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The late Lala Harkishen Das Sahib, M.A., P.E.S. (Retired.)
Born 1932 Bikrami.
Died 1992 Bikrami.



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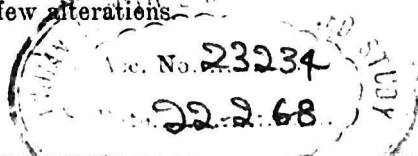
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* A Discourse on the Bhagavad Gita.

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN,

Sometime ago, I had the privilege of presiding at a meeting of this association. The subject for the day was " Lord Krishna and his Philosophy ", and the principal speaker of the evening was our learned friend, Pandit Gobind Ram. In summing up the discourse of the learned speaker, I made a few remarks, which were appreciated by some of the members, who have since been pressing me to give a discourse on the Bhagavad Gita and its teachings. Though feeling quite thankful to them for the kindness, I have been thinking all the while whether I should comply with their wishes or not, the reason for the hesitation being that the subject is too vast, comprehensive and deep to be properly handled by a man of my abilities. The high esteem in which the Bhagavad Gita (or the Song Divine) is held by the Hindus of all castes and creeds, and the unique position, which it occupies in the Hindu litera-

* This discourse was given at a meeting of the Literary Association, Lyallpur. on the 27th October, 1913, and is being printed with a few alterations.



ture are too well known to all ; and it would be a mere waste of time, if I were to say anything on the point. The sphere of its influence is not confined to the Hindus alone. I may safely say that it is now regarded to be one of the few books which are revered by all nations and which go a long way in binding together the various races of the world. It has been translated into English, French, German, Urdu, Hindi, and Persian. It deals with the most difficult and subtle subjects with a simplicity which is not shared by any other book. Consequently, it is a source of pleasure and inspiration for men of all grades of intellectual development. It affords mental food to all alike. Whosoever the reader may be, he finds a real pleasure in its study ; and the more he reads of it, the more enamoured he becomes. But whereas the ordinary man is satisfied with the mere husk, the man of intellect seeks after the grain ; and it is in finding out the grain that the real difficulty lies. It was for this reason that I felt the hesitation. I knew in my heart of hearts that my knowledge of Sanskrit was limited, that I had not drunk deep at this fountain of im-

mortality, and that unless something really useful and instructive were placed before such a learned audience, it would be mere waste of their valuable time. But I overcame that diffidence, and thinking that there ought to be no shame in respectfully placing one's views before others, I undertook the task and tried to study the Bhagavad Gita critically. Consequently, the views which I shall place before you will not be the views of any particular sect or society, but they will be the result of my private independent study. No doubt, I have studied some books on the subject, but the manner in which I intend handling the subject is perhaps quite new. My to-day's discourse will only deal with the most salient features of the Bhagavad Gita and will, therefore, be merely introductory. If I am given another chance, I shall try to show wherein the philosophy of the Gita resembles, and wherein it differs from, the teachings of some other important schools of Hindu Philosophy. However, that will be seen later on. For the present, I should feel satisfied if you would kindly lend me your ears for a short time. The subject, as already stated, is very

deep and perplexing, and unless you gave your full attention, much of your valuable time would be wasted.

To come to the subject. The Bhagavad Gita is a poem written in the usual verse form of the Hindu Epic poems, and is an episode in the 6th book or *Bhishma Parvan* of the *Mahābhārata*, which describes the deeds of the *Kauravas* and the *Pandavas* who, though descended from the same ancestor *Kuru*, fought for the kingdom, of which *Hastinapur* was the capital. As most of you already know, the *Kauravas* treacherously defeated the *Pandavas* in a game at dice, and thus compelled them to undergo exile for twelve years. During the period of exile, the *Kauravas* tried their best to kill the five brothers together with their wife *Draupadi*; but, through good luck, the *Pandavas* remained safe, and on coming back to *Hastinapur* demanded their kingdom. But *Duryodhana*, who was the eldest brother of the *Kauravas* and who was an unprincipled man, refused to restore it, thus compelling the *Pandavas* to have resort to arms. Preparations were made for a battle, and the armies of both the

parties were arrayed in the battle-field. Lord Krishna was on the side of the *Pandavas* and acted as *Arjuna's* charioteer. When everything was ready, and both the parties were anxiously waiting for the commencement of the battle, *Arjuna's* heart began to sink within him. He saw relatives on both sides and, in a state of depression and dejection, asked his charioteer to drive between the two armies, that he might regard them more closely. Krishna did as desired; and seeing his kinsmen, Arjuna was so much overcome with pity and sorrow that he gave up the idea of fighting against them and let fall his bow and arrow. At this Krishna told Arjuna that he was wrong in desisting from the fight, and that people would cry shame on him and blame him of weakness and cowardice. To this Arjuna raised certain objections all of which were very ably refuted by Lord Krishna. Arjuna said :—

“I desire not victory, Krishna, nor dominion, nor delights. Of what avail can dominion be to us, Govinda, or delights, or even life? They for whose sake dominion, wealth and pleasure are desired by us are here arrayed in the battle, giving up their life and wealth. For, it

were better to feed on the food of beggary for life than to slay these much-honoured teachers (*Gurus*) ; yea, if I were to slay these teachers, though greedy of wealth, I should eat of viands stained with blood" (*ii*, 5).

