruistic, by personal, social, humanitarian motives,

principles, ideals. Yet this is what present-day interpretations seek to make of the Gita. We are told continually by many authoritative voices that the Gita, opposing in this the ordinary ascetic and quietistic tendency of Indian thought and spirituality, proclaims with no uncertain sound the gospel of human action, the ideal of disinterested performance of social duties, nay, even, it would seem, the quite modern ideal of social service. To all this I can only reply that very patently and even on the very surface of it the Gita does nothing of the kind and that this is a modern misreading, a reading of the modern mind into an ancient book, of the present-day European or Europeanised intellect into a thoroughly antique, a thoroughly Oriental and Indian teaching. That which the Gita teaches is not a human, but a divine action; not the performance of social duties, but the abandonment of all other standards of duty or conduct for a selfless performance of the divine will working through our nature; not social service, but the action of the Best, the God-possessed, the Master-men done impersonally for the sake of the world and as a sacrifice to Him who stands behind man and Nature." (CWSA 19: 30–31)

5.

"The Gita can only be understood, like any other great work of the kind, by studying it in its entirety and as a

developing argument. But the modern interpreters, starting from the great writer Bankim Chandra Chatterji who first gave to the Gita this new sense of a Gospel of Duty, have laid an almost exclusive stress on the first three or four chapters and in those on the idea of equality, on the expression *kartavyaṁ karma*, the work that is to be done, which they render by duty, and on the phrase "Thou hast a right to action, but none to the fruits of action" which is now popularly quoted as the great word, *mahāvākya,* of the Gita. The rest of the eighteen chapters with their high philosophy are given a secondary importance, except indeed the great vision in the eleventh. This is natural enough for the modern mind which is, or has been till yesterday, inclined to be impatient of metaphysical subtleties and far-off spiritual seekings, eager to get to work and, like Arjuna himself, mainly concerned for a workable law of works, a dharma. But it is the wrong way to handle this Scripture." (CWSA 19:35–36)

XXXVI—Work in the Yoga of Patanjali, Rajayoga, and the Gita

1.

"... while Patanjali gives to works only an initial importance for moral purification and religious concentration, the Gita goes so far as to make works the distinctive characteristic of Yoga. Action to Patanjali is only a preliminary, in the Gita it is a permanent foundation; in the Rajayoga it has practically to be put aside when its result has been attained or at any rate ceases very soon to be a means for the Yoga, for the Gita it is a means of the highest ascent and continues even after the complete liberation of the soul." (CWSA 19: 69–70)

XXXVII—Work in the Vedanta and the Gita

1.

"By works the Vedantins understood these religious works, the sacrificial system, the *yajña*, full of a careful order, *vidhi*, of exact and complicated rites,*kriyā-viśeṣa-bahulām*. But in Yoga works had a much wider significance. The Gita insists on this wider significance; in our conception of spiritual activity all works have to be included, *sarva-karmāṇi.* At the same time it does not, like Buddhism, reject the idea of the sacrifice, it prefers to uplift and enlarge it. Yes, it says in effect, not only is sacrifice, *yajña*, the most important part of life, but all life, all works should be regarded as sacrifice, are *yajña*, though by the ignorant they are performed without the higher knowledge and by the most ignorant not in the true order, *avidhi-pūrvakam*. Sacrifice is the very condition of life; with sacrifice as their eternal companion the Father of creatures created the peoples. But the sacrifices of the Vedavadins are offerings of desire directed towards material rewards, desire eager for the result of works, desire looking to a larger enjoyment in Paradise as immortality and highest salvation. This the system of the Gita cannot admit; for that in its very inception starts with the renunciation of desire, with its rejection and destruction as the enemy of the soul. The Gita does not deny the validity even of the Vedic

sacrificial works; it admits them, it admits that by these means one may get enjoyment here and Paradise beyond; it is I myself, says the divine Teacher, who accept these sacrifices and to whom they are offered, I who give these fruits in the form of the gods since so men choose to approach me. But this is not the true road, nor is the enjoyment of Paradise the liberation and fulfilment which man has to seek. It is the ignorant who worship the gods, not knowing whom they are worshipping ignorantly in these divine forms; for they are worshipping, though in ignorance, the One, the Lord, the only Deva, and it is he who accepts their offering. To that Lord must the sacrifice be offered, the true sacrifice of all the life's energies and activities, with devotion, without desire, for His sake and for the welfare of the peoples. It is because the Vedavada obscures this truth and with its tangle of ritual ties man down to the action of the three gunas that it has to be so severely censured and put roughly aside; but its central idea is not destroyed; transfigured and uplifted, it is turned into a most important part of the true spiritual experience and of the method of liberation." (CWSA 19: 89–90)

XXXVIII—The Gita: A Synthesis of Work, Knowledge, and Devotion

1.