In reply to this, the Holy One gave many arguments to convince Arjuna that his action was not justifiable, and that he should bravely fight his enemies like a *Kṣhatriya* and punish them for their wickedness, even though they were his kinsmen. Some of those arguments are given below :—

(1) The fight would be advantageous to him (Arjuna) from every point of view. If he died in the battle, he would obtain heaven, and if he won, he would gain good name, fame, victory and kingdom. (*ii*, 37.)

(2) If on the other hand, he left the battlefield like a coward, he would lose his kingdom, give his enemies a pretence for vilifying him, and last but not the least of all incur sin by disregarding his duty. (*ii*, 33.)

(3) If, however, the hope of getting his kingdom and the call of duty were not sufficiently powerful incentives for him, he should undertake the fight for the sake of his people, that is, with the object of liberating his people from the hands of tyrants and setting before them an example of true bravery, heroism, justice and impartiality. (*iii*, 20.)

(4) A wise man should not mourn for the dead or living. He who is born must die some day or other, and there is no help for it. (*ii*, 27.)

(5) The soul does not die and is indestructible. If it casts off one body, it enters another, just as a man casts off dirty clothes and wears new ones. (*ii*, 22.)

This last argument was perhaps the strongest of all, and it is on this very argument that some of the important religions disagree. I need not enter into a discussion of this point, but I may mention by the way that the doctrine is already attracting some attention in the West, and has been hinted at by Sir Humphry Davy. He says :—

“It does not appear improbable to me that some of the more refined machinery of thought may adhere even in another stage to the sentient principle ; for though the organs of gross sensation, the nerves and the brain, are destroyed by death, yet something of the more ethereal nature, which I have supposed, may be less destructible. And I sometimes imagine that many of those powers, which have been called instinctive, belong to a more refined clothing of the spirit ; conscience, indeed, seems to have some undefined source, and may bear relation to the former state of being”*

* Last Days of a Philosopher, Page 215, quoted in John Davis's translation of the “Bhagavad Gita,” page 14.

Sir Oliver Lodge's Presidential address at the British Association and a remarkable article by M. Maeternick on "Life after Death" in the last month's Century Magazine, all point in the same direction, and the time may not be long in coming when the East and the West will agree on this all-important question**

The following extract from the "Popular Science Siftings" is also full of interest :—

"Professor Calderona of Rome has dealt in a paper with an alleged case of re-incarnation in the family of Carmelo Samona, a Sicilian doctor. The story is briefly that Dr. Samona and his wife sometime ago lost their five-year old daughter, Alessand-rina, and a short time afterwards, at a spiritualistic seance, the dead child was alleged to have told her mother that she would be reborn on Christmas Day in the following year. At a second seance she announced :—"There will be two of us, myself, and one another." On Christmas Day, fourteen months after the date of the seance, Signora Samona gave birth to twins, both girls, one of whom bore on the face three marks identical with marks on the face of the dead child, and after a year began to manifest exactly the same moral and physical tendencies. The two children are now two years old. Professor Calderone's state-

**The Civil and Military Gazette, Lahore, Dated 8th October, 1913, page 6.

ments are confirmed and signed by a number of persons who were present at the Spiritual seances referred to.”*

Arguments like these could not fail to convince Arjuna of his mistake, and towards the close of the 18th chapter, we find him saying thus :—

“My trouble is destroyed. By thy favour, O Sinless One, the holy doctrine has been perceived by me. I am now firm in resolve; my doubt has gone, and I will act according to thy word.” (XVIII, 73.)

This, in short, is a summary of the plot of the Bhagavad Gita. But there are some philosophers who hold that the battle of *Kurukshetra*, which is described in the *Mahabharata*, was never fought; that the *Kauravas* and the *Pandavas* represent the higher and the lower natures of man, and that the battle of *Kurukshetra* is no other than the constant struggle which is going on in the human body between the higher and the lower *Manas*. I need not go into the details of the point, as I explained it fully last time when I presided at the meeting referred to.

*Popular Science Siftings for 20th September, 1913, p. 558.

The Bhagavad Gita is regarded to be one of the three best and most authentic books on the *Vedantic Philosophy*. The other two books are the *Upanishadas* and the *Brahmasutras*. Curiously enough, the word *Vedanta* occurs only once in the Bhagavad Gita (XV, 15), and that too is regarded by some writers as an interpolation. It is difficult to say for certain whether the *Vedantic School of Philosophy* existed at the time when the Bhagavad Gita was compiled; but it is almost a fact that the Bhagavad Gita refers mainly to *Sankhya* and *Yoga* Philosophies, and that the present terminology of the *Vedantic System* was not then in vogue. Be it as it may, we are not materially affected by the point, and at present I have no mind to enter into the question as to when the Gita was written. I may take it up some other time, if I get a chance. For the present, it is sufficient for us to know that the Gita belongs to the *Vedantic School of Philosophy*. This school, as all of you know, believes in the doctrine that the whole universe is a mere phantom; that matter can not exist without *Brahma* and that the highest aim of life

Teachings of
Bhagavad Gita.

should be the attainment of Salvation through true knowledge, (*Jnana*). There are several sub-divisions of this school, and the founder of each one of them has tried to find a confirmation of his views in the Bhagavad Gita. Such differences will always exist ; but it is admitted by the followers of the various shades of thought that the Salvation or the attainment of *Nirvana* is the *summum bonum* of existence. But how to attain *Nirvana* is the question of questions. The only way of attaining it consists in the extinction of the ego in man or merging oneself into the creative power which pervades the Universe. But the extinction of the ego is not an easy task. Different methods have been prescribed for it. Ordinarily, Action (*Karma*) Devotion (*Bhakti*), Meditation (*Upasna*), and Discrimination (*Jnana*), are all considered to be necessary for the attainment of Salvation. By good works, the impurity of the mind is destroyed. By Devotion and Meditation we get rid of the distraction and agitation of the mind, and by Discrimination, the veil of ignorance which separates *Jiva* from *Brahma*, is removed. Thus, in the opinion of most of the Philosophers, action,

devotion and discrimination are the several rungs of the ladder which leads to Salvation. But the compiler of the Bhagavad Gita, if I have been able to understand him aright, does not seem to think that each and every one of the three is necessary for Salvation. He seems to believe that each one of *Karma*, *Upasana* and *Jnana*, is in itself quite sufficient for the purpose of attaining Salvation. The elimination or extinction of personality or the ego in man can be achieved by each of *Karma*, *Upasana* and *Jnana*, provided they are practised on right lines, and to-day, Gentlemen, I shall try to show how Salvation can be achieved by means of action or *Karma Yoga*. The subject, as I have said before, is intricate; but if you will kindly pay attention, I hope you will be able to understand it.

To begin with, let us see what *Karma-Yoga* is. The term means "Union with God through action" *i.e.*, by performing rituals, sacrifices and other good deeds. Now the question is how to attain Salvation by performing "good deeds." Good deeds are generally performed with some definite

object, as for example, the attainment of heaven or the fulfilment of a certain desire. This naturally results in births and rebirths ; because the desires of a man can not be fulfilled in *one* birth. It takes him several, nay, an unlimited number of births to get them satisfied. Consequently, a man is born and reborn till at last he comes to realise that these worldly desires are not worth hankering after, that the more they are indulged in, the stronger they become, and that their cessation is the only source of real bliss and happiness. But there are ways by which a man can attain Salvation without undergoing the bitter experiences of life and without passing through so many births and rebirths. They may be called short-cuts to the goal. In the case of *Karma-Yoga*, the performance of a deed without "attachment" constitutes this short-cut*. If a man acts, not with the object of gratifying his personal desires, but with the object of per-

*John Davies puts it thus :—"But all work must be done without "attachment" (the Sanskrit term *Sanga* having the same double meaning as this word), that is, it must be done simply as duty without any emotion, with indifference to all attendant circumstances and especially without any desire for reward (Phala, fruit). (Bhagavad Gita, Trubner's Oriental Series, P. 10)."

forming duty for duty's sake, nay with the still higher motive of serving mankind, he may be said to be paving his way to Salvation. Desire and self-interest which are the cause of all troubles being eliminated, his actions do not chain him down. Consequently, such a man, in the words of Lord Krishna, "though engaged in work, does not work at all." (IV, 20). This being the case, he is not responsible for his good and bad actions. He acts as conscience bids him do. He is no more fettered by personal or selfish considerations, and is therefore unconcerned as to the result. The result may be good or bad, he minds it not. He acted with good intentions, and there the matter ended. Such an action, therefore, though done, is not a source of anguish or pain, and the man who acts in this spirit, though engaged in work does not really do anything. Now let us consider for a while the various forms of action in so far as the motive is concerned.

There are three stages of *Karma Yoga*—

1. Action as a means of self-gratification.
2. Action as duty.
3. Action as sacrifice.

The lowest form of action aims at self-
First stage : self-gratification. gratification. In this stage a man
 acts simply with selfish motives.