"The practical difference, as it seems to have presented itself to the religious minds of that day, lay first in this that Sankhya proceeded by knowledge and through the Yoga of the intelligence, while Yoga proceeded by works and the transformation of the active consciousness and, secondly,—a corollary of this first distinction,—that Sankhya led to entire passivity and the renunciation of works, *sannyāsa*, while Yoga held to be quite sufficient the inner renunciation of desire, the purification of the subjective principle which leads to action and the turning of works Godwards, towards the divine existence and towards liberation. Yet both had the same aim, the transcendence of birth and of this terrestrial existence and the union of the human soul with the Highest. This at least is the difference as it is presented to us by the Gita.

The difficulty which Arjuna feels in understanding any possible synthesis of these oppositions is an indication of the hard line that was driven in between these two systems in the normal ideas of the time. The Teacher sets out by reconciling works and the Yoga of the intelligence: the latter, he says, is far superior to mere works; it is by the Yoga of the Buddhi, by knowledge raising man out of the ordinary human mind

and its desires into the purity and equality of the Brahmic condition free from all desire that works can be made acceptable. Yet are works a means of salvation, but works thus purified by knowledge." (CWSA 19: 81–82)

2.

"Knowledge is essential, there is no higher force for liberation, but works with knowledge are also needed; by the union of knowledge and works the soul dwells entirely in the Brahmic status not only in repose and inactive calm, but in the very midst and stress and violence of action. Devotion is all-important, but works with devotion are also important; by the union of knowledge, devotion and works the soul is taken up into the highest status of the Ishwara to dwell there in the Purushottama who is master at once of the eternal spiritual calm and the eternal cosmic activity. This is the synthesis of the Gita." (CWSA 19: 86)

3.

"This integral turning of the soul Godwards bases royally the Gita's synthesis of knowledge and works and devotion. To know God thus integrally is to know him as One in the self and in all manifestation and beyond all manifestation,—and all this unitedly and at once. And yet even so to know him is not enough unless it is accompanied by an intense uplifting of the heart and soul

Godwards, unless it kindles a one-pointed and at the same time all-embracing love, adoration, aspiration. Indeed the knowledge which is not companioned by an aspiration and vivified by an uplifting is no true knowledge, for it can be only an intellectual seeing and a barren cognitive endeavour. The vision of God brings infallibly the adoration and passionate seeking of the Divine,—a passion for the Divine in his self-existent being, but also for the Divine in ourselves and for the Divine in all that is. To know with the intellect is simply to understand and may be an effective starting-point,—or, too, it may not be, and it will not be if there is no sincerity in the knowledge, no urge towards inner realisation in the will, no power upon the soul, no call in the spirit: for that would mean that the brain has externally understood, but inwardly the soul has seen nothing. True knowledge is to know with the inner being, and when the inner being is touched by the light, then it arises to embrace that which is seen, it yearns to possess, it struggles to shape that in itself and itself to it, it labours to become one with the glory of its vision. Knowledge in this sense is an awakening to identity and, since the inner being realises itself by consciousness and delight, by love, by possession and oneness with whatever of itself it has seen, knowledge awakened must bring an overmastering impulse towards this true and only perfect realisation. Here that which is known is not

an externalised object, but the divine Purusha, self and lord of all that we are. An all-seizing delight in him and a deep and moved love and adoration of him must be the inevitable result and is the very soul of this knowledge. And this adoration is no isolated seeking of the heart, but an offering of the whole existence. Therefore it must take also the form of a sacrifice; there is a giving of all our works to the Ishwara, there is a surrender of all our active inward and outward nature to the Godhead of our adoration in its every subjective and in its every objective movement. All our subjective workings move in him and they seek him, the Lord and Self, as the source and goal of their power and endeavour. All our objective workings move out towards him in the world and make him their object, initiate a service of God in the world of which the controlling power is the Divinity within us in whom we are one self with the universe and its creatures. For both world and self, Nature and the soul in her are enlightened by the consciousness of the One, are inner and outer bodies of the transcendent Purushottama. So comes a synthesis of mind and heart and will in the one self and spirit and with it the synthesis of knowledge, love and works in this integral union, this embracing God-realisation, this divine Yoga." (CWSA 19: 324–325)

4.