The attainment of some desire is generally at the root of it. Evidently there can be no real happiness in this stage. The pleasure obtained by the achievement of the object in view is generally momentary and vanishes soon after the fulfilment of the desire. I shall try to explain it by means of an illustration. A man, after working hard passes the M. A. Examination. The moment he hears the news of his success, his joy knows no bounds. He thinks that the be-all and end-all of his existence has been achieved. But soon after he begins to think that the mere passing of the Examination is of no use to him. He has a large family to support, and unless he can make a decent living, it is difficult for him to maintain them. So the pleasure which he experienced at passing the Examination is soon converted into disappointment and grief. He tries to get some job, but this he cannot do on account keen competition and a limited number of openings. Consequently, he begins to feel dissatisfied

with his lot. But after some time, he succeeds in getting a sufficiently lucrative job which, however, does not satisfy him. He had hoped that by passing the M. A. Examination, he would secure a very high post and be in a position to lead a life of ease and luxury. But his hopes have not been realized and so he begins to feel sullen and morose. Thus his life which ought to have been a source of contentment and happiness to him becomes a source of anxiety and sorrow. But what is the reason of all this? How is it that education, which is really a blessing, has not proved so in his case? This is because he received education with the object of earning money, and not because education is a good thing in itself. If he had acquired learning, because it is a means of moral and spiritual advancement and because in the words of *Sâdî*, an illiterate person cannot know anything about God, he would not have felt all this moroseness and sorrow, even if his worldly position had not been half so good. If he had expended his time and labour in prosecuting his studies with the noble and enviable object of acquiring learn-

ing for the sake of learning, or with the still higher object of spreading its light among the masses, he would have felt the greatest amount of pleasure even if he had to live on the hardest crust of bread. In short, if his action had not been actuated by selfish motives, his life would have been a source of perpetual bliss and joy not only to himself but also to those who came in contact with him. But, unfortunately, the case was otherwise; and consequently, the results too were quite the opposite. I have given you one example of how selfish motives and desires are a cause of trouble and pain; but you can work it out in detail in your lives and see for yourselves how far the statement is correct. Thus action as a means of self-gratification is not desirable, and as pointed out by Lord Krishna, the abandonment of such works constitutes real Abstinence or *Sanyasa* (XVIII, 2). The consequences of such deeds, in a majority of cases, are far from good. Pain and sorrow come in their train, and evil thoughts haunt him who is given to them.

But there is a higher stage, namely, that of

Second Stage : acting with the object of performing one's duty. When a man advances

a little, duty takes the place of self-gratification. In this stage, he no longer works because that work is to bring him pleasure and comfort, but because it is his duty to do so. All of you know that the path of duty is not always smooth, that sometimes in the performance of *dūtya* one has to risk one's life and has to displease those who are near and dear to him. Still there are men who hazard every thing in the discharge of duty. Examples of those who placed duty far above self and died for it are not wanting. Work done in this spirit is a source of great pleasure, consolation and satisfaction. When a man has performed his duty, he feels a joy which cannot be had in worldly things. Consequently, this form of action is much better than the first one, and it is hence that Lord Krishna asks Arjuna to fight and slay the sons of *Dhritrashtra* who have proved themselves unworthy of their family, and who, by playing mean tricks, have ousted the *Pandavas* from the kingdom of which they were legitimate masters. To kill such men was the duty of Arjuna as a *Kshatriya*, and if he

failed in his duty, eternal disgrace was to be his lot. Lord Krishna exhorts Arjuna in the following terms :—

“Regarding, too, thy proper duty, thou oughtest not to falter, for to a Kshatriya nothing is better than a lawful fight. Happy are the Kshatriyas, O! son of Pritha, who obtain such a fight as this, offered freely to them as an open door to Heaven. But if thou wilt not undertake this lawful fight, then by abandoning thy proper duty and thy honour, thou wilt be guilty of a crime. Then men will proclaim thy eternal disgrace, and to a well-born man disgrace is more than death.” (*ii, 31-34*).

What stronger words could ever be used to impress the importance of duty? Such an exhortation was bound to have effect, and certainly Lord Krishna succeeded in persuading Arjuna to undertake the fight.

In passing, I may be allowed to say a few words regarding the undignified and unjust criticism which has of late been levelled against the Bhagavad Gita. Owing to the mistakes of some misguided youths who professed to believe in the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita, some persons have begun to entertain the view that the Bhagavad Gita advocates slaughter and bloodshed, and is the