"Those who lay a predominant stress on knowledge, arrive to the same point [a single uplifting of our whole

being and nature to the eternal Purushottama] by an always increasing, engrossing, enforcing power of the vision of the Divine on the soul and the nature. Theirs is the sacrifice of knowledge and by an ineffable ecstasy of knowledge they come to the adoration of the Purushottama, *jñāna-yajñena yajanto mām upāsate*. This is a comprehension filled with Bhakti, because it is integral in its instruments, integral in its objective. It is not a pursuit of the Supreme merely as an abstract unity or an indeterminable Absolute. It is a heartfelt seeking and seizing of the Supreme and the Universal, a pursuit of the Infinite in his infinity and of the Infinite in all that is finite, a vision and embracing of the One in his oneness and of the One in all his several principles, his innumerable visages, forces, forms, here, there, everywhere, timelessly and in time, multiply, multitudinously, in endless aspects of his Godhead, in beings without number, all his million universal faces fronting us in the world and its creatures, *ekatvena pṛthaktvena bahudhā viśvatomukham*. This knowledge becomes easily an adoration, a large devotion, a vast self-giving, an integral self-offering because it is the knowledge of a Spirit, the contact of a Being, the embrace of a supreme and universal Soul which claims all that we are even as it lavishes on us when we approach it all the treasures of its endless delight of existence." (CWSA 19: 327–328)

5.

"The Gita cannot be described as exclusively a gospel of love. What it sets forth is a Yoga of knowledge, devotion and works based on a spiritual consciousness and realisation of oneness with the Divine and of the oneness of all beings in the Divine." (CWSA 29: 441)

6.

"The way to liberation is to turn from the outward to the inward, from the appearance created by the material life which lays its burden on the mind and imprisons it in the grooves of the life and the body to the divine Reality which waits to manifest itself through the freedom of the spirit. Love of the world, the mask, must change into the love of God, the Truth. Once this secret and inner Godhead is known and is embraced, the whole being and the whole life will undergo a sovereign uplifting and a marvellous transmutation. In place of the ignorance of the lower Nature absorbed in its outward works and appearances the eye will open to the vision of God everywhere, to the unity and universality of the spirit. The world's sorrow and pain will disappear in the bliss of the All-blissful; our weakness and error and sin will be changed into the all-embracing and all-transforming strength, truth and purity of the Eternal. To make the mind one with the divine consciousness, to make the whole of our emotional nature one love of God

everywhere, to make all our works one sacrifice to the Lord of the worlds and all our worship and aspiration one adoration of him and self-surrender, to direct the whole self Godwards in an entire union is the way to rise out of a mundane into a divine existence. This is the Gita's teaching of divine love and devotion, in which knowledge, works and the heart's longing become one in a supreme unification, a merging of all their divergences, an intertwining of all their threads, a high fusion, a wide identifying movement." (CWSA 19: 336)

7.

"We have already seen that for this end self-knowledge, equality, impersonality are the first necessities, and that that is the way of reconciliation between knowledge and works, between spirituality and activity in the world, between the ever immobile quietism of the timeless self and the eternal play of the pragmatic energy of Nature. But the Gita now lays down another and greater necessity for the Karmayogin who has unified his Yoga of works with the Yoga of knowledge. Not knowledge and works alone are demanded of him now, but *bhakti* also, devotion to the Divine, love and adoration and the soul's desire of the Highest. This demand, not expressly made until now, had yet been prepared when the Teacher laid down as the necessary turn of his Yoga the conversion of all works into a sacrifice to the Lord of our being and

fixed as its culmination the giving up of all works, not only into our impersonal Self, but through impersonality into the Being from whom all our will and power originate. What was there implied is now brought out and we begin to see more fully the Gita's purpose." (CWSA 19: 281–282)

XXXIX—The Purushottama in the Gita: The Transcendent and Immanent Divine

1.

"*The correspondent asked how to reconcile two passages in the Gita: 'Deliver the self by means of the Self'' and 'Abandon all dharmas, take refuge in Me alone' (Gita 6.5 and 18.66).* — Ed.

"There is no real contradiction; the two passages indicate in the Gita's system two different movements of its Yoga, the complete surrender being the crowning movement. One has first to conquer the lower nature, deliver the self involved in the lower movement by means of the higher Self which rises into the divine nature; at the same time one offers all one's actions including the inner action of the Yoga as a sacrifice to the Purushottama, the transcendent and immanent Divine. When one has risen into the higher Self, has the knowledge and is free, one makes the complete surrender to the Divine, abandoning all other dharmas, living only by the divine Consciousness, the divine Will and Force, the divine Ananda." (CWSA 29: 442)

2.

"We get back to the great idea of the Gita, the idea of the Purushottama,—though that name is not given till close

upon the end, it is always that which Krishna means by his 'I' and 'Me', the Divine who is there as the one self in our timeless immutable being, who is present too in the world, in all existences, in all activities, the master of the silence and the peace, the master of the power and the action, who is here incarnate as the divine charioteer of the stupendous conflict, the Transcendent, the Self, the All, the master of every individual being. He is the enjoyer of all sacrifice and of all tapasya, therefore shall the seeker of liberation do works as a sacrifice and as a tapasya; he is the lord of all the worlds, manifested in Nature and in these beings, therefore shall the liberated man still do works for the right government and leading on of the peoples in these worlds, *lokasaṅgrāha*; he is the friend of all existences, therefore is the sage who has found Nirvana within him and all around, still and always occupied with the good of all creatures,—even as the Nirvana of Mahayana Buddhism took for its highest sign the works of a universal compassion. Therefore too, even when he has found oneness with the Divine in his timeless and immutable self, is he still capable, since he embraces the relations also of the play of Nature, of divine love for man and of love for the Divine, of bhakti." (CWSA 19: 239)

3.

"Purushottama of the Gita is the supreme being; ..." (CWSA 28: 133)

XL—Other Quotations on Works

1.

"... Krishna proceeds to state the superiority of the spiritual man to works. 'But the man whose delight is in the Self and who is satisfied with the enjoyment of the Self and in the Self he is content, for him there exists no work that needs to be done. He has no object here to be gained by action done and none to be gained by action undone; he has no dependence on all these existences for any object to be gained." (CWSA 19: 114–115)

2.

"But from the standpoint of the Gita, where the aim is not inaction and immergence in the eternal Impersonal, but a union with the Purushottama through the integrality of our being, this objection cannot at all intervene. In this Yoga the soul escapes indeed its lower personality by the sense of its impersonal and immutable self-being; but it still acts and all action belongs to the multiple soul in the mutability of Nature. If we do not bring in as a corrective to an excessive quietism the idea of sacrifice to the Highest, we have to regard this element of action as something not at all ourselves, some remnant of the play of the gunas without any divine reality behind it, a last dissolving form of ego, of I-ness, a continued impetus of the lower Nature for which we are not responsible since

our knowledge rejects it and aims at escape from it into pure inaction. But by combining the tranquil impersonality of the one self with the stress of the works of Nature done as a sacrifice to the Lord, we by this double key escape from the lower egoistic personality and grow into the purity of our true spiritual person. Then are we no longer the bound and ignorant ego in the lower, but the free Jiva in the supreme Nature." (CWSA 19: 283)

3.

"The result is, says the Gita, a perfect equality to all things and all persons; and then only can we repose our works completely in the Brahman. For the Brahman is equal, *samaṁ brahma*, and it is only when we have this perfect equality, *sāmye sthitaṁ manaḥ*, 'seeing with an equal eye the learned and cultured Brahmin, the cow, the elephant, the dog, the outcaste' and knowing all as one Brahman, that we can, living in that oneness, see like the Brahman our works proceeding from the nature freely without any fear of attachment, sin or bondage. Sin and stain then cannot be; for we have overcome that creation full of desire and its works and reactions which belongs to the ignorance*, tair jitaḥ*
sargaḥ, and living in the supreme and divine Nature there is no longer fault or defect in our works; for these are created by the inequalities of the ignorance." (CWSA 19: 202)

4.

"When we are freed by knowledge, the Lord, no longer hidden in our hearts, but manifest as our supreme self, takes up our works and uses us as faultless instruments, *nimitta-mātram*, for the helping of the world. Such is the intimate union between knowledge and equality; knowledge here in the *buddhi* reflected as equality in the temperament; above, on a higher plane of consciousness, knowledge as the light of the Being, equality as the stuff of the Nature." (CWSA 19: 203)

5.