A misunderstanding,

possible cause of the horrible crimes that have been committed during the last few years. Though not desiring in the least to talk of political matters in an association like this, I have thought it proper to make this reference, because in a discourse on the Bhagavad Gita, it would be unfair if I did not try to show that such a charge is quite unfounded and uncalled for. It may be, that some interested persons might have distorted the teachings of this wonderful book and misled some raw youths in the name of religion, but to blame the book for teaching what it does not, would be far from fair; and in an association like this where the moral and spiritual worth of the Bhagavad Gita are to be discussed, it is quite appropriate that such an important question were thoroughly sifted; for if the book under reference really contains such objectionable matter, it would be a mistake to have discourses on that. The following remarks, I believe, will remove all misunderstandings and enable us to judge for ourselves what the real facts are. No doubt, the Bhagavad Gita contains a discourse wherein Lord Krishna urges Arjuna to fight and slay his own kith and

kin and not mind his scruples in killing them. But this does not justify the conclusion that the compiler of the Gita was a wanton lover of indiscriminate carnage and bloodshed and that the book incites its readers to acts of violence and murder. So far as I have been able to judge, nothing could be farther from truth. In a passage quoted above, Lord Krishna urges Arjuna to undertake the *lawful* fight, a fight which he was justified in undertaking not so much with selfish motives as with the higher object of restoring peace to a country which had been terrorised by the unwise, cruel and imprudent sons of Dharitrashttra who richly deserved punishment for their misconduct, breach of trust and violation of all the rules of Dharma. If Lord Krishna preached murder and bloodshed, it was against such wicked persons, and who is there in this meeting who will not honestly say that Lord Krishna was fully justified in doing so? Apart from this general theme of the book, let us, for a moment, consider its other teachings and see whether this view of ours is correct or not. In the twelfth discourse, Lord Krishna says :—

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"He who hates no single being, is friendly and compassionate, free from self-regard and vanity, the same in good and evil, patient and contented, ever devout, subdued in soul, firm in purpose, fixed on me in heart and mind, and who worships me is dear to me. He whom the world troubles not, and who troubles not the world (mark the words: who troubles not the world !); who is free from the emotion of joy, wrath or fear, is dear to me. The man who has no selfish bias, is pure, upright, unconcerned, free from the distress of mind, detached from all he undertakes and worships me is dear to me. He who is the same to friend and foe, and also in honour and dishonour, who is the same in cold and heat, in pleasure and pain, who is wholly free from attachment, to whom praise and blame are equal, who is silent, content with every fortune, home-renouncing, steadfast in mind, and worships me, is dear to me." (*XII, 13—20.*)

Could a book which contains lofty teachings like these be justly pronounced as advocating murder and bloodshed? Could a man who preaches that good treatment should be accorded even to one's enemies be ever blamed of sowing seeds of discord and dis-union? If this is possible, the Bhagavad Gita too may be charged with inciting its readers to acts of violence; otherwise the Gita is quite above such criticisms and is entitled to the reverence which is rightly accorded to it by the Hindus.

Then again says Lord Krishna:—

“ Well I will declare to thee my Divine Perfections by means of the chief of them only, O! best of the Kurus, for there is no end of my greatness. I am soul, O! Gudakesha, seated in the heart of every creature. I am the beginning and the middle and the end of all things. Among the *Adityas* I am *Vishnu*, among luminous things the resplendent Sun. I am *Marichi* among the *Maruts*, and the *Moon* among the constellations. I am *Sama* (*Veda*) of the *Vedas*, I am *Indra* of the Gods. Of the senses I am *Manas* (Mind); of elephants the *Airavata*. and among men I am the *King*.” (X, 19—27.)

In this long list, Lord Krishna gives the names of those things which are the best of their kind, and which, consequently, are worthy of the greatest respect and reverence. They are symbols of divine perfection, and as such far superior to the remaining things of the same kind. Just as the Sun is the best of all the luminous objects, the Moon the best of all the constellations; similarly the *King* is the best of all human beings and the embodiment of Divinity. In the face of such strong proofs to the contrary, could anyone honestly affirm that the Bhagavad Gita teaches irreverence of elders and superiors and is a

source of lawlessness ? The only conclusion that can be drawn is that those who hold such an opinion about the Bhagavad Gita have not had the opportunity of reading and rightly understanding it. If there is any book in the Hindu Literature which teaches self-control, self-restraint and right conduct, it is the Gita and Gita alone. To look on such a valuable book with eyes of suspicion is the least desirable; but who is responsible for this ill-treatment of the Divine Song? Not they who hold such a low opinion about it, but they who while professing to believe in its teachings perpetrate such heinous offences the like of which were never dreamt of in the days when the Bhagavad Gita was written—offences the mere mention of which would have alarmed the whole world and brought universal reprobation on him who spoke of them. May Lord Krishna, whose name such men are defiling, set them on the right path and give them strength to walk in the footsteps of their forefathers, whose loyalty to the throne and love of justice and uprightness have always been proverbial.