"When we can live in the higher Self by the unity of works and self-knowledge, we become superior to the method of the lower workings of Prakriti. We are no longer enslaved to Nature and her gunas, but, one with the Ishwara, the master of our nature, we are able to use her without subjection to the chain of Karma, for the purposes of the Divine Will in us; for that is what the greater Self in us is, he is the Lord of her works and unaffected by the troubled stress of her reactions. The soul ignorant in Nature, on the contrary, is enslaved by that ignorance to her modes, because it is identified there, not felicitously with its true self, not with the Divine who is seated above her, but stupidly and unhappily with the ego mind which is a subordinate factor in her operations in spite of the exaggerated figure it makes, a

mere mental knot and point of reference for the play of the natural workings." (CWSA 19: 212)

6.

"The works of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras, says the Gita, are divided according to the qualities (*guṇas*) born of their own inner nature, spiritual temperament, essential character (*svabhāva*). Calm, self-control, askesis, purity, longsuffering, candour, knowledge, acceptance of spiritual truth are the work of the Brahmin, born of his swabhava. Heroism, high spirit, resolution, ability, not fleeing in the battle, giving, lordship *(īśvara-bhāva*, the temperament of the ruler and leader) are the natural work of the Kshatriya. Agriculture, cattle-keeping, trade inclusive of the labour of the craftsman and the artisan are the natural work of the Vaishya. All work of the character of service falls within the natural function of the Shudra. A man, it goes on to say, who devotes himself to his own natural work in life acquires spiritual perfection, not indeed by the mere act itself, but if he does it with right knowledge and the right motive, if he can make it a worship of the Spirit of this creation and dedicate it sincerely to the Master of the universe from whom is all impulse to action. All labour, all action and function, whatever it be, can be consecrated by this dedication of works, can convert the life into a self-offering to the Godhead within and without us and is

itself converted into a means of spiritual perfection. But a work not naturally one's own, even though it may be well performed, even though it may look better from the outside when judged by an external and mechanical standard or may lead to more success in life, is still inferior as a means of subjective growth precisely because it has an external motive and a mechanical impulsion. One's own natural work is better, even if it looks from some other point of view defective. One does not incur sin or stain when one acts in the true spirit of the work and in agreement with the law of one's own nature. All action in the three gunas is imperfect, all human work is subject to fault, defect or limitation; but that should not make us abandon our own proper work and natural function. Action should be rightly regulated action, *niyataṁ karma*, but intrinsically one's own, evolved from within, in harmony with the truth of one's being, regulated by the Swabhava, *svabhāva niyataṁkarma*." (CWSA 19: 509–510)

7.

The work or function of a man is determined by his qualities, karma is determined by *guṇa*; it is the work born of his Swabhava, *svabhāvajaṁ*karma, and regulated by his Swabhava, *svabhāva niyataṁ karma*. This emphasis on an inner quality and spirit which finds

expression in work, function and action is the whole sense of the Gita's idea of Karma." (CWSA 19: 514)

8.

Swabhava and Swadharma

"What the Gita is concerned with is not the validity of the Aryan social order now abolished or in a state of deliquescence,—if that were all, its principle of the Swabhava and Swadharma would have no permanent truth or value,—but the relation of a man's outward life to his inward being, the evolution of his action from his soul and inner law of nature.

And we see in fact that the Gita itself indicates very clearly its intention when it describes the work of the Brahmin and the Kshatriya not in terms of external function, not defined as learning, priest-work and letters or government, war and politics, but entirely in terms of internal character. The language reads a little curiously to our ear. Calm, self-control, askesis, purity, long-suffering, candour, knowledge, acceptance and practice of spiritual truth would not ordinarily be described as a man's function, work or life occupation. Yet this is precisely what the Gita means and says,—that these things, their development, their expression in conduct, their power to cast into form the law of the sattwic nature are the real work of the Brahmin: learning, religious ministration and the other outer functions are only its most suitable field, a