But all this was by the way. I was speaking of the second stage of
 Third Stage: Sacrifice *Karma Yoga*, namely, performance of action as duty. This stage, though quite good for wordly men, is not, at any rate, a means of attaining Salvation. The ideas of selfishness and personality lie at the root of all work done in this spirit, and, consequently, the man who is still in this stage, cannot get rid of births and re-births. If he wants to attain *Nirvana*, he should move higher and enter the third stage which consists in doing work with a disinterested mind and with the object of serving mankind. It is in this stage that a man rises above personal considerations, and is not, therefore, bound down by his actions. But let us see whether this highest aim was also kept in view by Lord Krishna in exhorting Arjuna to undertake the fight against his brethren. Surely, if the Bhagavad Gita were silent on this point, much of its value and honour would have been lost; but a genius like Lord Krishna could not make such an omission, and we find him speaking on the point with great force. He says:—

“ For Janaka and others have attained to perfection

even by work. Thou oughtest to work also from regard to the masses of mankind. Whatever is done by one who is high in position that other men do whatever it may be. Whatever example he offers, the people follow it. Nothing whatever, O! son of Pritha, must needs be done by me in three worlds, nor is anything to be attained that is unattained, yet I engage in work. For if I should not be ever at work unwearied, and men follow my path, O! son of Pritha, from every part, these worlds would sink in ruin. If I should not work, I should be the author of confusion, and I should destroy this race of man." (III, 20-24).

In the foregoing passage, Lord Krishna impresses on Arjuna the need and desirability of working not for his own sake, but for the sake of the masses of mankind. He tells Arjuna that even if he did not like to kill his kith and kin for the sake of kingdom, or with the object of performing his duty, he should at all events undertake the fight for the sake of his people, for, if being a king, he hesitated in punishing the sons of Dhritrashtra, who acted against the *Dharma*, simply because they were his relatives, he would be setting a very bad example before the people who, misunderstanding his mercy and leniency, would

impugn his motives. They would begin to be partial in dealing out justice, and where justice is tampered with, law and order cannot exist. The disappearance of peace and order gives rise to confusion and anarchy, and where confusion and anarchy prevail, murder and bloodshed become the order of the day. Hence, "O! Arjuna, punish the Kauravas for their wickedness, for if thou dost not, thou wilt be responsible for the loss of life which will result from thy neglect of duty". To this Arjuna yeilds and girds up his loins to slay the sons of Dharitrashtra and their followers.

Now let us see how this view of *Karma-Yoga* can be applied in our daily life. The idea of sacrifice took a firm hold of the Hindu mind in the earliest days of their history. All the Vedas, the Brahmanas and Sutras are for the most part devoted to a description of the sacrifices and their gods. The performance of five daily sacrifices is enjoined on every householder, and most of you, I think, are acquainted with their names. It is not my business to-day to discuss their utility and the principle underlying them, but I may safely say that

they play a very important part in the Hindu religion. The spirit of sacrifice, however, was not confined to the performance of *Yajnas* only, but exhibited itself in various other forms. The Hindus have been famous for parting with their wealth and devoting it to acts of charity. They even went the length of sacrificing their bodies, and a well is even now pointed out at Benaras where people got themselves sawed into halves with the object of attaining salvation. This may look like an act of barbarity, but who would deny that in acts like these the spirit of sacrifice was always the motive-power. But though the Hindus could sacrifice everything for the sake of religion, the idea of employing that spirit in the ordinary transactions of every-day life does not seem to have dawned upon them up to the time of Lord Krishna, and it was to the inculcation of this spirit that his energies were mainly directed. On this point, we hear him say,

“ Whatever thou doest, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou offerest in sacrifice, or givest (to others), whatever austerity thou practises do it an offering to me. Thus shalt thou be free from the bond of works

producing good or evil fortune; united to me in soul by devotion and renunciation (of worldly good) thou when freed (from the body) shalt come to me." (IX, 27-28.)

On the same subject, he again speaks thus:—

"If thou art not equal to the frequency (of devotion), be thou intent on doing good work for me; if thou doest work for me alone, thou shalt attain the perfect state." (XIII, 1).

But what does doing work for God mean? Evidently, it cannot mean any thing but working in the interest of humanity. God loves all his creatures equally and does not wish that we should cut each other's throat, seek pleasure at the cost of our neighbour, and live a life of luxury while our brother is dying of hunger; but, on the contrary, He wishes us to work not as a separated individual but as a part of the universe. And if we begin to work in that spirit, we shall never do anything calculated to injure the interests of mankind. We shall then be ready to sacrifice our personal pleasures for the sake of humanity, and when that stage is reached, the kingdom of Heaven shall be ours. Let us, one and all, try to work in that spirit, and then will be brought home to us the full significance of the saying, "Work is worship."

I shall now try to explain by a few illustrations how the actions of a *Karma-Yogin* differ from those of an ordinary man. The *Karma-Yogin* leads almost exactly the same life as is led by a man of the world (*iii*, 25), but the difference lies in the motive. A *Karma-Yogin* will, for example, take food just as an ordinary man does. But whereas the latter takes food for gratifying his senses, the former does so simply with the object of keeping together the body and soul. The one will, consequently, take delicious and dainty dishes; while the other will take simple and nutritious food which may sustain his vigour and give him strength to serve his brethren. Though both of them resemble in eating, there is a world of difference between the binding effect of this action in the case of the two individuals. He who eats mainly with the object of gratifying his palate soon becomes a slave to his dishes; while he who eats so that he may live on, remains always free and is content with whatever he gets. Suppose both of them get very simple food some day. The man who is accustomed to dainty dishes will

fret and frown; while the other will take it with the same amount of cheerfulness with which he takes his usual meal. It is of such men that Lord Krishna says, "Though engaged in work they work not at all." (IV, 20).

Further, the object of Karma-Yoga is to so train and regulate oneself as to bring the whole body and mind under the control of the will and the self. A *Karma-Yogin* has to get the better of his worst and strongest passions and to so train them that they are used only in the right place and the right direction. Let us take the three passions which are among the strongest in our nature. They are anger, love and greed. Each of these can be rightly used and abused.

Let us first of all take 'anger'. In its lowest form, it is used against our enemies or those who displease us. In this case, it is used with the object of wreaking vengeance or gratifying our animal passions. Anger of this type should therefore be avoided. More advanced and cultured people use it on better occasions; as

Object of Karma
Yoga.

Purification of
anger.

for example, when they find a strong man torturing the weak. Feelings of resentment and compassion are aroused in them when they see this, and they at once make up their mind to punish the offender. Anger comes into display in this case too; but the man who shows anger on such occasions is much better than the first one, because he is actuated by a sense of duty; whereas the first one was moved to action through selfish considerations. But he who would be a perfect *Karma-Yogin* should go further and so train his mind as to take the side of neither the weak nor the strong. He should side with Law and Justice. He should express his anger towards him who is wrong, be he strong or weak. The man who has thus purified the passion of anger hates neither the oppressor nor the oppressed. He may punish the former, but he does not hate him. On the other hand, he pities him, and though outwardly he may treat him harshly he has his good at heart and is really his well-wisher. Thus 'anger' is purified into 'mercy', and we find the worst passion converted into a virtue.

Now let us take 'love'. In its lowest form, it

Purification of love. aims at the gratification of the sensual desires and does not care for anything else as long as they are satisfied. The man who loves with such low motives is in no respect better than a beast. But there is a better and higher form of love which is practised by good householders. They love their wives, children and other relatives, not merely with the object of gratifying animal passions, but because they consider it their duty to love them and support them. Such men are much better than those who belong to the first category. But the highest stage of love has not yet been reached. It consists in showing love to all, be they our friends or foes. The perfect *Karma-Yogin* does not think *this is mine, that is another's* ; but he embraces the whole universe with open arms and regards every one his own. To him the whole creation appears to be the work of God, whom he sees in every part of it. He, therefore, hates nobody. On the contrary, he loves every one just as he would love himself. Thus love which, in the case of some persons of brutish temper, was nothing better than the lowest form of carnal-

ity, is converted by a *Karma-Yogin* into one of the best virtues.

To come to 'greed'. Greed or covetousness means excessive love of money. Purification of greed. Too much of every thing is bad, but excessive love of money is perhaps the worst. He who loves money cannot love anything else. Brothers, sisters, fathers, sons, husbands, and wives say good-bye to one another, when the question of money comes in. They will part with every thing except money. But in the case of those who earn so that they may live and not hoard, money does not exert such a baneful influence. They love money because it gives comfort and pleasure to themselves, their family, and other relatives. Thus they love their family and relatives more than wealth; whereas a really greedy man loves wealth more than his relatives. But there is a higher stage in which men earn money and accumulate it neither for themselves nor for their families, but for the good of humanity. Such men help others not with the object of receiving a return or obliging a man, but because they look upon the whole universe as

their ownelves ; because they love God whose creation this universe is, and finally because they find greater pleasure in giving comfort to others than to themselves. Thus the passion of greed which so often sows seeds of disunion and discord in so many families is transformed into a virtue of the first water ; for pecuniary help often does what no other form of help can do.

We thus see that the path of *Karma Yoga* is not so easy as some people consider it to be. They generally labour under the impression that mere repetition of a few '*Mantras*' or the performance of the five daily sacrifices is all that is needed to become a *Karma-Yogin* ; but, as we have seen just now, such *Karma-Yoga* is not of much value. The real work of a *Karma-Yogin* consists in training his senses and controlling his passions, the subjugation of which is extremely necessary for attaining salvation. We shall see later on that devotion and meditation are also practised with the same object; but the method of subduing the senses by *Karma-Yoga* is the easiest and most convenient. It is hence that Lord Krishna says that action

Conclusion.

is better than renunciation and that a *Karma-yogin* is better than a *Sanyasin*. The whole of the third Chapter *the Bhagavad Gita* is devoted to a comparison of the relative values of work and renunciation, and, on the whole, the arguments in favour of work preponderate. Work, rightly practised, leads to salvation; because in the highest form of work, all thought of self-gratification and self-aggrandisement is absent, and when selfishness is gone, we enter the realm of peace and bliss.