favourable means of this inner development, its appropriate self-expression, its way of fixing itself into firmness of type and externalised solidity of character. War, government, politics, leadership and rule are a similar field and means for the Kshatriya; but his real work is the development, the expression in conduct, the power to cast into form and dynamic rhythm of movement the law of the active battling royal or warrior spirit. The work of the Vaishya and Shudra is expressed in terms of external function, and this opposite turn may have some significance. For the temperament moved to production and wealth-getting or limited in the circle of labour and service, the mercantile and the servile mind, are usually turned outward, more occupied with the external values of their work than its power for character, and this disposition is not so favourable to a sattwic or spiritual action of the nature. That too is the reason why a commercial and industrial age or a society preoccupied with the idea of work and labour creates around it an atmosphere more favourable to the material than the spiritual life, more adapted to vital efficiency than to the subtler perfection of the high-reaching mind and spirit. Nevertheless, this kind of nature too and its functions have their inner significance, their spiritual value and can be made a means and power for perfection. As has been said elsewhere, not alone the Brahmin with his ideal of spirituality, ethical purity and knowledge and the

Kshatriya with his ideal of nobility, chivalry and high character, but the wealth-seeking Vaishya, the toil-imprisoned Shudra, woman with her narrow, circumscribed and subject life, the very outcaste born from a womb of sin, *pāpayonayaḥ*, can by this road rise at once towards the highest inner greatness and spiritual freedom, towards perfection, towards the liberation and fulfilment of the divine element in the human being." (CWSA 19: 514–516)

9.

"The soul of man then feels itself to be one in a supreme spiritual impersonality with the Purushottama and in its universalised personality a manifest power of the Godhead. Its knowledge is a light of his knowledge; its will is a force of his will; its unity with all in the universe is a play of his eternal oneness. It is in this double realisation, it is in this union of two sides of an ineffable Truth of existence by either and both of which man can approach and enter into his own infinite being, that the liberated man has to live and act and feel and determine or rather have determined for him by a greatest power of his supreme self his relations with all and the inner and outer workings of his spirit. And in that unifying realisation adoration, love and devotion are not only still possible, but are a large, an inevitable and a crowning portion of the highest experience. The One who eternally

becomes the Many, the Many who in their apparent division are still eternally one, the Highest who displays in us this secret and mystery of existence, not dispersed by his multiplicity, not limited by his oneness,—this is the integral knowledge, this is the reconciling experience which makes one capable of liberated action, *muktasya karma*." (CWSA 19: 536)

10.

"When I [Sri Aurobindo] was arrested and hurried to the Lal Bazar hajat I was shaken in faith for a while, for I could not look into the heart of His intention. ... Then I grew calm and waited. I was taken from Lal Bazar to Alipore and was placed for one month in a solitary cell apart from men. There I waited day and night for the voice of God within me, to know what He had to say to me, to learn what I had to do. ... Then He placed the Gita in my hands. His strength entered into me and I was able to do the *sadhan* of the Gita. I was not only to understand intellectually but to realise what Srikrishna demanded of Arjuna and what He demands of those who aspire to do His work, to be free from repulsion and desire, to do work for Him without the demand for fruit, to renounce self-will and become a passive and faithful instrument in His hands, to have an equal heart for high and low, friend and opponent, success and failure, yet not to do His work negligently." (CWSA 8: 5–6)

11.

"Recover the Vedanta, the Gita, the Yoga. Recover them not only in intellect or sentiment but in your lives. Live them and you will be great and strong, mighty, invincible and fearless. Neither life nor death will have any terrors for you. Difficulty and impossibility will vanish from your vocabularies. For it is in the spirit that strength is eternal and you must win back the kingdom of yourselves, the inner Swaraj, before you can win back your outer empire." (CWSA 8: 28) (CWSA 13: 8)

12.

"This secret too has been possessed but not sufficiently practised by India. It is summarised in the rule of the Gita, *yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi*. [fixed in *yoga* do action (Gita 2.48)] Its principle is to do all actions in Yoga, in union with God, on the foundation of the highest self and through the rule of all our members by the power of the spirit. And this we believe to be not only possible for man but the true solution of all his problems and difficulties. This then is the message we shall constantly utter and this the ideal that we shall put before the young and rising India, a spiritual life that shall take up all human activities and avail to transfigure the world for the great age that is coming. India, she that has carried in herself from of old the secret, can alone lead the way in this great transformation of which the present *sandhyā* of the

old yuga is the forerunner. This must be her mission and service to humanity,—as she discovered the inner spiritual life for the individual, so now to discover for the race its integral collective expression and found for mankind its new spiritual and communal order.” (CWSA 13: 510)

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