Thus we have seen that there are three stages of *Karma Yoga*. The first consists in doing work with the object of gratifying one's animal desires or lower nature. The second, which is higher than the first, stimulates us to action with the object of performing our duties; whereas when we reach the third, we work not for ourselves, but for the masses of mankind. The first stage, we have seen, is a source of transitory joy which ceases soon after the attainment of the object. The second gives pleasure which is more lasting, though not permanent. In this stage, even when the im-

mediate cause of happiness is gone, we enjoy mental satisfaction which far outweighs worldly pleasures. The third and the highest stage is the *Summum Bonum* of life and the fountain-head of real bliss—bliss which knows no end, and which once acquired becomes our property for ever. Let us, therefore, try to seek after that eternal bliss, and disregarding all momentary pleasures which worldly objects bring, do our best to drink the nectar of immortality which frees us from the turmoils of life and unites us with *Brahma*, the Universal Soul. No doubt, this is a very difficult thing to accomplish; but if we make up our minds, there is every chance of success. Knock and it shall be opened. Ask and it shall be given. There is nothing impossible in the world. It is honest and persistent effort alone that is needed. To use the words of Lord Krishna, practice and pertinacity always succeed, and there is nothing unattainable to them. Hence, friends, try to get out of these narrow environments and learn to work not for your personal benefit, but for the bene-

fit of all. In doing so, you will, in most cases, not be a loser; for your interests and the interests of the humanity generally coincide. What is useful for the masses is also useful for you. Be, therefore, a source of joy and comfort not only to yourselves, but to the public at large. Serve others and thereby you will be serving yourselves. If we learn some practical lesson from to-day's discourse, it can only then do us any good; otherwise it may be nothing more than a mere recreation.

Gentlemen, I had a mind to take up the second part of *the Bhagavad Gita* also, but as I have already taxed your patience too much, I beg leave of you in the hope that, large-minded as you are, you will kindly overlook my shortcomings.

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The foregoing pages were written and sent to the press by my father before his death. The proofs had to be read by me. If any mistake has been left unnoticed the readers will kindly excuse me.

KARAM CHAND,
Malhoutra,

6. F., MODEL TOWN, LAHORE.

Dated 21st November, 1935.

LALA HARKISHEN DAS SAHIB, the writer of this discourse, breathed his last on the 13th of August, 1935, at his residence, 6 F., Model Town. May the Almighty Father bestow upon him *Puran Nirvana* and release him from *Avagavan*.

He was born in Lahore (Kucha Gulzari Shah, Wachhowali) in Maghar, 1932 Vikrami or November 1875, A. D. His father was a man of means and was a contractor of Canal-flour-mills. When he was only one year old, his paternal uncle, Lala Sita Ram, who had no issue, adopted him as his son.

According to the custom of the time he was married when he was a lad of ten years, with the daughter of Lala Medoo Mal, the proprietor and founder of the present firm of Messrs. Cheap John, The Mall, Lahore. He passed a major portion of his student life as a married man.

After passing the Entrance Examination he got a job in the Loco Office (N. W. Railway) Lahore, on Rs. 25 p. m. This job he left to join the Law College, which he had to leave eventually, out of sheer disgust for the profession, arising out of a sad incident. He graduated as a private student in 1899 and took his M. A. (in Sanskrit) in 1901 from the D. A. V. College, Lahore.

He started his career in 1901 A. D. as Head Master of Sanatana Dharma High School, Hoshiarpur on Rs. 80 p. m. He had to leave the place after serving the school for a short period of six months, due to unsuitable climate. In 1902, he was appointed Second Master in the Sresht Niti High School, Rawalpindi, which was run by S. B. S. Boota Singh. After a period of three months, he was given the charge of the school. In March 1906, his services were transferred to the Punjab Education Department, as the Sardar Bahadur made over the school to the Government. He served as Head Master of the Government High Schools at Jhelum (1906), Amballa City (1908-1909), Lyallpur (1909—19), Amritsar (1919—23), Montgomery (1923—31) and Alipur (1931—34); from which place he retired on the 1st January, 1935, when he was getting Rs. 550 p. m.

He was a self-made man, who, had risen by his personal efforts and hard work. He mainly devoted himself to the study of Sanskrit literature, and did full justice to his duties. He believed in plain living and high thinking; which principle he followed in his life. In a nutshell he was a true 'Karam Yogin' as is described in '*the Bhagavad Gita*'.

